



The Thematic Photobook System: A Teaching Strategy for Exceptional Children

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Abstract

The Thematic Photobook System is a teaching strategy that uses an interpersonal approach to involve and encourage a child to participate in producing photobooks of specific themes to facilitate desired learning or behavioral objectives. A thematic photobook is a tool which integrates a number of educational or therapeutic photo activities focused on a certain theme to help a child to attempt increasingly challenging tasks. A finished photobook may be used as a further learning tool. It may also stimulate the creation of additional photobooks on other themes which facilitate further objectives. The article gives examples of educational and behavioral goals achieved by exceptional children who were involved in the system. It describes the components of the teaching strategy that characterize the system. Advantages of this holistic system over using single photo activities and potential applications are suggested.

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phototherapy

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A picture is worth a thousand words, and sometimes, as in the case of exceptional children, worth many more. In her book, *Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism* (2006), Temple Grandin writes, “One of the most profound mysteries of autism has been the remarkable ability of most autistic people to excel at visual spatial skills while performing so poorly at verbal skills” (p. 4). Kimball, Kinney, Taylor, and Stromer (2003) note, “Today, where children with disabilities are concerned, the classroom that isn’t adorned with some form of individualized visual supports seems to be the exception” (p. 40). As a source of visual information, the use of camera work and photography generally has been shown helpful in achieving both educational and therapeutic goals. (Close, 2007; Fryrear, 1980; Hunsberger, 1984; Stewart, 1979; Weiser, 1999,).

In a recent article appearing in a journal on photography with exceptional children, Carnahan (2006) gave the children cameras, had them take photographs, and then had them share them with the group. She notes, “Decreasing the reliance on verbal instruction and increasing the use of visual learning materials created opportunities for students with autism to engage in joint attention activities and increase attention to learning materials” (pp 44-45).

Carnahan’s use of photography is similar to the camera practices of others who have used this modality with exceptional children. Taking photographs, posing for photographs, and talking about the photographs have been the main strategies employed to facilitate learning objectives (Germain, 2004;

Geyer, 2005; Gosclewski. 1975; Nelson-Gee, 1975). Sometimes pictures serve simply as a means of soothing the child, as Miller & Ellen-Miller (1989) observed; they “could keep him calm by presenting him with colorful, high-contrast pictures of animals...not too big. Invariably, looking at the picture and holding it would calm him down” (p. 275). As commonly practiced, once the photo activity has been completed and the educational or therapeutic process engaged, there is no further use for the photos.

The Thematic Photobook System that we describe in this article combines photo activities into a coherent, individualized sequence of learning tasks to produce a special product, a photobook expressing a certain theme. The system relies upon using an interpersonal strategy that channels the child’s observable interests into photo activities to facilitate the completion of tasks of increasing challenge and import. The process of creating this product allows the achievement of educational or behavioral goals beyond what is traditionally achieved with individual photo activities.

Furthermore, the final creative product, the photobook, has value in itself, as it can be used later to achieve other goals. This integrated approach could reveal the potential of exceptional children to have a more creative involvement in their world. We can better describe the strategic nature of the system by first presenting examples of some achievements that have been made through its use.

Examples of Thematic Photobook System Kate: An Example of Learning Concepts

The Thematic Photobook System is a teaching strategy that uses an interpersonal approach to involve and encourage a child to participate in producing photobooks of certain themes to facilitate desired learning or behavioral objectives.

Kate is a twelve-year-old girl with physical and intellectual disabilities limited in her movement and ability to perform daily activities. Although her health is fragile, her spirit is very strong. She loves to participate in life and has many interests. She loves to learn new things and one of her favorite learning tools is a camera.

When we worked with Kate, our goal was to leverage Kate's fascination with the camera and pictures into a productive learning process. The prospect of being able to go outside to take pictures enticed her to put up with her feeding and therapy. Camera work was an effective reward for her. It motivated her to make efforts she would not ordinarily make. For example, she would get out of her stroller (which she normally wouldn't do), walk in search of a beautiful flower, and then bend over in order to take a better picture of it (see Photo 1).

