

First Exposures:

Youth Opportunities Through Photography

First Exposures: Youth Opportunities Through Photography is a special interest mentoring program where academic skills and life skills are developed by combining the benefits of mentoring relationships with art education. The volunteer mentors are professional, commercial and fine art photographers with a commitment to youth and to education. Their students are creative young people, aged 11-18, with backgrounds that have included homelessness, foster care or low-income living situations. The students and mentors work together in one-to-one partnerships in a group setting. First Exposures fosters supportive intergenerational relationships in a stimulating environment of active learning.

First Exposures is a demanding program. Both the students and their mentors agree to attend each Saturday class from 10:00 to 2:30 PM for at least one academic year. Most students and mentors stay in the program for more than one year, some have stayed as long as seven years. Students develop photographic skills and get exposed to a larger world than they may otherwise know. We meet at either SF Camerawork (a nonprofit photography gallery) or RayKo Photo Center (an excellent community darkroom). We reinforce our class time spent in experiential learning environments: visits to local newspapers, major museums, alternative art spaces, commercial photography studios, and each semester we also go on a field trip to locations like Angel Island, Pie Ranch in Pescadero, the Solano Land Trust, and Bay Area beaches. The students use their cameras to explore and interpret these places, as well as with sites and people closer to home.

First Exposures was initiated at Eye Gallery in 1993 and was redeveloped under SF Camerawork's sponsorship in 1996. SF Camerawork is the base of a support network for the partnership between the student and his or her mentor. This network includes the support of the youth service providers who work collaboratively with SF Camerawork and First Exposures, Bay Area mentoring organizations, professional child care workers, and the student's families or guardians.

**For additional information, contact Erik Auerbach or Kate Gentzke at
(415) 512.2020 x107**

Here is what some mentors and students have had to say about their time at the program.

Students:

“Working with a mentor gives me more knowledge than I get working alone. It allows me to get information and try new things and get help with things I may need to get help with. I can get "feed-back" about pictures I have taken and get to talk to someone about more than photography sometimes.”

-First semester student age 13

“Photography is fun and useful. Sometimes I get questions like "What is the right f/stop?" and I can easily answer them. Also you get special advantages when people ask you to take pictures for them, then you can really show your stuff!”

-Fourth semester student age 15

"Photographs help keep the memory." -First semester student, age 14

“My mentor teaches me how to print and how to see things differently.”

-First semester student, age 14

“My mentor taught me how to develop pictures and use an enlarger. He works hard with me to finish the pictures that I like. I hope I will be able to work with him again next semester.”

- First semester student, age 16

Mentors:

"Being a mentor has given me the opportunity to share my love of photography with the creative and motivated kids in First Exposures. We have learned a lot about each other and the medium."

-First semester mentor, age 26

"I have put a lot of things in perspective both in my life and other people's lives by spending time with kids from various backgrounds."

-Fourth semester mentor, age 34

“We are constantly teaching each other new things. There is not one day that has gone by in the program where I have not learned something new from a student. Sometimes I get to be the student and the teacher at the same time.”

- Mentor, age 28

In order to become a mentor in First Exposures you will need to:

Submit completed application

Application reviewed by staff

Personal interview with program coordinator

References checked

Background check from live scan fingerprinting with DOJ and FBI

Must provide DMV driving record and copy of insurance if applicable

Mandatory mentor training

MANDATORY MENTOR MEETINGS MONTHLY