

## Dan Schlapbach, M.F.A.

*Associate Professor of Fine Arts and  
Photography Program Director*



I have found teaching service-learning courses to be one of the most rewarding ways I live justice at Loyola. I have used a service-learning component in my Introduction to Digital Photography course several times over the last few years, partnering with a variety of local inner-city elementary schools.

The structure of the service-learning component is that Loyola students teach the partner students the skills and aesthetics they learned in preceding projects. For example, if the Loyola students previously learned how to work with shutter speeds, the next week they teach their partner students how to use shutter speeds effectively to convey an idea related to time. The subsequent lessons might be on using apertures, qualities of light, points of view, etc.

The Loyola students provide their own cameras and usually have about an hour to teach and work with the partner students each week. The students spend about 30-45 minutes taking photos. By using digital cameras, the students are able to preview the results immediately and make suggestions on how to better utilize the specific skill of the week. After making photographs, the students spend the remainder of

the time making prints using portable printers. The partner students leave each class period with prints from the resulting experiments.

At the next on-campus class session, the Loyola students make presentations to the class of the photographs their service-learning partners made, explaining the before/after photos, and how their teaching improved the photos of the service-learning partners. At the end of the semester, the Loyola students and the service-learning partners select the best photos and make 8" X 10" prints. The Loyola students then mat and frame the photos and exhibit them in a gallery at the partner institution. The Loyola students, our service-learning partner students, their parents, members of the community and the public, are all invited to the exhibition. This is the most rewarding component of the project. Loyola students and their service-learning partner students congregate and reflect on their experiences. Parents of the service-learning partner students proudly seek out the photos their children made, and often take more photos of their children standing next to their framed photos.

Finally, at the end of the semester, the Loyola students write a two-part paper. One component of the paper is a reflection on the experience; the other is a formal analysis of the photographs made by their service-learning partner students. Teaching a course with a service-learning component has proven to be an incredibly enriching endeavor for the service-learning partner students, the Loyola students and me. The experience brings disparate groups together to share knowledge, cultures and friendships in a reciprocal relationship.