

Eye on Health: Giving Students a Voice through Photography

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this activity is to provide an opportunity for students to explore and share their view of the six domains of health through the use of photography and personal interpretive analysis. After reviewing the domains of health and receiving in-class instructions, students are given two weeks to collect photos in their environments that reflect their own interpretation of the health domains. The students then create presentations to share their views with the class. The project is evaluated using rubrics to determine if objectives were met and to assess participant satisfaction with the activity.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding how students view their surroundings may be a key element in aiding educators to more effectively influence young Americans regarding their health. Compared to past generations, American youth today are projected to die at an earlier age from chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and strokes (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2010). Armed with this knowledge, it is imperative that health educators implement innovative methods of disseminating health information that connect with our young people. Literacy theorists are reclassifying the notion of "literacy" by expanding it to embrace many venues currently familiar to our youth, including visual, electronic, and musical structures (Street, 2004). Using the new definition of "literacy," it makes sense to use young people's interests and expertise with digital media to provide new approaches for students to make connections to

school and their health (Marquez-Zenkov & Harmon, 2007).

The use of art and artistic expression has become recognized outside of the art community as an important means to facilitate education. The arts offer a unique way for students to develop listening and observation skills, become more self-aware and self-confident, and to become more creative in problem solving (Randall, 1997; McDonald, Antunez, & Gottemoeller, 2007; Stickley, 2010). These approaches allow students to engage in the analysis of their realities, their insights, and their perceptions of personal life experiences (Marquez-Zenkov & Harmon, 2007).

An innovative technique involving the arts and education, called "Photovoice", was introduced by Wang and Burris (1994), and in recent years has become popular in the health education field (Lorenz & Kolb, 2009; Baird,

2009; Fitzgerald, Bunde-Birouste, & Webster, 2009; Goodheart, Hsu, Baek, Coleman, Maresca, & Miller, 2006). This strategy engages individuals in participatory research by providing them with cameras and asking them to take photos of their community. These photos are intended to represent their own perspectives about a variety of issues that affect them. The photos help when assessing the needs of the community, opening up communication about the concerns of a community, and initiating policies of potential change (Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang & Burris, 1997). The process also creates a sense of empowerment among the participants to effect change in issues they feel strongly impact upon their lives. When used with students, Photovoice has created opportunities for personal growth and the development of personal and social identities. Strack, Magill, & McDonagh (2004) described the use of this innovative method using urban youth who were subsequently given the opportunity to identify issues that they felt directly affected their health and the health of their peers. They suggested that the Photovoice method had the potential to promote and enhance the empowerment of youth by increasing skills-based competence, by encouraging group interaction and cohesiveness, and by encouraging young people to voice their opinions and find solutions to problems that affect them (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004).

TEACHING METHOD

Purpose

This activity provides an opportunity for students to explore and share their view of the six domains of health through the use of photography and personal interpretive analysis.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this teaching idea, students will be able to:

1. Define the six domains of health.
2. Use oral and electronic techniques for communicating health education information.
3. Identify issues in the immediate environment that affect their health and the health of their peers.

Materials

The materials needed to complete this activity are copies of the photography laws for your state, student cell phones with camera

capability or disposable digital cameras (approximately \$5.99 each), and a presentation format, such as PowerPoint, or a photography program for compiling pictures into the slide show.

Target Audience

This lesson was designed for secondary school-aged students and for college students at the undergraduate level. Forums in which this activity would be most applicable include use within secondary school health classes and use within college classes such as Introduction to Health, Health Communications, and Community Health.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

The following lesson is intended to take approximately one 50 minute class time for teaching instruction (including how to use the presentation format)/lecture time, two weeks for students to complete their photography activity (outside of class time) and organize their data, a week for the instructor to process/download pictures if necessary, and three 50 minute class periods to allow individual student presentations (3-5 minutes each).

Step 1. Six Domains of Health: in a lesson plan, present students with the six domains of health (physical, spiritual, mental/intellectual, social, emotional, and environmental). Be sure to include various examples of each domain and to encourage student participation and interaction when discussing what variables of life can be included under each domain. A good source for presenting and discussing the domains of health is *The Dimensions of Health: Conceptual Model* by Helm (Helm, 2010).

Step 2. Photography Laws: Make sure to familiarize students with the laws of photography and provide them with a handout of those laws. Each state has a different set of photography laws. A good source for photography laws is: <http://www.krages.com/phoright.htm>.

Some examples of things to be aware of are:

- 1) anyone in a public place can take pictures of what they want,
- 2) public places include anything open to the public including parks, sidewalks, and malls,
- 3) if you are on private property and asked not to take pictures, you must honor the request.

Step 3. In-Class Discussion: Have students break into small groups of 4-6 students and brainstorm about what might be included in each of the six domains in their immediate environment. Instruct them to individually list the domains on paper and write down as many ideas that come to mind. Then as a group, review the lists to identify similarities and differences. Encourage them to discuss the differences as a way of expanding their current perceptions about the domains of health.

