

Take compelling photos with your phone

Improving engagement with your messages through great photos

“A picture is worth a thousand words.”

English idiom

“...but some may be worth a little more or less.”

Carol Tilstra Nash

Take classroom photos with your phone.

Pictures (nearly) always increase viewing for messages. The suggestions here are not a photography tutorial--they are tips for taking photos for digital media. Photos for print media will have additional requirements.

Smiling faces are good. Happy, active faces are better.

Which photo does a better job of promoting your school? (Let me answer that for you.) The left-hand photo is stronger because it shows students doing something that clearly has their attention and interest. The right-hand photo, while charming, could be used by any kind of organization.



May the light (like the wind) be always at your back.

Keep the sun or your classroom windows behind you, not behind your students. Strong light behind your students is both distracting and often makes their faces dark and hard to see. (Although in the left-hand photo the student's face is still easy to see, the big white area behind him is where a viewer's eye will go first.) The right-hand photo, while not abiding by the letter of the law, has fabulous lighting on the student's face.



Simple is good--for both foregrounds and backgrounds.

Try to simplify everything in the photo as much as you can so the focus is clearly on the face and activity of the student(s). Cleopatra would be much more compelling without the white object in front of her. And in the right-hand photo, although each of the girls is clearly engaged with the teacher and the book, there is so much visual clutter in the background that it is hard to notice.



Cropping can be your friend--although it's faster and easier to take the photo close up to start with.

When all else fails, see if you can crop out problems. The bottom photo is stronger because it simplifies the background and foreground, and gets rid of the over exposed window in the back (although it didn't improve the focus or the over exposed table behind them).

Tip: Avoid using the zoom on your phone. Most American phones do not have optical zoom and you will often end up without enough data to reproduce well.



Delegating: Photography and posting photos on your social media and/or website can be delegated to volunteer parents and/or teachers. For parents, you'll have to let them know when you are planning presentations or experiments or other photo-friendly activities. But there is a lot of great stuff that happens unscheduled (like the photo above) and you or your teachers will be the only adult around.

Credits: Although I don't know the names of all the photographers, thank you to Chico Oaks, Foothills and Paradise for the demonstration photos.

Binder tab: Ongoing (in front of the January tab)

School size: All