

Olympus Donates Digital Cameras to Enhance Visual Learning and Innovative Technology Usage at Clara Barton Elementary School

Philadelphia's Clara Barton Elementary School is a multi-ethnic, multi-racial K-4 learning environment. Located in the Juanita Park/Feltonville section of the city, the school serves close to 750 children, 55% of whom are bilingual students. Clara Barton has always been proactive about using technology and two years ago, with the help of Olympus, the school introduced digital photography into their Mentally Gifted (MG) program. The benefits of visual learning have since become evident throughout the school's curricular activities, from social studies and science to communication techniques and PowerPoint presentations.

The launch of Clara Barton's photography program was the result of the efforts of two people: Harris Sklar, a volunteer photography teacher and president of a non-for-profit corporation "R First Photos Inc," which is dedicated to improving the lives of inner-city school children through the teaching of photography; and Beth Hartman, Clara Barton's art teacher. In 2002 Mr. Sklar, who attended Clara Barton in the 1940s, approached Olympus for a donation of digital cameras and soon after received a shipment of thirty D-370 digital cameras. Olympus has continued to support the K-4 school and has recently donated 35 additional D-395 digital cameras.

The cameras are used primarily in Clara Barton's MG program, which is run by Beth Hartman and Lynn Israel, the school's technology teacher. "Every year we have between 14 and 20 gifted children in the program," explained Ms. Hartman. "The students, primarily 3rd and 4th graders, are pulled out for six periods weekly for extra lessons that include art, technology, literature and other subjects. The point of the program is to encourage creative thinking and using higher order thinking skills."

The MG students originally used disposable cameras until their partnership with Olympus. They now use Olympus digital cameras in a curriculum initially developed by Mr. Sklar to learn about the art of photography. "We spend a lot of time teaching the children to use a camera the way a professional or serious amateur photographer would, to think about depth, perspective and composition. We look at actual images and discuss what is or is not good in the picture and why," said Ms. Hartman.

Once they learn how to photograph, the students take their knowledge further. "The program uses photography to teach vital life skills," said Mr. Sklar. "The children practice writing and speaking about their photographs. They also learn to use photography as a means of documenting an event or location." Ms. Israel also teaches the students how to download the photographs to the computer, save, manipulate the photos using Photoshop Elements, and print them.

Using curricular activities similar to the lesson plans included in www.envisionyourworld.com, an Olympus-sponsored free on-line curricular program written in association with faculty at Columbia University's Teachers College, students document their family life, their school and their community. These images are incorporated into PowerPoint presentations that are used to share learning in a visual format (rather than a report) on multiple occasions--from parent-teacher meetings to classroom sharing.

The benefits of visual learning and Olympus digital camera technology have extended from art photos into language arts activities. "Classroom teachers have now seen how we have used the cameras with our MG students and have incorporated the use of cameras into their classroom's language arts activities," said Ms. Hartman. "Students bring in photos of their family or images from a trip to the zoo and use these as a basis for a story. Students also know that images evoke feelings which we can discuss." Many of Clara Barton's teachers

now also ask their MG students to visit, camera in hand, to document their classroom activities.

One of the benefits of having digital cameras is that students learn to become better communicators. "Many of the students are bilingual and having these images helps our students break down any verbal barriers. E-mail is also very useful as it lets them share their photographs," said Ms. Israel. Students who have graduated have also stayed in touch and have e-mailed Ms. Hartman, Ms. Israel and Mr. Sklar pictures to show their progress. "Many of the students did not previously have permanent cameras (not throwaways) in their family life. Olympus digital cameras have opened a world to them that would not have been afforded otherwise," said Ms. Hartman.

"With Harris Sklar as the catalyst, the creativity and dedication of Clara Barton's teachers and students have ensured that digital camera technology is now an integral part of the learning process," said David Willard, Director of Marketing and Community Services for Olympus America Inc. "Olympus is proud to support Clara Barton and other schools like it in integrating visual literacy and promoting visual learning in the classroom."

As the number of visual learning projects at Clara Barton expands, Mr. Sklar and the MG teachers continue to focus on the importance of taking a good photograph. That focus has paid off: this June one of the MG students' photograph received honorable mention at Philadelphia's Manayunk Arts Festival.

ABOUT OLYMPUS IMAGING AMERICA INC.

Olympus Imaging America Inc. is a precision technology leader, designing and delivering award-winning products for consumer and professional markets.

Olympus Imaging America Inc. works collaboratively with its customers and its parent company, Olympus Corporation, to develop breakthrough technologies with revolutionary product design and functionality that enhances peoples lives every day. These include:

- Digital and film cameras
- Professional SLR Imaging Systems
- Digital and Microcassette recorders
- Digital Music Players
- Personal Photo Printers
- Digital Print Kiosks
- Digital Video Projectors
- Digital Media
- Binoculars

Olympus Imaging America Inc. is responsible for sales in United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

Agency Contact:

Kim Neuman

Link Marketing Communications

212-500-5882

knewman@linkmc.com

[View Story Archives](#)



Consumer Products | Diagnostic Systems | Medical Systems | Microscopes & Imaging Systems

© 2009 Olympus America Inc.

[Privacy Statement](#)

[Terms of Use](#)