

Randi Sparks
Rogers Academy of
Leadership & Innovation
Rogers, AR

Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

ARTEFFECT



For my completed Capstone, I created a Project Based Learning (PBL) style project and implemented it in my classroom with all three of my sections of combined Ceramics I/Ceramics II/Sculpture courses. To start the project, learners analyzed an "Entry Doc" that was written from the perspective of an Indie board game company that I invented called "Heroic Storytelling LLC" who was putting out a press release to find new roleplaying style board games based on the lives and work of Unsung Heroes. Learners were directed to put together an "application packet" with group and individual components which correlated to the requirements for submission to the ARTEFFECT competition. As a group they needed to each pick an Unsung Hero and then teach their group about their chosen person so they could work together to create a cohesive storyline and board game with player pieces that symbolized all the Heroes. Then, as an individual, they needed to create a scaled up version of their player piece with more details and symbolism to fully represent their chosen Hero with an Impact Statement to explain their thinking and research.

After formalizing groups and analyzing the Entry Doc, learners had the opportunity to explore multiple types of board games to make choices about what elements they wanted or needed to include in their own game, such as Hero-specific rules and advantages, pieces for gameplay, etc., and took notes on a guided notes sheet I created for future reference. I was able to use my \$250 supply gift card to purchase a few interesting games from a local board game store, so I loved being able to support a small business in our community with these funds!

Next, learners worked together to complete the "Hero Selection & Game Design" Doc, where they each had space to choose a Hero, document their research, and work together to design their game. We utilized the "Role Models" section of the ARTEFFECT website, which organized Unsung Heroes into archetype groups, such as "Innovators", "Healers", and "Reformers". For the research aspect, we focused more on brainstorming symbols to represent the lives and impact of each Hero rather than portraiture.

After completing their Hero selection and research, they worked together to write the storyline and design the board/elements for their board game. Some learners chose to style their game off of some that already exist, like variations of chess or Monopoly, while others completely invented new styles. No matter what, I always encouraged them to stay focused on the purpose of the project, which was incorporating the stories of their Heroes into the game to celebrate their lives and impact. In addition to the board game itself, learners created "player pieces" that symbolized their chosen Heroes; for example, some learners created small versions of the cameras that Heroes like Lewis Hine and Dorothea Lange used in their photographic work to represent them in their game.

The final step asked learners to create a scaled up, more detailed sculptural version of their player piece along with a typed Impact Statement to go along with it. I continually reminded them that this Sculpture needed to have a clear connection to their chosen Hero; for this one a camera by itself would not be enough without a clear connection to the types of photography or subject matter the Hero addressed in their work.

In addition to the ARTEFFECT resources, learners also watched and took guided notes based on several Art21 videos to learn more about how contemporary artists respectfully and empathetically tell their own stories/the stories of others through symbolism as part of this project.

Overall, my favorite learning impact of this project was seeing how energized and interested they became when telling the stories of their chosen Heroes to me, our class intern, and anyone who would listen! The focus on having them teach each other about their Heroes meant that they learned significant details about many rather than just one. They also learned to work on an extensive project with their groups in a way that ensured all voices were being heard and celebrated. I am pleased with how the project turned out and looking forward to revamping it for future years!