One of the photobook projects she worked on was on the theme of shapes. Kate spent her time outside, working on finding different shapes in her neighborhood—a

round flower, an oval bush—and taking pictures of them. She pasted the pictures into her photobook and wrote the words “square” or “round” next to each photo. Kate’s work with these specific words, “round” and “square,” helped her understand their meaning as well as be able to read them.

Because Kate was learning to read and count in school, we incorporated those tasks into the camera work. To help her learn to count, we asked her to photograph something that appeared in twos and another that appeared in threes, such as two flowers and three bushes. After she found these objects, she photographed them. Later, she pasted these pictures into her photobook, where she counted out loud: “one, two, three” as she pointed to her pictures of one tree, two trees, and so on.

In a later photobook project, on the theme of the properties of things, she returned to her neighborhood to photograph a “big” tree and a “small” tree, or a “tall” tree and a “short,” one, thus learning new categories of abstraction.

Photo 1: Kate is taking pictures for a thematic photobook about flowers



In her class, the teacher presented to the students a photobook on the theme of shapes. She showed the children that shapes were all around them: there was a round bush and a square window. “These shapes are in our neighborhood,” she explained. “This photobook, which demonstrates shapes, was made by one of you,” pointing to Kate. The other students applauded Kate. She was very proud of herself and smiled as she thought of those happy times she spent outside in the world with her camera in hand. The camera had become her ally and her partner, making it possible for her to enter the world of education from another angle. The process elicited new abilities in Kate that gave her a sense of self-worth and promoted her fascinating and brave personality.

Handling a camera presented a certain challenge to Kate that stimulated the development of various skills relevant to exceptional children, including hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. Looking through the viewfinder promoted focusing and paying attention (McLennan, 1997; Mayberry, 2000). Kate had to take a picture of the same tree three times before she was able to include the entire tree in her photograph.

Choosing a scene to photograph prompts awareness of the environment, knowing one’s preferences, and making decisions and acting upon them (Nelson-Gee, 1975). In the beginning of our work, Kate showed no initiative in deciding what pictures to take, but the more we worked, the more she showed personal preferences (indicating the flowers she liked or her favorite leaves). The

more obvious her preferences became to her, the more initiative she took, as she seemed to be more aware and confident of her choices. As further evidence that her confidence was increasing, when we began work, she answered most questions with “I don’t know,” but, as we progressed, her answers became more specific and descriptive, better indicating her choices.

Kate’s work with the camera enhanced her communication and cooperation skills, valuable attributes for exceptional children. There is a feedback loop, especially in the context of instant or digital photography,

where the actions going into taking the picture lead rapidly to the resulting picture, and this loop can foster a motivational situation in which children are eager to work with helpers to obtain better pictures or pictures that conform more closely to their intent. For example, in trying to take a picture of a big house that she really liked, Kate found that the task was not easy; however, she was using a digital camera, which provided her with immediate feedback. With each attempted picture, she could see her mistake and try to fix it with the next picture. It took her several attempts before she was completely satisfied. Because she was so involved with the task, she didn’t notice that it was somewhat of a tedious process. In a beautiful, outdoor, fresh-air environment, viewing something she found very beautiful and wanting to have a picture of it for herself, she developed perseverance.

Working with the photos, cutting them out, pasting them in a book, and labeling them or writing on them facilitate reading

A thematic photobook is a tool which integrates a number of educational or therapeutic photo activities, focusing on a certain theme, to help a child attempt increasingly challenging tasks.

(Nelson-Gee, 1975, Schudson, 1975; Tarulli, 1998), and elicits communication and discussion, both with the teacher or adult and with peers (Barber-Smith & Reilly, 1977). When Kate created labels for her pictures, and then matched the labels with the pictures, she learned to read these labels aloud. This way, the photo activities facilitated the development of language and other skills. The system can also be used to facilitate behavioral change, as we'll see in the example of Mike.

