Just like writing, photography can be learned by anyone. While some people have greater aptitude for photography, anyone can learn the skills. Here are some quick tips for helping your students create interesting images for their yearbook.

**SET A HIGH STANDARD**
The most effective way to set standards is by allowing the pride students have in their school to dictate them. You are their greatest cheerleader. Get them excited and full of pride about their yearbook. Once that standard is set, the next group of students will accept nothing less. This sets in motion a healthy competition from year to year.
Stephanie Stark has only been in the education system for four years. Prior to that, she served in management for a Fortune 500 company. Her degree is in Photography and when she moved to Port St. Lucie, her plan was to open a studio. When the economy weakened, a friend talked her into teaching. The rest is history. She fell in love with the kids and the art of teaching. Her goal is to make a difference in how kids look at life after high school.

By Stephanie Stark

Teach Students Camera Basics
Familiarize yourself with the types of cameras that may be available to your students. Know the settings on those cameras. If manuals have been lost, the world is at your finger tips online. In my experience, students start running when handed the “big camera.” At first, students typically wanted to use the smaller digital cameras, but after they learned the different functions of the SLR, the “big camera” became the preferred camera. Also, have them bring in their personal cameras and show them how to use their own camera with the correct settings.

Help Students Understand the Importance of Light
As simple as it may seem, students do not always understand the principles of light. They may ask themselves why they can’t see the faces of their friends in a particular photo. Was the sun behind their friends’ backs? Teaching students to think before they shoot and about the basic principles of light can go a long way.

It’s All About Thinking on Your Feet
It’s important that students know what a great photo looks like. Show students images from Life Magazine. Ask them what story the photo tells… then put them next to poor images. In art, we teach that a good piece of art evokes emotion. Every photo in the yearbook tells a story. To make it interesting, the photographer needs to think fast on their feet and see things that most people would not look for.

Allow for Creativity… and Mistakes
Some students are going to have that “natural” knack for creating great images. They see the angle and they take risks. Other students will be more mechanical in their choices. When an image is not working, use it as a teaching moment. Ask them to tell you why it isn’t working. You will be amazed at what they learn from their own mistakes.

 Foster Students’ Passion for Photography
If you are lucky enough to have a couple of students whose passion is photography, make them the best at what they do. Talk your administration into letting them carry their cameras all day. So many “photo ops” and great yearbook stories are lost just because there was not a photographer present. From the celebration of a struggling student making their first A in Geometry to a football receiver flying through the air to make a touchdown, the story of your school’s year should be told through great photos.

Photojournalism is like fishing. Sometimes you drop your line in and you catch the “big one.” Other times, you sit and sit… and nothing ever bites. The key ingredients to successful photojournalism are having the skill set and preparedness to capture that one moment that will tell a story for years to come. When a photo can aesthetically stand alone and create an enduring emotion, a story has been told. It is then that you know that the old adage is true, “A photo is worth a thousand words.”

Image & Graphics Checklist
- Are graphics contemporary, well-planned, consistent and used for a purpose rather than decoration?
- Does every spread have a center of visual interest, probably a dominant photo that is at least twice as large as other photos on the page?
- Does every spread contain a combination of horizontal and vertical photographs?
- Have photos been placed so action comes into the spread and not off the page?
- Is the use of ghosted or mechanically treated photos avoided?
- Is the use of crude artwork and clip art avoided?