



How to Take Great Pictures For Your School Website

Your website is the full time, 24/7, welcome mat for your school. This is where you invite new families to join you, bolster community among your school families, show off for grandparents and welcome home alumni. We have all kinds of advice about what your site can and should be doing for you if you tend it carefully. Start that care with excellent photos of the smart and adorable children who call your school home.

Always be respectful of everyone concerned: students, teachers, volunteers. Ask teachers if it is alright to interrupt; ask children if it is okay to take their picture. Only post images of children whose parents have given permission with the requisite form at the beginning of the school year. Never name children in a photo. If your administration and or school board prefers, never post photos of individual children.

Here are some tips for great pictures:

1. Get down. Kneel or bend over so that you are shooting at the level of your subject. Occasionally, get on the ground and shoot up at about 20 degrees.
2. Fill the frame. Consider using a telephoto lens as your default (or just zooming in by default) so that you are very close to the subject. The children (and perhaps what they are doing) are going to be the only interesting part of the photo so fill the frame with them.
3. Turn the camera so that some of your shots are vertically oriented. It gives you some composition alternatives and it helps you to learn to see the best shot before you take it. People standing in pairs or groups of three almost always look better in a vertical shot.
4. When shooting a group, position them close together so that you don't have to try to crop space from between them. If you have a squirrely group, let them make goofy faces in one or two shots.
5. Take at least four or five shots every time you set-up for one, moving slightly between shots. Your movement keeps everyone a little more alert and gives you some insurance regarding light and shadow problems. A slight change can make a big difference.
6. Encourage the boys and girls in a group to look as if they like each other; in some shots have them look at each other.

7. Take shots in profile. This is especially effective when there are a lot of people taking pictures (like parents, for instance). Stand to the side, zoom in, and get the angled shot. Great with a group, too, particularly a group singing or praying. And take shots from the back, especially if the kids are holding hands, or have their arms around each other.
8. Take shots of kids working in groups, or at a desk, when they not looking at the camera. Stay in close-up; classrooms are not generally exciting background. In this instance, alternate between shooting down and from the height of your subject. If you do need a classroom shot, try taking it from the corner, not too far from the closest student.
9. Shoot during rehearsals for plays or concerts and ask the kids to be sure not to look at the camera. Once they get the idea, they may remember not to look during the real performance, either.
10. Keep special occasion reminders on your calendar so you don't miss the kindergarten lemonade stand, or the spelling bee, but also announce photo shoot days to the faculty and go around the school building taking as many shots as you can. Build yourself a good library of shots:
 - that include diversity of age, gender, ethnicity
 - in and out of uniform
 - in the classroom
 - at work
 - just looking happy
 - with teachers and without
 - in the lunchroom
 - at recess
 - in the gym
 - in church (ask for specific permission, or ask a teacher to help you by taking the children into church just for the photo shoot)

Take hundreds of pictures; download them into folders that are named meaningfully; delete them from your camera immediately. Be disciplined enough to go through the folder as soon as possible and delete everything except the best. Copy the shots that you are going to post on the site into the appropriate folder among your website files. Finally, move the best of the best into a folder for special use (Greatest Hits 2014-15) so that you don't have to search for it later. You will have a ready made slide show for Grandparents' Day, or the last day of school ice cream social.