Mike: An Example of Behavioral Change

Mike is a seven-year-old creative and mischievous boy. When we first started working with him, Mike was not familiar with a camera, but he loved to look at and talk about family pictures. He also loved talking about the interesting little constructions he made, and was reluctant to destroy them. Using these ideas, we showed Mike that photography could be very useful to him. We suggested that he preserve his constructions in the form of a photograph. Mike liked the idea,

and was inspired to learn how to handle a camera and use it for that purpose.

Later, in order to deal with Mike's inappropriate behavior, we introduced the concept of white and black folders. If we observed Mike engaged in a bad behavior (such as yelling at his little sister or throwing his toys around) we took pictures of him engaged in that behavior and then described to him an alternative good behavior (such as hugging his sister or putting his toys away) and asked him to perform it in front of the camera. "Bad" pictures would go into the black folder and the "good" ones went into the white folder. Mike participated willingly in helping to create those folders—cutting pictures and pasting them onto the pages in the folder (see Photo 2). Together we would look at the pictures in his two folders. Clearly Mike liked the way he looked in the pictures from his white folder and loved to talk about them, but didn't like the way he looked in the pictures from his black folder.

Photo 2: Mike is preparing the material for presentation in his school



We were also able to use Mike's desire for attention. We organized a "home school" for his siblings and favorite toys. Mike was the "teacher," educating his "students" about different kinds of behaviors using the pictures from his folders. Slowly, Mike became interested in teaching his students other things and found he needed to take different pictures about these new themes. One such theme was about the "neighborhood," so Mike took pictures of his favorite park and a few stores where they went shopping.

Whereas Mike's attention was usually wild and roaming, having to focus on the details of the camera work helped him calm down. He had to pay attention to compose his pictures carefully. Composing the pictures promoted paying attention to scenes and making decisions about what is viewed. Deciding on the moment at which to push the button to take the picture requires a certain confidence and an ability to act quickly upon a decision. Mike liked cats and enjoyed capturing interesting images of cats with his camera wherever he saw one. This work required his undivided attention and patience, as well as a timely response. These small skills are likely to transfer to other situations (Nelson-Gee, 1975).

Mike's parents got into the act. At weekly dinners, they would look through the black and white folders. They praised Mike as they began seeing more and more photos in the white folder and fewer and fewer photos in the black folder. The parents also showed interest in Mike's other photo work. Eventually, Mike became the "family photographer," taking photos that portrayed the interesting things that happened to the members of his family. Mike especially liked

to show these photos to his father, who worked a lot and couldn't participate much in the family life.

Mike was happy and proud of the responsible role that he had begun to play in the family. Mike enjoyed walking with a camera in his hands. At a family wedding, he received a lot of respectful attention from guests. People enjoyed posing for him. His social personality and talking ability was finding an acceptable place for expression. The results of using the Thematic Photobook System with Mike support Geyer's (2005) observation that, "Using photos ... can help nurture a young student's developing self-concept and self-esteem. Photos can also encourage children to celebrate diversity and appreciate the unique qualities that each person possesses" (p. 57).

The success of the Thematic Photobook System depends upon the strategies used in facilitating the production of its essential tool, the photobook. Now that a couple of examples have been provided, it will be useful to describe those strategies in more detail.

Strategies Used in the Thematic Photobook System

There are many aspects to working with the camera and photos. Each aspect has some potential benefit for the learners. What the Thematic Photobook System adds to the benefits ascribed to various individual photo activities is the ability to create a progressive learning environment involving almost all photo activities, sequenced according to the individual child's abilities, interests, and learning needs. As the examples show, it can help exceptional children learn a variety of skills and shape a vari-

A finished photobook may be used as a tool for further learning. It may also stimulate the creation of additional photobooks on other themes, facilitating the pursuit of other objectives.

ety of behaviors through the systematic presentation of photo activities that motivate the child to navigate challenges of increasing difficulty.

To facilitate the child's progress along a developmental sequence, we emphasize that these photo activities should be chosen and arranged to match the child's individual level of functioning. The creation of the photobook from these activities serves as the focus and incentive for the child's ongoing learning process. The individual design of a specific thematic photobook program for a given child depends upon a number of factors. What follows are some strategic considerations for the facilitation of learning goals in creating thematic photobooks.

