

TAKING GOOD ACADEMICS PHOTOS

Students spend most of their school day in classes. But photos of those classes can be incredibly dull. (How many pictures of kids sitting in desks do you want to see in your yearbook?) Taking a moment to think about how to shoot academics photos can help make these photos interesting and informative.

The biggest thing you can do to get good academic photos is have good communication with teachers and classmates. If they are doing something “fun” in class (a debate, a socratic circle, an experiment, a field trip, a guest speaker...), you need to know about it in advance so you can take pictures!

THE TECHNICAL STUFF

Check to make sure you have a SD card in the camera before you leave the room. Seriously.

LOOK FOR EMOTION, ACTION OR REACTION. Every photo should have one or more of these elements!

Get close! You either physically have to get close to your subject, or you need to bring a telephoto lens. Otherwise, you aren't going to be able to see the emotion, action, or reaction.

In most cases, use the AV mode (shutter priority): Unless you are using a tripod, do not ever take pictures with a shutter speed less than 1/160. This will eliminate shake.

SHOOT HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL PHOTOS! Turn the camera! This gives the page designers options.

If you don't want to use flash, you need to take a f2.8 lens so you can get enough light without it.

After the first photo, check the image. This is your chance to make sure things are the way they are supposed to be. There is very little worse than a SD card full of images that are unusable because of technical issues.

Is it too dark? Is it too light? If so, adjust either the ISO setting or the shutter speed.

Is the image blurry? If so, adjust the shutter speed.

Stay long enough to become invisible. Very rarely can you take good photos if you are in a room for 2-3 minutes. You need to spend enough time in the room so that the kids (and teacher) forget that you are there and relax.

No “posed” photos! We don't use pictures of people looking at the camera, or who are obviously making a silly face. If someone won't stop looking directly at the camera, tell them firmly but politely that you can't take a picture of them unless they get back to work and ignore you. A long lens can sometimes help with this, because it's harder to tell who you shooting.

THE COMPOSITION STUFF

Good composition can help transform what might be a ho-hum subject into an interesting, memorable photo.

- **RULE OF THIRDS!!** Use your viewfinder to set this up as you are taking pictures!
- Leading Lines can add interest
- Framing can add interest, too.
- Angle UP (from beneath the subject looking up, like kneeling or sitting on the ground)
- Angle DOWN (from above the subject looking down, like standing on a chair)
- Try to avoid a distracting background (shallow depth of field can help if you can't move to get an angle with less distraction)

MUST-HAVE PHOTOS

A successful visit to a classroom should result in no fewer than 50 photos. Every batch of academics photos should include as many of the following photos as possible (and most of them should be possible every time you visit a classroom):

- Photos where you can see the student's face AND the assignment/task (angle up or down if necessary)
- A teacher offering help to an individual student and/or to a group (answering questions, reviewing work...)
- Think-pair-share, small group work, or other cooperative learning (again, angle up or down if necessary so it's obvious what is being worked on)
- Animated class discussions (hand raised, animated expression, talking with hands...)
- Teacher engaged in active teaching (at the board, gesturing...that sort of thing).
- Photos of individual subjects
- Photos of 2-3 subjects (all students, students and teacher)
- Photos taken from different angles (not all straight on from standing level)