



Media. Arts. Education.

"A Travers Mes Yeux / Through My Eyes" **A photographic exploration of community**

Evaluation Report
Submitted by Dr. Carol Fineberg
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Evaluation Description

To what extent can a photography program impact students' artistic and attitudinal growth as well as their schools' institutional development? Magic Box Productions, an arts organization that provides programs in the media arts to public school students in elementary and secondary schools in New York City, assumed a trifecta of responsibility when its proposal to the NYC Department of Education (DOE) was accepted for an Arts Continuum grant in the 2014-15 school year. Magic Box proposed to institute a short-term photography project in two classes, one in each of two neighboring schools, which would

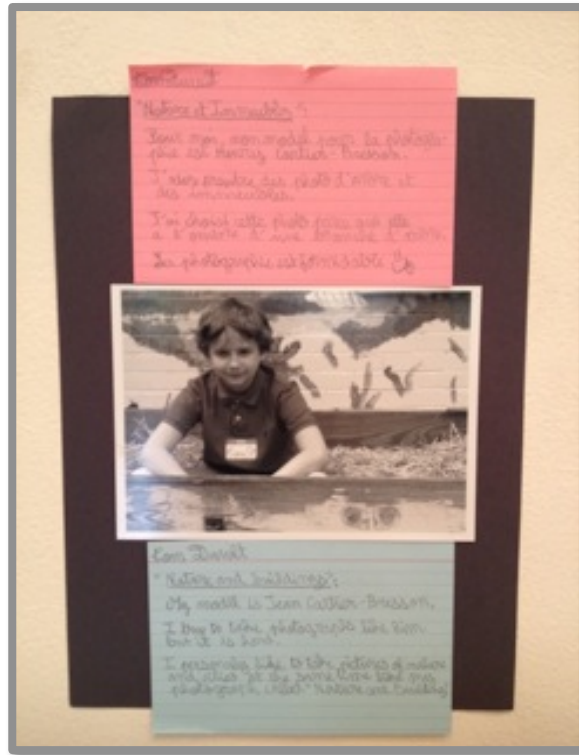
- a) encourage more collaborations between the two schools and increase the number of students from the elementary school who opted to attend the intermediate school just a block away from them, enabling continuity between arts learning in elementary school and arts learning in middle school;
- b) expand student knowledge and skills related to photography as an art form and a conveyer of information; and
- c) support the Dual Language Model of education embraced by both schools, stressing a French-English connection to students' work as novice photographers.

Like all imaginative initiatives, Magic Box used this grant opportunity to stretch its capacity to serve; in this case to support the educational goals of the Chancellor and the aspirations of two risk-taking schools eager to enrich the teaching and learning in their buildings. And, like many imaginative arts organizations, the results of this first step into a new realm revealed both triumphs and challenges as they unrolled their first attempt to achieve desired results.

Method

Following the guidance of leading scholars in the field of evaluation (Robert Stake, Elliot Eisner, Phillip Jackson), this report summarizes findings and recommendations emerging from a close study of the project's plan, activities, and 360 degree feedback from students, teachers, teaching artists (TAs) and administrators from both Magic Box and the targeted schools. The evaluator, a published writer on evaluation with 30+ years of analyzing arts education programs, observed classes in session at both schools, discussed observations with the Magic Box administrative team, prepared questionnaires for all stakeholders to complete, and examined the work produced by fifth and sixth graders over the course of six double-period instructional sessions and in a culminating exhibition at the French Consulate. Impressions from all stakeholders including students, school administrators, Dual Language teachers, teaching artists and Magic Box leadership were collected regarding the anticipated and unanticipated goals of the project. Responses were analyzed for qualitative and quantitative information; student responses were tallied to indicate itemized scoring. The methods were more compatible with formative rather than summative evaluation, given the short period of time allotted to roll out the project (from April – June), a limited number of instructional periods (2 hours, once a week, per student), and the limited number of planning sessions combining teachers and teaching artists.

A rubric was developed for reviewing student work, but time did not permit the incorporation of the rubric into this evaluation process. The rubric, once reviewed by teaching artists and classroom teachers, should be a helpful way of measuring each student's portfolio of photographs over time and could be used for future residencies.



Sample Self-Portrait and Artist Statement (French and English) by Tom Duault

ATMY/TME Description

Over the course of six sessions, held once a week, two professional photographers taught participating students how to use a digital camera to take pictures using the camera's technical capacities to meet age appropriate aesthetic criteria, as outlined in the teaching units. The instructional plan included the introduction of French and English technical and aesthetic words and phrases that complemented the style of instruction at the two Dual Language Model schools. All students were responsible for their memory cards from the first session; they took approximately 100 pictures as they tried various techniques to create successful images for eventual exhibition. The project culminated with an exceptional opportunity to show finished work in an exhibition at the French Consulate.