Carefully Engaging the Child in Photo Activities to Create Inspiration

If a child is familiar with a camera and enjoys taking pictures, the adult can work from there. On the other hand, if a child doesn't have any experience or interest in the camera or pictures, then the adult's first task is to create a motivation for the photo activities themselves, building on whatever is currently motivating the child that might inspire his/her interest in photo activities.

In our example with Mike, he was very motivated to preserve his "constructions," therefore taking pictures of these arrangements of his favorite objects inspired him to learn how to handle the camera. Another child saw an interesting object in somebody's front yard and was motivated to use the camera to "bring home to mom" a picture of what had captured his interest.

Motivators can also be invented. Creating a present for the mother's birthday is

often a good motivator. The adult can plant an idea in the child's mind with a comment such as, "Your mother would be very happy with a great present you can make from all these pictures!" Such ideas can motivate a child to get involved in the photo activities. Alternatively, the adult might ask, "may I take your picture to know you better?" The adult might also ask the child to take the adult's picture. At the next meeting, or, if using an instant camera, when the photograph appears, the adult might suggest, "Let's glue these pictures together." The adult might suggest to the child that it would be good to write a description on the photos, such as: "Peter and Anna are spending time together." These kinds of things are good motivators.

Some children, however, can neither handle a camera, nor pose for pictures. It can be very difficult to motivate such children, but the use of the camera and pictures can be used to entice them in other ways or to otherwise elicit a response. For example, in our work with a withdrawn, autistic, non-verbal

boy, we found that we could get his attention by using a camera. Even though he was completely in his own world, we were able to achieve some eye contact and even get him to smile for a picture. This simple activity can serve as the beginning of the creation of a bridge between a child and an adult, and an opportunity for further communication and learning. As Schudson (1975) noted, "the photograph serves as a non-threatening medium of communication" (p. 225). The photograph is clearly a non-invasive and delicate medium by which an adult can approach an autistic child.

The initial involvement, when it's gentle and without pressure, is the key to get-

They learn to take turns and to collaborate. These are not insignificant achievements for such children.

ting the process started. If the adult detects any negativity or resistance on the child's part, the adult should gently refocus the child's attention to something stimulating and pleasant. If the enjoyment factor is attended to, then, later in the process, when the child is sufficiently involved, the adult can explore tasks that gently encourage the child to go beyond the current level of functioning.

Choosing a Photobook Theme Tailored to the Child's Personality and Interests

The adult's strategy for initiating the process must be individualized and tailored to the child's level of functioning, the child's personality, interests, and preferences, as well as the learning goals that the adult has for that child. In our examples, while Mike was socially very active, Kate was quiet and compliant. When Mike was given a camera, he took the initiative and started taking pictures of living things, such as a cat or a girl, and later enjoyed taking pictures of people at a wedding. Kate, on the other hand, paid more attention to nature, so she felt more comfortable photographing trees and flowers. Mike's program, therefore, involved photo activities focused on social activities while Kate's program focused more on taking pictures of her favorite things. The choice of theme is a very important component of the process of creating and maintaining the child's motivation.

Choosing themes based on learning goals in certain subject matter is useful. To help Kate learn more about trees and flowers, we took her for walks through the neighborhood, out in nature, and to a botanical garden to look at a variety of examples. As we looked at various trees or flowers, we encouraged her to take pictures of those trees or flowers that she liked. It's a good opportunity for the adult to ask the child about such preferences, to encourage conversation, and to

help the adult observe where the children are focusing their attention. Maybe one child is attending to size, or maybe to shape or to color, or perhaps he/she cannot explain the choice. Here the adult can help the child learn to identify specific attributes of a subject, and these attributes might become subjects themselves for activities in that child's photobook program. For example, we suggested to Kate, "Let's take a picture of that *big* tree. This tree is *big* like the tree which is next to your house." Similarly, one might suggest, "Let's take pictures only of *red* flowers."

