

Investigating Where We Live



Created in 1996, *Investigating Where We Live* is a two day per week, summer program created to teach young people the design process as a method of critical thinking. Over five weeks, groups of 25 to 30 students, in grades 7 through 12, from D.C. Public Schools learn to use photography as a means of describing and understanding such culturally diverse communities as Adams Morgan, Logan Circle, Shaw, Columbia Heights, Eckington, and Southwest Waterfront. To show their mastery of the design process, students create a final exhibition of their work for display at the National Building Museum, which later travels to a venue in one of the local neighborhoods explored.



In addition to learning camera use and techniques, students research the history and development of cultural influences in neighborhoods and analyze how Washington, D.C. is represented in the media. Students keep journals on their work, complete creative writing assignments, and present their work to their peers. In 2004, the Museum added a creative writing component to the program, and students participated in workshops conducted by a professional writer. These writing exercises allow students to delve further into their impressions of the assigned communities.



Investigating Where We Live also focuses on youth development and team-work skills. The program culminates with students working in groups to design and create an exhibition of their photography, poems, and narratives in the Museum. The students' exhibition is presented in the Museum's new Building Learners Youth Gallery, a dedicated space for youth exhibitions. All program participants receive a digital camera to use for the program, and upon successful completion of the program, participants keep both their camera and negatives for personal use.

The Museum aims for *Investigating Where We Live* students to achieve the following:

- proficiency in the use of photography as a tool to explore a neighborhood;
- ability to articulate ideas effectively through creative writing exercises related to the students' photographs and neighborhoods
- knowledge of the physical, social, and cultural components of a specific neighborhood;
- ability to work as a team with students from different backgrounds and neighborhoods;
- experience in organizing research and information
- success in the design and production of an exhibition to be displayed at the Museum



To sponsor this program, please contact the National Building Museum's Development Office at 202.272.2448.