Two professional artists (Brian Buckley and Anya Hoyer) planned with Corrine Berthiaume and Patricia LeBoeuf (French teachers at PS 84 and MS 256 respectively), Magic Box Artistic and Executive Director, Nelle Stokes and her staff. They delivered a sequence of lessons and field excursions enabling youngsters to begin to master the art of photography. Lessons were structured and sequential according to the principles by which the photographers themselves were trained, and they were aligned with the NYC DOE *Blueprints for the Arts*. Twenty five

teams of two shared cameras, so that every student had adequate “time on camera” during each session, sufficient to take at least a dozen photos and get immediate feedback from the TAs. All lessons were written and stored on Magic Box’s Google Drive for this project.

An essential element in the project was the way the two classes were divided so half of each would work with the other half from the neighboring school. Thus, half of the PS 84 5th graders were paired with half of the MS 256 6th graders. **Each 6th grader partnered with a 5th grader, giving each group an opportunity to get to know the kids from the other school. Of particular importance was the chance for 5th graders to see that life in MS 256 was not unlike life in their beloved PS 84.** And it gave the 6th graders a chance to discover their innate leadership abilities as they worked with their younger partners.

*80.5% enjoyed working with the kids at the other school.
82.5% enjoyed working (specifically) with their partners from the other school.
66.7% of PS 84 students would recommend that rising 5th graders apply to MS 256 to continue this program.*

From student survey responses

Student Comments:

- *“Can we have the program again next year?”*
- *“I like this program, and my mom was proud of me when I showed her my pictures.”*

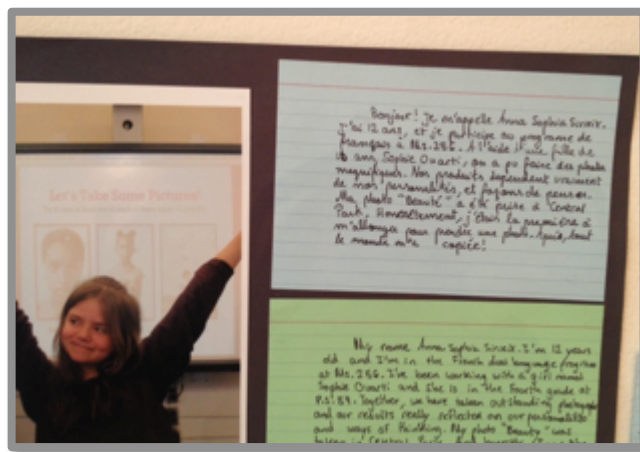
Another element was the preparation of support materials such as the French-English word list and the excellent worksheet for a photo “scavenger hunt” where teams needed to use their cameras in particular ways in order to “find” the items and shoot them as directed on the worksheet. For example, students needed to create a photo showing a “bird’s eye” view of an object (perhaps one’s feet), or a “worm’s eye” view of an object (perhaps a “bottoms up” view of a bunch of flowers.) See the appendix to this report for “The Art of Photography Scavenger Hunt.” **Through direct instruction, the actual photo shoots and the facilitated critiques, students learned to incorporate a new set of words and terms in both French and English:**

Portrait	Lens
Close Up	On/Off button
Landscape	Shutter button
High-Angle	Zoom
Low-Angle	Digital viewfinder screen
Action Shot	Functions Button
Lighting	Playback and video record buttons
Texture	Battery Cover]
Contrast	Memory Card Slot
Abstract	USB Charging slot
Body	and their French equivalents.

These words were necessary to make comments about the process of taking various photos, and students were expected to use them properly. They also lent themselves to word-study and analysis, finding the roots, prefixes and suffixes that made them meaningful.

Students were asked to shoot different kinds of pictures from concrete to more abstract images and to find abstract patterns in nature and architectural forms.

Each session began with the introduction of well-recognized professional photographers from French speaking regions of the world (France, West Africa, Haiti, etc.) Their different subjects and styles helped students familiarize themselves with many ways that a camera can tell a story in the hands of an artful photographer.



Findings

90.2% of students claimed they learned how to take better pictures with a digital camera.

From student survey responses

All responses – from students, teachers, teaching artists, school administrators and project overseers – were enthusiastic about the program. Students rated their experiences most positively as can be seen in the results of the student survey. The survey covered their evaluation of the total experience and each part (proficiency in using the camera, technical control over photographic effects, understanding aspects of composition, appreciation of photography as an art form, their ability to describe a photograph in great detail, and their knowledge of at least three professional photographers). A copy of the survey may be found in the appendix to this report.