There are endless possibilities here, which can be inspired by the child's motivation, attention patterns, or goals for learning, and implemented by the adult's imagination. The child can learn spatial relations, such as left versus right, with instructions like, "Let's take pictures of those flowers on the left," or "Let's take a picture of the tree on the right side of the house." We can even teach a child about taking turns, simply by playing the game, "You will take one picture, then I'll take one, then you take one again... and so on."

Another type of theme concerns the child's self-awareness. It is much easier to explore with a child certain attitudes or behaviors when the child can see his or her own self in a picture demonstrating that attitude or engaged in that behavior. We've observed that children with special needs often hug pictures of themselves, showing how they identify with these portraits. Asking the child, "What is your favorite activity?" or "What activity is difficult for you?", and then taking a picture of that child while engaged in that activity, is an easy way to begin a thematic sequence relating to the child's behaviors, whether favorite, troublesome, or desired. Looking at these photos can stimulate discussion with the child, and the adult can learn what situations

the child encounters that create such feelings. Those discoveries can lead to the development of themes for further photo opportunities.

Sometimes using make-believe situations (such as stories) as subjects for photographs can help develop a theme on developing personality traits. A shy child, for example, could be the hero of a photobook containing photos of the child role playing various heroic actions. A child who is afraid of birds could be the character in a story about someone who likes birds and talks about them.

We feel that, in pursuing any thematic photobook program, it is better not to create lesson plans in advance. It is much more effective to allow the lesson plans to emerge spontaneously in response to the child's attitude and behaviors. Very often, the adult will be surprised at the ideas that the child comes up with on their own. It helps the adult to see the child from a new perspective based on what the child suggests or initiates, and that can be very important in further work with that child. One strategic factor, related to the learning goals that we have found important, is for the adult to be prepared to stand back and grant the child as much initiative as possible in the activities.

Creating a Progressive Learning Environment

The adult's goal is to create an environment in which the child can learn the most. Producing thematic photobooks presents many such opportunities, because there are numerous photo activities involved in producing a photobook that an adult can use to involve the child.

Depending upon the level of function-

ing, the child initially may be able to participate directly in only some activities or only a portion of the activities, while requiring the adult to perform the others. As the child progresses through the program, the adult may notice that the child is ready to assume some of the duties that the adult had been performing. The adult should promptly incorporate that new skill into the program and then build upon that new skill to progress the child further.

We found that it is important to create a progressive learning environment by constantly presenting small challenges or something new to learn. If an activity or a task is too easy, it can be very boring for the child; if it's too difficult, the child can also lose interest. The ideal activity would be just a little bit more complicated than the usual level of that child's functioning. Having to stretch a little can add some element of learning and satisfac-

tion.

In the beginning, photography and the camera are generally sufficient to capture the child's attention. To build upon that spark of motivation, the adult should try to be more attuned to the child's personality to find the avenues that will keep the child's interest and will allow the child to function best. For example, we observed in Mike's case that he found it very stimulating to pretend to be a teacher and to perform in front of an audience. Therefore we approached his photobook program in such a way that it included many opportunities for him to present material in front of others. That stimulated a need for him to create new photobooks as well as required him to learn new things. Recording family events eventually made Mike happy and proud of his role of "family photographer,"

The main purpose is to motivate the children to participate in the photo activities.

positively affecting his behavior and self-esteem. In our work with Kate, we discovered she loved nature, and enjoyed looking at trees, bushes, and flowers, so we began to go for walks more often and took along her camera. From these outings, we began creating thematic photobooks on subjects that stimulated her development. First, we distinguished simple shapes, using trees and bushes as learning material. From there, we chose other attributes to study, things that make one tree look different than another, to help her develop her perceptual, cognitive and verbal abilities, and for her to better define her preferences. In the beginning of our work with her, Kate's descriptions of objects were rather limited. When asked to describe a flower, for example, she would only say "pretty flower." After a period of working with photographs, labels and descriptions, her vocabulary got much larger. When asked the same question about a flower, she would say "It's a beautiful flower. It's so small! I like the color red. It smells so good!"