Step 4. Cameras: Most students will have cell phones with cameras allowing them to take pictures wherever they are located. If a student does not have a cell phone with a camera he/she may be given a disposable digital camera. Students can send pictures from their phone to their email and download the pictures into a presentation format. If disposable digital cameras are used the pictures may be copied to a flash drive or some other media source, downloaded to a computer and placed into a presentation format.

Step 5. The students are instructed to create a presentation arranging their photos by health domains. Each student will prepare a 3-5 minute presentation during which he/she shows the pictures that were selected and discuss why he/she felt each photo represented a particular domain. All six health domains must be covered in the presentation. Students will also describe what aspects of each domain are most important or relevant to them. For example, one student may feel exercise and working out is the most important component of the physical domain to him or her whereas another student may talk about problems with eating disorders he or she may have encountered or overcome. Encourage students to be creative in their depictions of the domains. Students can add music or personal stories to individualize the presentations.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND EVALUATION RUBRICS

The project can be assessed on two levels – achievement of the lesson objectives and participant satisfaction. A rubric for assessing the achievements of the objectives and for assigning grades (Table 1) and the second rubric is for assessing participant satisfaction

(Table 2). The second rubric allows each student to reflect upon what affect this activity had on their knowledge of the domains of health. The rubric also serves as a way in which students can express their opinions regarding the use of this creative methodology (photography) as a means for communicating health education information.

RESULTS

One hundred and thirty student volunteers from four Introductory to Health classes at a Midwestern University participated in this creative activity by using photography to explore their definition of the six domains of health during the Spring and Fall 2010 terms & Spring 2011 term. All students in each class were provided cameras and asked to photograph their perceptions of the domains of health. The students then presented Power Point presentations to the class explaining their visual choices. The assessment from participating classes resulted in the following findings:

- 1) 100% strongly agreed or agreed that this activity aided me in understanding the six domains.
- 2) 92% strongly agreed or agreed that they liked the flexibility of this project.
- 3) 96% strongly agreed or agreed that they liked the creativity of the project.
- 4) 96% strongly agreed or agreed that overall they liked the project.
- 5) 95% strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend this project be used in the future.

DISCUSSION

The results from the assessment clearly show students agreed the project was enjoyable and they gained a better understanding of the six domains of health. Students appeared comfortable expressing themselves with this medium. And, as suggested by Wang and Burris (1994) with the Photovoice method, this project engaged the students in exploring their environment and provided an avenue to present their unique perspective on a variety of health issues. The use of technology appeared to empower the students. Students typically reserved in classroom were often the most creative and outspoken when presenting their projects. The photographs clearly gave the

classroom instructor a better understanding of how students view their surroundings and may be a key element in aiding educators to more effectively influence young Americans regarding their health.

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Table 1. Eye on Health Power Point Presentation Rubric

Student's Name: _____

Date: _____

	NO RESPONSE	NOT COMPETENT	MINIMALLY COMPETENT	CLEARLY COMPETENT	EXCEPTIONAL	SCORE/ COMMENTS
Points Possible	0	15-16	17-19	20-22	23-25	
Domains	No presentation given.	Discussed 2 or less domains and/or domains were not covered well and did not relate to assignment.	Discussed 4 or less domains and/or presentation related to the assigned topic, but gives too much irrelevant or tangential information.	Discussed 5-6 domains and/or presentation related to assigned topic, and all information is relevant.	Discussed all 6 domains and presentation is clearly competent, but also ties in to course material. Shows relevance to the course.	
Information Quality	No presentation given.	Incorrect information given.	Information given is correct, but insufficient detail. May have correct but irrelevant information.	Information is correct, detailed, and relevant.	Information is correct, relevant, and exceptionally detailed.	
Presentation Style	No presentation given.	Much too long or too short. Delivery style compromises presentation effectiveness.	Presentation may be too long or too short. Some distracting body language or word choices. Overall presentation competent.	Presentation within time limit. Minimal distractions. Makes some attempt to establish rapport with audience.	Clearly competent, and beyond minimum requirements (visual aids, etc.). Established good rapport with audience.	
Integration of Visual Media	None used.	Media used but not integrated.	Media integrated into presentation.	Media integrated and appropriately used in conjunction with the presentation content.	Media clearly enhances the quality of the presentation.	

Total score: _____/100

Additional comments:

Table 2. Eye on Health Project Assessment Rubric

Please read and answer the following questions. Please do not leave any questions blank. The next set of questions includes items that ask your opinion about the project. Please check the box that best gives your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Eye on Health project aided me in understanding the six domains.					
I liked the flexibility of the Eye on Health Project (vs. a term paper etc.)					
I liked the creativity of the Eye on Health project.					
Over all, I liked the Eye on Health project.					
I would recommend this project be continued in future classes.					
Total					

Additional Comments (If you have anything you would like to add about the project please state below):