The 100 People Project is a nonprofit organization based in New York City. The organization poses the question: If there were only 100 people in the world, what would the world look like? Based upon statistics, there would be fifty males, fifty females, sixty-one Asians, eighty adults, eight children, seventeen people would have no safe water to drink, amongst other statistics.

A book, a documentary, and traveling exhibit will exhibit the best 100 images that describe the world portrait. Students submit their photos online, while also accessing work from other schools throughout the world. There are teacher lesson plans and suggestions for integrating this project into your school, as well as the statistics on the website of the 100 People Project.

Introduction
On the first day of class, I showed a computer presentation on the history of portraiture and the power of environmental portraiture. Artists included August Sander, Dorothea Lange, Lewis Hine, Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon, Joel Sternfeld, Gregory Crewdson, Sabastio Salgado and David Hilliard. We discussed ethics, the caste system, and other societal structures in the world, which led us to a discussion about ethics in photography.

Ethical Considerations
When is it okay to photograph “the other”? Some of my students photographed people they knew, others didn’t. The parameters state that students must photograph someone they admire from the country in which they reside. They also needed to get model release forms signed.

Photography
There are ten students in the class. I have five computers in my classroom and two 35mm digital cameras. Some students chose to photograph at school, but as the project progressed they became bolder and some wanted to photograph strangers. They used their own cameras outside of school time.

We had five critiques over five months, during which time they learned digital photo manipulation techniques, digital output, and how to upload an image to the Internet. They thought it was pretty cool that their work was in cyberspace. I tell them that one of the most important things about making art is sharing it with other people. What good does an image do if it is in a box under the bed or just in your computer?

If there were only 100 people in the world, what would the world look like?

We learned how and why to critique photos, covering everything from composition and the rule of thirds, to what hues you get in color images shot under various lighting conditions, how and when to color balance, plus the fact that you can create a “tripod” by using a wall, shelf, or chair to minimize camera shake.

Assessment
Students assessed on participation in discussions, photographic technique (in-camera and on the computer), written biographies of their subjects, and the final result. Since we have students from various backgrounds such as France, the United States, Thailand, Finland and India, this presented an accessible way to understand their host cultures or their own culture beyond what they see daily.

At the end of the project, each student gave a photo to the person they photographed and we had an exhibit as part of a school-wide “India Week.” We also had an article published in a local magazine, and one of our students sold a photo.

Reflections
This project could easily be adapted to any community by representing the various statistics based upon that community, and could also be done with younger children. The ability to collaborate and integrate multiculturalism, writing, imagery and technology creates higher-level thinking and visual as well as auditory communication that goes beyond being just a school project. The images can be seen at www.100people.org. Go to the “Schools” page to see the various schools involved. Check out our photos from the American International School, Chennai, India. Contact the organization to see if your school has time to become part of the 100 People Project. They have extended the original deadline. Any medium is accepted. Email: kmike@aisch.org

NATIONAL STANDARD
Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

WEB LINK
www.100people.org

“After living in India for a couple of years now, and experiencing my roots, I was under the impression that I knew ‘what it was all about.’ I couldn’t have been more wrong.”

— Sabina