Above all, the most important consideration is that of *enjoyment*. The joy of doing the activity should be primary while any possibility learning should be secondary. This way, the adult can create many different activities focused on the child's development of a particular skill, or conceptual learning, and be assured of the child's participation.

Creating the Thematic Photobook as Opportunities for New Discoveries

The process of creating the photobook consists of taking and posing for pictures, discussing the pictures, sorting the pictures, placing the pictures in a book, writing things in the book related to the pictures, and decorating the book. As the process continues with the adult attempting to involve the child in as many of these activities as possible, the chil-

dren will vary on which of these activities they enjoy or are able to perform. Some children's participation may be limited to posing for pictures and doing simple tasks related to putting the pictures into the photobook.

In the cases we have discussed, Mike became very enthusiastic about taking pictures, and access to the camera was a powerful motivator or reinforcement for him, but he was reluctant to do those parts of the work that required patience, such as cutting or gluing pictures. He did enjoy using the paper cutter and hole punch, so we used that interest to involve him further in working on his photobook. Kate, on the other hand, enjoyed posing for pictures, and already had some camera skills, but, unlike Mike, she really enjoyed the tedious process of cutting the photos, gluing them in the photobook, and writing titles for them. She became fascinated with making decorations for her photobooks, and, in response, we provided her with new stencils and different styles of lettering to cultivate her interest in making each photobook an exciting process of discovery.

Using the Thematic Photobook to Create Motivation for Further Participation

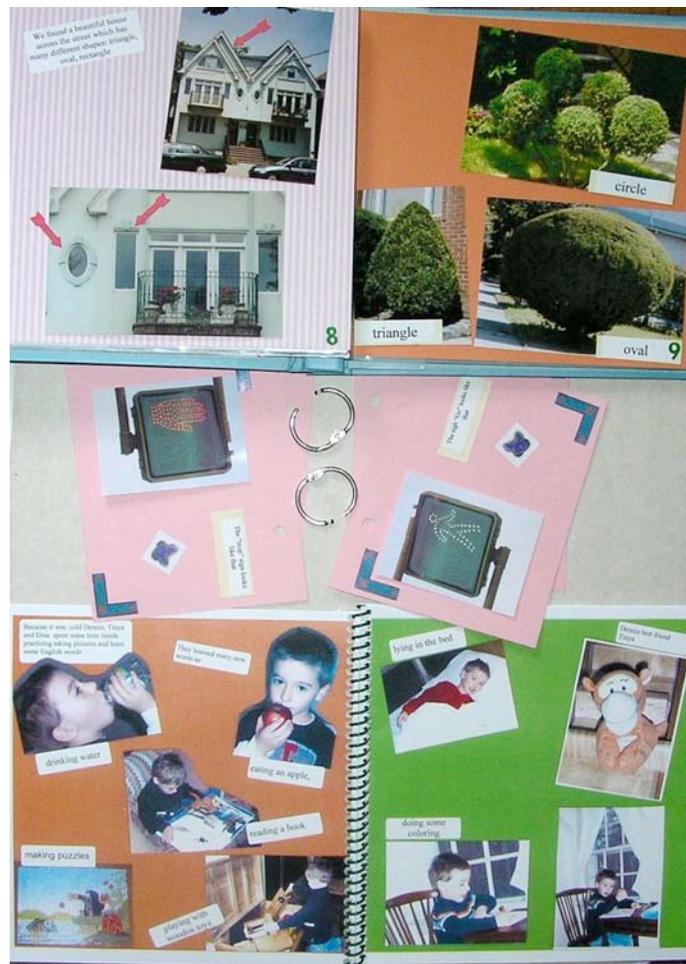
The uses of a photobook are diverse, just as the uses of photography are diverse. The main purpose is to motivate the children to participate in the photo activities so that the desired learning goals can be achieved. As the photobook begins to take form, looking at it can be a pleasure for the children. Furthermore, if the children see that the parents, or other people that they communicate with, enjoy the photobook and are proud of the children's accomplishments, this approval and admiration can possibly encourage the children to participate in further photobook projects involving more challenging learning opportunities. Such was the case with Mike.

