Unit 4: Introduction to Sustained Investigation

Content Area: **Fine Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **12 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

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

1.5.12acc.Cr	Creating
1.5.12acc.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.
	Explore
1.5.12acc.Cr1a	Individually and collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on student's existing artwork.
1.5.12acc.Cr1b	Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
1.5.12acc.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.
	Investigate
1.5.12acc.Cr2a	Through experimentation, practice and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.
1.5.12acc.Cr3	Refining and completing products.
	Artists and designers develop excellence through practice and constructive critique, reflecting on, revising and refining work over time.
1.5.12acc.Pr4	Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.

	Artists and other presenters consider various techniques, methods, venues, and criteria when analyzing, selecting and curating objects, artifacts and artworks for preservation and presentation.
1.5.12acc.Pr4a	Analyze, select and critique personal artwork for a collection or portfolio presentation.
1.5.12acc.Pr5	Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
	Artists, curators and others consider a variety of factors and methods including evolving technologies when preparing and refining artwork for display and or when deciding if and how to preserve and protect it.
1.5.12acc.Pr5a	Evaluate, select and apply methods or processes appropriate to display artwork in a specific place.
	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.
1.5.12acc.Pr6a	Make, explain and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural and political history.
	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.
1.5.12acc.Re7a	Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments.
1.5.12acc.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
	People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.
	People evaluate art based on various criteria.
	Through artmaking, people make meaning by investigating and developing awareness of perceptions, knowledge and experiences.
1.5.12acc.Cn10a	Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research and experimentation to explore other subjects through artmaking.
	People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

Brief Summary of Unit

In alignment with the NJSLS-VPA standards, students will develop foundational skills in inquiry-based and research-driven artmaking as preparation for advanced studio practice. This unit introduces students to the concept of sustained investigation, where personal questions, ideas, and themes become the driving force behind artistic development over time. Students will explore how artists develop meaningful bodies of work through research, experimentation, reflection, and revision. Emphasis will be placed on student-generated inquiry, where students begin to identify areas of personal interest and develop open-ended questions that guide their creative process. Through brainstorming strategies such as mind-mapping, visual journaling, thumbnail sketching, and iterative experimentation, students will begin to recognize patterns in their thinking and making. These patterns will help students identify their emerging artistic voice and strengthen their ability to make intentional decisions rooted in artistic intent. The teacher will act as a facilitator, providing open-ended demonstrations, resources, and checkpoints that support student exploration without prescribing outcomes. This unit serves as a bridge into Advanced Art, where students will independently develop sustained investigations as the foundation of their portfolio work.

Revised: August 2026

Essential Questions

- How do artists develop meaningful, sustained bodies of work over time?
- What role does research play in the development of artistic ideas and intent?
- How do artists curate and present a sustained body of work to best communicate their meaning to an audience?
- How do artists identify and refine personal themes or questions in their work?
- How does experimentation lead to discovery and innovation in artmaking?
- What patterns can be found in an artist's work, and how do they help define artistic voice?
- How do artists use reflection and revision to strengthen their ideas?
- How does understanding historical and contemporary artists inform personal creative direction?
- What does it mean to create artwork with intentional purpose rather than isolated projects?

Essential Understandings

- Artists develop ideas through sustained inquiry, research, experimentation, and reflection.
- Artistic voice emerges over time through repeated exploration of personal themes and interests.
- Research and observation are essential drivers of meaningful artmaking.
- Creativity is strengthened through risk-taking, revision, and iterative processes.
- Artists identify patterns in their work that help define their style, intent, and direction.
- The creative process is cyclical and evolves through questioning, making, and reflecting.
- Teachers and peers serve as facilitators and collaborators in the development of artistic thinking.

Students Will Know

Students will be able to:

- Develop and refine open-ended, student-driven inquiry questions.
- Use brainstorming strategies such as mind mapping, sketching, and visual journaling to generate ideas.
- Conduct basic visual and contextual research to inform artistic decisions.
- Experiment with materials and processes to explore personal ideas.
- Document artistic processes through sketches, notes, reflections, and visual evidence.
- Identify patterns, themes, and interests within their developing body of work.
- Revise and refine artwork based on reflection and feedback.
- Articulate artistic intent using appropriate visual arts vocabulary.

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:

- Answer the essential questions.
- Engage in active and meaningful participation in classroom discussions and activities including critiques, and create artwork that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the work of renowned artists.
- Complete a writing prompt related to the influences of art and artists of the past on the art of today.
- Participate in evaluation of artwork produced through critique, self-assessment and teacher assessment (rubrics).
- Complete a summative evaluation using a rubric
- Draft an Artist Statement that articulates their artistic intent, themes, and material choices, expanding upon the required writing prompt.

Learning Plan

- Introduction to the concept of sustained investigation and how artists develop long-term bodies of work.

- Exploration of artist examples who use research and inquiry as the foundation of their practice.
- Guided brainstorming using mind mapping, sketchbook prompts, and visual journaling.
- Development of student-driven inquiry questions to guide artmaking.
- Teacher-led demonstrations of open-ended techniques and experimental processes.
- Structured sketchbook practice focusing on ideation, exploration, and iteration.
- Material experimentation using a variety of media including drawing, painting, collage, and mixed media.
- Ongoing documentation of process through visual journals and process notes.
- Small-group and individual conferences to support idea development and reflection.
- Identification of emerging themes, interests, and visual patterns in student work.
- Informal peer feedback sessions focused on intent and process rather than final product.
- Reflection checkpoints where students evaluate growth and refine their inquiry direction.
- Mid-point formal critique to evaluate the progression of the sustained investigation and apply peer/teacher feedback for revision.
- Final curation activity where students select, prepare, and display their artwork, simulating a professional portfolio review or gallery presentation.

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