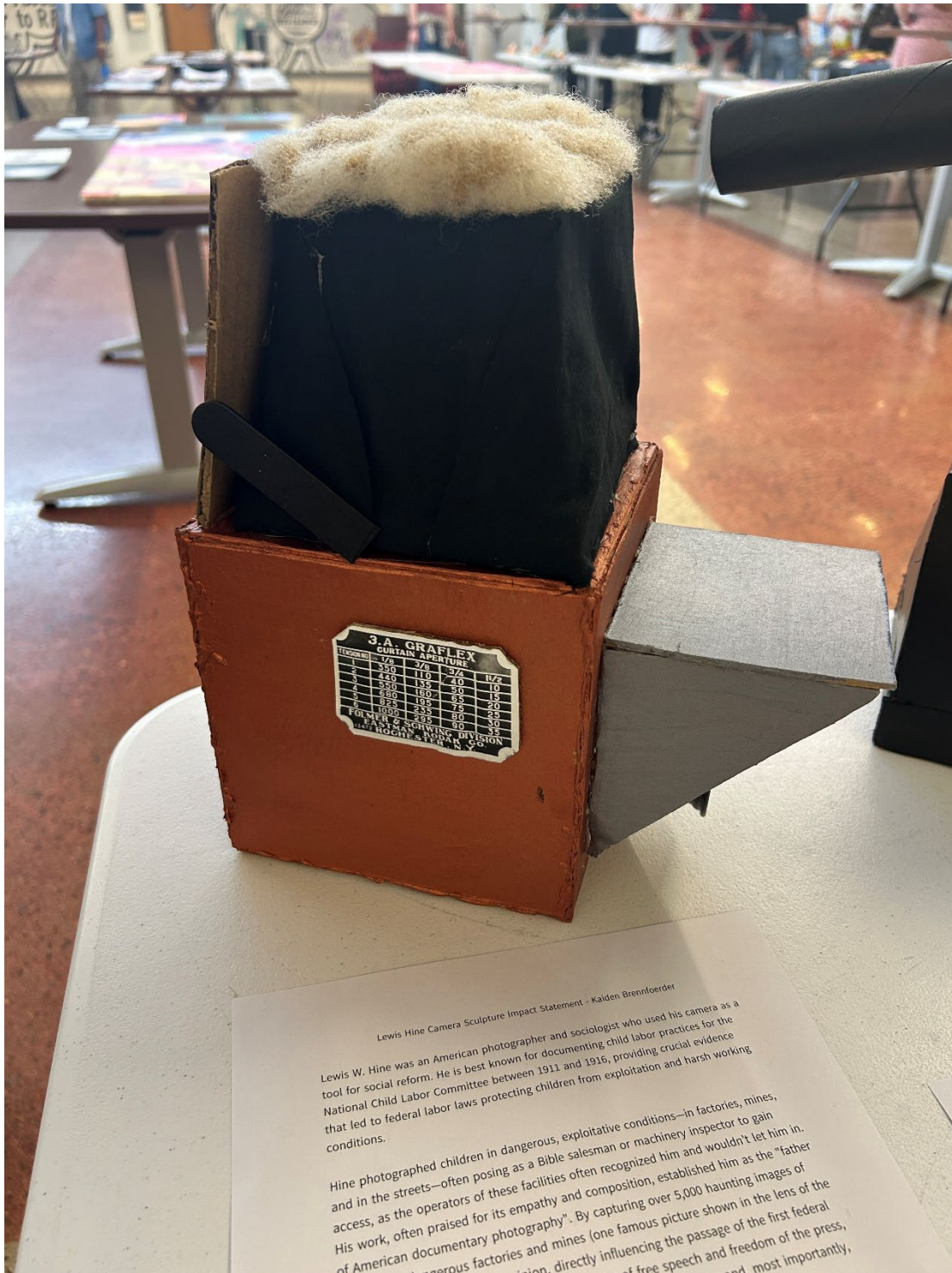
We hosted an Art Show/Talent Show night and we had about 60 people in attendance. The Art Show with all the board games, sculptures, and Impact Statements was set out right next to the gym where the Talent Show was taking place so people could browse before the show started.

The biggest lesson I learned during this project is that my organization is crucial to ensuring that my learners stay motivated and productive, especially on a project this intensive and involved.

If we had been able to start this project at the very beginning of the semester or continue finishing it before starting a new project then the quality of the sculptures would have been much better, but the way it all worked out meant that we only ended up having one learner feel ready to submit to the actual ARTEFFECT competition. We spent way more time on the collaborative parts of the project than the individual parts, which resulted in some really cool group-made art objects but did not leave enough time for the individual sculptures and Impact Statements. I would say that the main positive of the focus on the board game aspect is that all the learners taught each other about multiple Unsung Heroes in order to create their games, rather than being completely focused on only one by themselves. They also enjoyed the break from working exclusively with clay, and I loved seeing their ingenuity. I find that leaving plenty of room for their voices and ideas to be heard (even if it changes the project from what I had originally intended) helps the project evolve in interesting and unexpected ways; although it sounds like a cliché, I truly learn as much from them through their work as they learn from me sometimes!

In terms of the final event, this was the first year I had to wear my "Theatre Teacher" and "Art Teacher" hats while preparing for the Art/Talent Show, so the last few weeks of the project felt very rushed and I was pretty stressed about getting everything done. I loved this project and many of the kids expressed enjoying it too, so I will definitely be including some version of the "Unsung Heroes Board Game" project in future years. I will definitely also create a simplified project focused on procedures that learners can follow based on their own interests to help them prepare to create artwork about Unsung Heroes so they can submit to the competition without doing such an involved side project. Now that I know more about ARTEFFECT and all the requirements for submission, I will be much better prepared to support and encourage them to participate! I'm so grateful and appreciative of the opportunity I was given to be part of this Ambassadorship, and I know this experience will continue impacting me and my learners in the future.

August 2026



Lewis Hine Camera Sculpture Impact Statement - Kaiden Brennförder

Lewis W. Hine was an American photographer and sociologist who used his camera as a tool for social reform. He is best known for documenting child labor practices for the National Child Labor Committee between 1911 and 1916, providing crucial evidence that led to federal labor laws protecting children from exploitation and harsh working conditions.

Hine photographed children in dangerous, exploitative conditions—in factories, mines, and in the streets—often posing as a Bible salesman or machinery inspector to gain access, as the operators of these facilities often recognized him and wouldn't let him in. His work, often praised for its empathy and composition, established him as the "father of American documentary photography". By capturing over 5,000 haunting images of the dangerous factories and mines (one famous picture shown in the first federal law of free speech and freedom of the press, and, most importantly,