Kate's perception, that her classmates were using the photobooks to learn new things, was a source of great pleasure for her and served to motivate her further.

Besides serving as a source of pleasure and pride for the child, reviewing the photobook with the child presents its own learning opportunities. It is a focus for conversation with the child. The adult can ask questions about the photos to stimulate the child's verbal interaction. Words can be written as captions next to the photos, and the child can practice reading them. Photobooks created

around themes involving the learning of specific self-help skills, such as dressing oneself, can serve as a means of reviewing these skills and can even become an instructional book for the child to use in practicing those skills. If the photobook is not permanently bound, but held together in a ring binder, individual pages can be separated and used as cues. Learning how to wash dishes or do laundry can be facilitated by the sequence of the photos, reminding the child of the correct sequence of the tasks. (see Photo 3, in the middle).

Photo 3: Examples of Thematic Photobooks: (top) in the form of a scrapbook, (middle) a set of separate pages bound together with book rings, and (bottom) a professionally bound photobook.



Interaction: an Important Source of Learning

There have been many references to the quality of interaction between the adult and the child. The Thematic Photobook System is designed to facilitate a long, productive interaction. In the beginning, the important thing is to create a bond between the child and the adult, giving interactions the feeling of an exciting journey. During the program, the adult and child work together on an interesting project and their interaction introduces opportunities for them to assume various roles. As the adult engages the child to help in the creation process, the child can begin assuming more of a partner role, taking on more responsibility while collaborating, and, hopefully, performing more activities independently. The social learning effect of the Thematic Photobook System is an important contribution. Besides creating a variety of photobooks with individual children, we have also developed a significant number in a group setting. Although the details of applications in a group setting don't fit in this discussion, we would like to mention here some of our observations. In those situations, the emphasis on interaction shifted from being between student and teacher to being between the children themselves, allowing them to learn much from one another. We have observed that children learn about themselves from one another in terms of their individual activity preferences while, at the same time, seeing how each child contributes something needed for the whole. They also learn to take turns and to collaborate. These are not insignificant achievements for such children.

Advantages of the Thematic Photobook System

One might wonder if the system described here has any advantages over the

many simple and discrete photo activities described in the literature, such as having the child pose for a picture and then discussing it, or having the child take some photographs for discussion, but there are a number of advantages that lend themselves to incorporating the various activities into a single, larger project. One advantage is that the system creates and maintains the child's motivation, allowing the adult to encourage increasingly challenging learning tasks for the child. Another advantage is that the themes of the photobook projects create a learning focus that enables the child to grasp more of the "total concept" being explored. Pursuing the theme in the sequence of photo activities enables the child to create cognitive structures for better understanding of the thematic content being learned. Mike learned the concept of how his behavior could help him be a more meaningful member of his family. Kate learned how to recognize and discuss the shapes and other attributes of various objects. Her photobooks helped her to become aware of her own preferences and increased her self-confidence.

Another advantage of the Thematic Photobook System is its creation of a meaningful structure for an ongoing relationship between the adult and the child. It allows the adult to perceive opportunities to encourage the child to make yet another step in learning new skills, discussing and improving them to create greater levels of personal satisfaction. It becomes a socializing tool that produces products of learning that have value in themselves.

Finally, we should also note that this system encourages the adult to find ways to help children discover more and more of their latent abilities. Exceptional children often have exceptional abilities, yet how to detect, encourage and manifest these abilities remains a challenge for our profession. The

Thematic Photobook System can make a meaningful contribution to this ongoing endeavor.

As D. S. Zwick (1978) explained it, Photography, by its reproductive, communicative, and creative nature, is a subjective representation of reality. It is a process which can enable an individual to actively pursue a better understanding of himself. He can concretely clarify, in pictures, his unique response to the environment. The camera, itself, is not a causal agent; rather, it is a tool that may lead to an increase in the appreciation of one's Self as he actively exists in the world. (p. 135)

We have found that the Thematic Photobook System allows exceptional children to prove that, with regard to Zwick's observation, they are not an exception.

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