Student comments, drawn from the survey, underscored the success of the project:

- *I really enjoyed the experience because I learned a lot about photography, and how to use a digital camera. I also met a few new kids because most of them went to my old school. I haven't seen them in 2 years, so I was glad that I got to see them again.*
- *I've enjoyed this program very much.*
- *This program was definitely helpful for better photography!*
- *Continue this program.*
- *Is there a program like this in France? Thank you for helping me learn how to use a camera.*
- *I like this program! Can we continue it next year?*
- *Thank you, it was amazing!*
- *Bigger cameras that we can keep next year.*
- *Magic Box TME was awesome. You should do it next year again without a doubt. I suggest you go outside more to take pictures.*

Teachers and TAs were asked to evaluate their roles and the program elements for supporting their work. **Here their comments were especially thoughtful and useful to Magic Box as plans for a second year of photography began to take shape.** Teachers and TAs were impressed with the quality of student work and how students' skills and styles evolved even in the relatively short residency. They were particularly helpful in pinpointing particular features to bolster or expand in a next iteration of ATMY/TME. Below are excerpts from their written feedback:

- There was a lot of vocabulary and the kids seemed to learn it well, especially the vocabulary used to describe settings and shots.
- Students learned that we can compare a regular camera to the human eye.
- Students reflected on photography as the art of "writing with light."
- Students stretched their awareness to the environment. They literally stretched their gaze and captured a diversity of landscapes.
- How to compose a portrait (head shots, mid shots, and wide shots)
- They learned to experiment with different settings.
- Difference between bird's eye and worm's eye view
- Social skills including appreciation of [working with] partners.
- Respecting materials
- Making pictures is exciting; it is in a way of self expression.

Teachers genuinely appreciated the way the residency reinforced or introduced new understandings, as identified below:

- The final exhibition was a powerful statement that, to say it briefly, the whole is more than the sum of its parts;

- That beauty is not randomly achieved;
- That techniques are a language in themselves;
- That technology may enhance some art forms.

Asked to cite the most successful lessons in the six lesson series, teachers listed the following:

- The field trip to Central Park. The students were very engaged. They had enough time to plan shots and execute them and to collaborate with their partner. It was a great setting for taking many different kinds of pictures.
- Exposure to specific techniques ... to realize that rules may have a creative purpose.

Teachers suggested some tweaking to ensure even greater impact:

- More work on composition
- More analysis of work during the series
- Linking certain strategies to solve certain challenges or to reach desired effects
- More field trips, including one to Philadelphia

Teachers were candid regarding the management of the residency:

Management was a little difficult. I think we should set clearer behavioral expectations and be sure that we insist on those behavior expectations being met. I think it would be best if both groups met on the same time on the same day. It would be less disruptive to our regular schedule. As discussed with Liz over the phone, and with Nelle during the reception at the French Consulate, [we need] to fine tune the logistics/scheduling.

Teachers reminded Magic Box that some management issues pertain to the availability of equipment and the memory cards:

Following the photography sessions in the classrooms, remember that without the cameras/memory card, all that we can do is rehearse the theory.

Teaching artists were very appreciative of the opportunity to share their expertise with the two classes. Their teaching units were detailed and ambitious, and coordinated well with the two NYC DOE Arts Blueprints (Visual Arts and Moving Image) published by the Arts Education unit of the Department of Education.

Everyone appreciated the opportunity to exhibit student work at the French Consulate on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The exhibition and reception at the Consulate punctuated the importance of the project and contributed to students' understanding of how special this opportunity was.

In mounting the photos for the exhibition, students were asked to title their work, and create artist statements in French and English, to help viewers see their intentions.



Families gather at culminating exhibition at French Embassy

Observations of the various sessions by the evaluator and the Magic Box staff identified both **anticipated and unanticipated results**, including

- how well the pairs of students got along, sharing cameras, helping to teach each other, building up each partner's confidence with deserved praise, posing and taking photographs and thus working on composition problems together, talking through their intentions, and so on;
- how easily students acquired mastery over special digital effects as introduced by their TAs;
- how thrilled students were to go to the local pocket sized park and Central Park to take pictures (landscapes, portraits, action shots, varying points of view, abstractions, etc; birds, kids, adults, in various poses and candid shots); and
- how thoughtful and incisive the critiques of their work became as the weeks passed.

Eleven Recommendations

The following recommendations stem from the data collected during the ATMY/TME project elicited from students, teaching artists, Dual Language teachers, school administrators and Magic Box leadership. They are mostly dependent upon finding more time to accommodate more of everything, more planning time, more instructional sessions, more time to explore the artistic properties of photography, more time to practice new techniques in and out of classrooms, etc. Specifically, we strongly suggest the following:

1. Expand the number of PD and classroom sessions so that there is increased time to work on composition and reflection.
2. Begin sessions in the first semester of school year so we can see whether the actual number of PS 84 students select MS 256 as one of their choices for middle school assignment.
3. Begin orientation of both artists and teachers with a review of the work produced by students in previous year. Discuss the implications of what is seen in the virtual gallery. Determine themes and refinements based on reflections about last year.

