Unit 1: Identity Exploration Through Artistic Voice

Content Area: **Fine Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **1 Week**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

In alignment with the NJSLS-VPA standards, students will explore identity through the creation of artwork that communicates who they are, what they value, and how they see themselves and the world. Through experimentation with a wide range of materials and processes, students will develop their artistic voice while learning how artists use visual language to express personal and cultural identity. Throughout this unit, students will engage in inquiry-based artmaking to investigate how different media (such as drawing, painting, collage, and digital tools) can shape meaning and expression. Students will analyze contemporary and historical artists who use art to explore identity, and they will apply these concepts to create original works that reflect personal narrative, lived experience, and self-expression. By the end of the unit, students will have developed a deeper understanding of how artistic choices communicate identity and how experimentation with materials supports creative growth and individuality.

Revised: August 2026

Standards

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.5.12prof.Cr1	Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
	Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed. Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative art-making goals.
	What conditions, attitudes and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process? How does knowing the contexts, histories and traditions of art forms help us create works of art and design? Why do artists follow or break from established traditions? How do artists determine what resources and criteria are needed to formulate artistic investigations?
	Explore
1.5.12prof.Cr1a	Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
1.5.12prof.Cr1b	Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art and design.
1.5.12prof.Cr2	Organizing and developing ideas.
	Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches. Artists and designers balance experimentation and safety,

	freedom and responsibility, while developing and creating artworks. People create and interact with objects, places and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives.
	How do artists work? How do artists and designers determine whether a particular direction in their work is effective? How do artists and designers learn from trial and error? How do artists and designers care for and maintain materials, tools and equipment? Why is it important, for safety and health, to understand and follow correct procedures in handling materials, tools and equipment? What responsibilities come with the freedom to create? How do objects, places and design shape lives and communities? How do artists and designers determine goals for designing or redesigning objects, places or systems? How do artists and designers create works of art or design that effectively communicate?
1.5.12prof.Cr2b	Explain how traditional and non-traditional materials may impact human health and the environment, and demonstrate safe handling of materials, tools and equipment.
	Artists and designers develop excellence through practice and constructive critique, reflecting on, revising and refining work over time.
	What role does persistence play in revising, refining and developing work? How do artists grow and become accomplished in art forms? How does collaboratively reflecting on a work help us experience it more completely?
1.5.12prof.Cr3a	Apply relevant criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts to examine, reflect on and plan revisions for works of art and design in progress.
	Artists and other presenters consider various techniques, methods, venues, and criteria when analyzing, selecting and curating objects, artifacts and artworks for preservation and presentation.
	Objects, artifacts and artworks collected, preserved, or presented either by artists, museums, or other venues communicate meaning and a record of social, cultural and political experiences resulting in the cultivating of appreciation and understanding.
	What is an art museum? How does the presenting and sharing of objects, artifacts and artworks influence and shape ideas, beliefs and experiences? How do objects, artifacts and artworks collected, preserved, or presented, cultivate appreciation and understanding?
1.5.12prof.Pr6a	Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural or political beliefs and understandings.
	Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments. Visual arts influences understanding of and responses to the world.
	People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.
1.5.12prof.Re8a	Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
	People evaluate art based on various criteria.
	Through artmaking, people make meaning by investigating and developing awareness of perceptions, knowledge and experiences.
	How does engaging in creating art enrich people's lives? How does making art attune people to their surroundings? How do people contribute to awareness and understanding of their lives and the lives of their communities through artmaking?
	People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

Essential Questions

- What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking?
- What factors encourage or prevent people from taking creative risks in expressing identity?
- How does art communicate personal and cultural identity?
- How do artists use materials, processes, and techniques to express who they are?
- How does understanding historical and cultural contexts influence the way we create and interpret art?
- Why do artists follow or break from established traditions when expressing identity?
- How do artists determine which materials, processes, and ideas best communicate meaning?
- How do artists grow through experimentation, reflection, and revision?
- How can collaboration and feedback expand artistic voice and personal expression?

Essential Understandings

- Artistic materials and processes directly influence meaning and expression.
- Identity can be explored, communicated, and developed through artmaking.
- Experimentation with materials strengthens artistic voice and creative confidence.
- Artists draw from personal experience, culture, and history to inform their work.
- Creativity and innovative thinking are skills that develop through practice, reflection, and risk-taking.
- Artists and designers make intentional choices when constructing meaning in their work.
- Artistic growth occurs through trial and error, reflection, and revision.
- People create and respond to visual culture in ways that shape identity and understanding of the world.

Students Will Know

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe a variety of art materials, techniques, and processes.
- Experiment with different media to explore personal identity and expression.

- Analyze how artists communicate identity through visual language.
- Apply elements and principles of design intentionally to express meaning.
- Reflect on personal artistic choices and creative growth.
- Develop and communicate ideas through visual storytelling and symbolic imagery.
- Revise and refine artwork based on reflection and feedback.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Fine Arts students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Evidence of progression may be demonstrated in divergent ways through the Artistic Process of Creating, Presenting/Producing, Connecting, and Responding.

Tasks will include:

- Experimenting with a wide range of materials
- Creating a resource with examples of different materials and their use
- Recording and comprehending important art terminologies and techniques associated with current and past units
- Participating in the art making process while applying design criteria and requirements
- Participating in formal and informal assessments
- Answering essential questions and meeting project objectives and deadlines

Learning Plan

- Group and station-based exploration of materials and techniques to build confidence and familiarity.
- Introduction to artists who explore identity through diverse media and cultural perspectives.
- Sketchbook journaling to document ideas, experimentation, and reflective writing on identity.
- Skill-building demonstrations focused on drawing, painting, mixed media, and experimental processes.
- Inquiry-based artmaking projects centered on personal identity themes.
- Critiques (formal and informal) to support reflection, dialogue, and artistic growth.

- Integration of digital tools and traditional media to expand creative possibilities.
- Opportunities for revision and refinement of work based on feedback and self-assessment.
- Exhibition of student work within the school or district to celebrate personal voice and identity.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Sketchbook, Various Pencils, Sharpies, Markers, Various Papers, Various Erasers, Mirrors, Blending Sticks, Charcoal, Graphite, Sharpeners, Colored Pencils, Oil Pastel, Chalk Pastels, YouTube Videos, Value Scales, magazines, glue, scissors, Watercolor, Watercolor paper, paint brush, ink, printing materials, chromebooks, ipads, Paint, Color Wheels, Drawing Pen, Rulers

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations:

Fine Arts Accommodations & Modifications