



A TSE (“Through Students’ Eyes”) Top 10 Keys for Project Success

#1: R&R

Take the time to build *rapport* and develop *relationships* with the students who are participating in the project.

#2: Cameras and Computers

Find access to cameras (to take pictures) and computers (to view and print pictures and to draft reflections). Lending students cameras is key—they need to take these into their worlds beyond school if we are to hope they’ll be honest about what they think about school.

#3: It’s a 1:1 Thing

Take the time and create the structures to allow A LOT of 1:1 time with individual students. They cannot—and often will not—reflect and compose in the ways they are capable without this 1:1 attention.

#4: Institutional Support

These sorts of projects are unique, so schools and universities are cautious. Pictures can seem like a dangerous medium to administrators. Show potential benefactors examples from previous TSE projects—these are almost universally compelling. Think about foundations’ “discretionary” funds.

#5: Stay True to Justice

We’ve engaged in this work because we know school doesn’t matter in the same to many of our students—and their families and communities—that it does to youth who traditionally find success in school. We are working to challenge this entrenched injustice: let’s be open about our mission.

#6: Listen to the Youth

We’re amazed on nearly a daily basis at our students’ perceptions and perspectives. Forgive daily, ask first, make no assumptions, and work on eliciting youths’ ideas. Persistence is everything.

#7: Obtain Consent from the World

Before, during, and after you engage youth in this work, seek out permissions from everyone who might be impacted by these images and reflections. We’ve had the most success getting permissions from photographers and photograph subjects AFTER the fact.

#8: Make Friends with Your Local Techie

Enough said.

#9: Feed ‘Em

Out of respect for their time, out of an awareness that youth may not always have eaten or eaten something healthy, out of the simple motivation that is food, based on the awareness that breaking bread (or donuts) together brings us closer...feed ‘em and they will come.

#10: Pay ‘Em

Out of respect for their time, because they are often working to support themselves and families, to encourage the notion that school is part of that economic equation that youth won’t be able to avoid in the future, and because it feels amazing to give a young adult cash for making art and writing...pay ‘em and even more will come.