4. Spend more time with students on reflection of work done and collaboratively plan future work accordingly.
5. Help students develop a deeper understanding of the different purposes of photography (for example, commercial, journalistic, as well as fine arts) and how artistic issues may be considered, regardless of purpose of photography.
6. Plan more opportunities for “metacognitive” work. TAs need to share their thinking processes and encourage students to develop similar “internal dialogues” regarding making choices as photographers. Encourage kids to think before they shoot: what should they think about? When do you shoot first and think later?
7. Combine photos with writing as part of journaling.
8. Incorporate school-owned printers in the process so kids can see how printing affects the way photos are perceived.
9. Enlist a panel of expert photographers to participate in a reflection session following a virtual gallery stroll. Record and share with schools and parents.
10. In discussions with school principals, see if the schools can be helpful in purchasing additional cameras, memory cards, and other equipment to help propel this outstanding program to even greater impact.
11. Use a well-designed, clearly understood rubric to rate individual student portfolios. Synthesizing various rubric models to rate each child’s portfolio of photographs (Popham, Torrance, Beattie), we suggest that the rubric below might be appropriate for future photography residencies. Note that there needs to be developed consensus among TAs, MB and school staff regarding how to distinguish between the various rubric ratings.

Suggested rubric including criteria, ratings and points:

Portfolio Criteria	Very Limited Achievement (1)	Limited Achievement (2)	Sound Achievement (3)	High Achievement (4)	Very High Achievement (5)
Technical control					
Composition					
Purposeful					
Original					
Fluent					
Flexible					

Conclusion

ATMY/TME has demonstrated the power of digital photography as a vehicle for MAJOR learning, has established its utility despite its brevity and the short period of time available for planning and executing its process.

By juxtaposing the original goals of this program with findings, we can say with certainty that Magic Box’s ATMY/TME project has accomplished in a very short time demonstrable intended outcomes:

ATMY/TME Goals	Outcomes
<p>a) Encourage more collaborations between the two schools (PS 84 and MS 256) and increase the number of students from the elementary school who opted to attend the intermediate school just a block away from them;</p>	<p>Students and teachers from both schools planned, worked and socialized together throughout the course of the residency as confirmed by the participants in surveys and interviews as well as observations.</p> <p>Due to the timing of the initiative, it was impossible to determine whether the project could influence 5th graders' choices for middle school. But the positive attitudes developed toward the middle school during the program seem to indicate that should the program continue in the future, not only would the program encourage students to enroll at MS 256, but arts teaching could be enhanced at the middle school level, building upon what students learned during their elementary years.</p>
<p>b) Expand student knowledge and skills related to photography as an art form and a conveyer of information</p>	<p>Student work over the course of six weeks demonstrated an increase in technical and artistic control of the camera; every participant produced a stunning sequence of photographs as evident in the Magic Box virtual gallery. Students indicated in an individual survey their mastery of new French and English vocabulary related to their photographic assignments.</p>
<p>c) Support the Dual Language Model of education embraced by both schools, stressing a French-English connection to students' work as novice photographers.</p>	<p>Students acquired knowledge of professional photographers representing the larger French speaking regions of the world as demonstrated in their recollection of specific individuals and particular photographs that they learned to recognize during their classes.</p>

Unanticipated consequences noted by observers and participants included the forming of new inter school and in school friendships, the development of mutual respect for work well done, and the apparent increase of self confidence as shy students noticeably blossomed as their good work was recognized by peers and adults. In addition, with the recognition of officials from the French Consulate, the two schools and Magic Box contributed to a positive perception of a very impressive group of young public school students at a critical stage of their intellectual and social development.

Readers are encouraged to review the evaluation segment of Magic Box's report to the NYC DOE, appended to this report, for further information on the project's effectiveness.

Scholarly References

Donna Kay Beattie, *Assessment in Art Education*

Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*

Karin DeSantis and Abigail Housen, *A Brief Guide to Developmental Theory and Aesthetic Development*

Phillip Jackson, *The Moral Life of Schools*

W. James Popham, *Transformative Assessment and Transformative Assessment in Action*

Robert Stake, *Standards-Based and Responsive Evaluation*

Paul Torrance, *Is Creativity Teachable?*

NYC Department of Education Resources on Evaluation/Assessment

Arts Count Resources for Quality Education,

<http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/ArtsCountResources.html>

ATMY/TME Appendix

Results of student survey, itemized (Included in graphic summary)

Observation Protocol

Lessons:

 Sample Unit Description (Anya Hoyer)

Graphic Summary

Dr. Fineberg's biography