



The Graphic Novel Project

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The HTH Graphic Novel Project, based at High Tech High Chula Vista, aims to instruct high school students in professional standards of graphic novel/comic book design and execution while simultaneously researching local causes and topics, telling their stories, and using comic sales to benefit the selected cause.

The project is an after school program and participation is completely reliant on its volunteer members. Since the inception of the HTH Graphic Novel Project, 19 students have worked together to create a completed comic book entitled “La Sombra De America” (The Shadow of America) that showcased student research on the escalating violence in Tijuana, Mexico. The project is continuing in the 2009-2010 school year with a new service learning topic centered on teenage dropout rates in California.

Teacher Reflection

It has been my pleasure to discover a group of talented and like-minded comic enthusiasts who were desperately searching for a venue to express themselves. Being a part of the HTH Graphic Novel Project has influenced every part of my teaching and has heightened my senses as an instructor. There are no grades in the project, so students are driven solely by self-motivation and discovery. To inspire student ownership and self-motivation, I have had to develop clear and attainable objectives, design work and challenges that could be completely owned by the students, and force myself to trust the creative instincts of students even when I did not fully understand them. There is no question that magic occurs in this project, but there is a constant question of how that magic works and how it can be replicated.

Student Reflection

At the start of the program, our group of about 15 students sat in a circle and decided on which jobs we would each like to pursue. The group needed a leader, and I was considered for the part. Up until that point, I had never been chosen to be a candidate for a leader because I was usually quiet. As the production manager, I assumed a great deal of responsibility over the course of the program, which gave me a chance to break out of my shell and show my true skin.

—Evan Berg, 10th grade

To learn more about this project and others visit the HTH Digital Commons and Patrick Yurick’s digital portfolio at <http://www.hightechhigh.org/> and <http://staff.hthcv.hightechhigh.org/~pyurick/>

