Unit 01: Design Fundamentals

Content Area: **Fine Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

This unit introduces students to the dynamic relationship between industry-standard digital media tools and the creative design process. Students will explore how designers use technology to develop visually balanced, engaging, and effective compositions across a variety of media formats. Through the analysis of real-world print and digital examples, students will uncover the foundational principles and elements of design, including color, typography, layout, contrast, and composition, and begin applying these concepts to their own creative projects throughout the course. Emphasis will be placed on developing both technical proficiency and visual communication skills essential to the field of graphic design.

Revision Date: June 2026

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions:

- What is the role and purpose of graphic design in modern communication?
- What characteristics contribute to an effective and successful design?
- In what ways can graphic design skills be applied across different forms of communication?
- What qualities and competencies are essential for success in the field of graphic design?
- How has modern design software influenced the evolution of the graphic design industry?

Enduring Understandings:

- Graphic design plays a vital role in modern communication by visually conveying ideas, information, and messages in ways that inform, persuade, and engage diverse audiences.
- Effective and successful design is achieved through the thoughtful use of visual elements, creativity, organization, clarity, and an understanding of audience and purpose.
- Graphic design skills can be applied across a wide range of communication formats, including print, digital media, advertising, branding, social media, web design, and multimedia presentations.
- Success in the field of graphic design requires creativity, technical proficiency, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, adaptability, collaboration, and professionalism.
- Modern design software has transformed the graphic design industry by increasing creative

possibilities, improving efficiency, expanding accessibility, and enabling designers to produce and share work across multiple digital platforms.

Objectives

Students Will Know:

- The basic operations, tools and vocabulary related to Adobe Illustrator.
- The seven principles of design: balance, emphasis, proportion, contrast, rhythm, and unity.
- The basic elements of Graphic Design: text, space, color, line, shape, value.
- That a good design attracts, organizes, communicates, and makes a lasting impression.
- The difference between vector (resolution-independent) and raster (pixel-based) graphics, and how to appropriately save and export file formats

Students Will Be Skilled At:

- How to identify effective and ineffective design examples in the print world.
- How to critique and analyze their own work and work of their peers.
- How to utilize their knowledge and understanding of design to create an effective composition
- That the principles of design are guidelines for arranging the elements of a graphic design and are not to be considered a strict set of rules that will guarantee good results

Learning Plan

- Introduce and preview the essential questions for the unit, encouraging students to make connections between the questions, course objectives, and real-world applications of graphic design throughout the unit.
- Teacher-led presentation introducing the field of graphic design, including the role of visual communication in modern media, advertising, branding, and digital platforms.
- Teacher demonstration and guided instruction on the functions and applications of the basic tools and interface within Adobe Illustrator.
- Teacher presentation on the elements of design (line, shape, color, texture, space, form, and value) and the principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity), including professional examples and visual demonstrations.
- Students will research and identify real-world examples of each element and principle of design from print media, digital advertisements, logos, packaging, websites, and other visual sources.
- Students will collaborate in small groups to present and discuss their findings, analyzing how designers use visual elements to effectively communicate ideas and messages.
- Whole-class discussion and reflection activities focused on evaluating the effectiveness of various designs and identifying successful communication strategies.
- Students will participate in guided design challenges and problem-solving activities that require them to apply the elements and principles of design using class notes, reference materials, and handouts.
- Teacher-guided introduction to the Adobe Illustrator toolbar and workspace, including demonstrations of selection tools, shape tools, pen tools, type tools, color applications, layers, gradients, and alignment features.
- Students will complete practice exercises designed to reinforce the use of Adobe Illustrator tools while creating examples that demonstrate the elements and principles of design.
- Students will continue developing technical proficiency in Adobe Illustrator through structured tutorials, independent exploration, and creative exercises.
- Students will research and study the design process, including the design loop, brainstorming techniques, concept development, sketching, revision, critique, and refinement.
- Students will learn how designers generate ideas, organize concepts, and visually communicate solutions to design problems through planning and iteration.
- Using their understanding of Adobe Illustrator and design theory, students will create a comprehensive reference guide that demonstrates the elements and principles of design. This guide will serve as a resource throughout the duration of the course.
- Students will analyze and recreate existing logos using typography, color theory, shapes, and composition techniques to better understand branding and visual identity design.
- Teacher will introduce the Personal Logo Project through a detailed project handout outlining objectives, requirements, expectations, timelines, and assessment criteria.
- Students will conduct self-reflection activities and develop a list of at least ten adjectives that describe their personality, interests, values, and identity to help guide their logo development.
- Students will research color psychology, typography styles, symbolism, and logo trends to support their creative decision-making process.
- Students will generate multiple thumbnail sketches and preliminary concepts for their personal logos, experimenting with composition, symbols, fonts, and visual styles.
- Students will participate in instructor conferences and peer critiques to discuss their sketches, receive constructive feedback, and identify the strongest concepts for further development.
- Students will refine and digitally create two final logo designs in Adobe Illustrator: one designed in CMYK color mode and one in grayscale.
- Students will incorporate design requirements into their final products, including the use of their full name in at least one logo design and the application of a gradient within the CMYK version.
- Students will engage in ongoing peer reviews, self-reflection activities, and revision opportunities throughout the creative process to improve their work and strengthen

communication skills.
- Teacher will provide continuous individual instruction, small-group support, technical demonstrations, and differentiated assistance as needed throughout the unit.
- Students will complete formative assessments, including quizzes related to Adobe Illustrator tools, terminology, file management, and the elements and principles of design.
- Students will complete a final reflection and self-assessment using a rubric that evaluates creativity, technical skill, communication effectiveness, craftsmanship, and application of design concepts.
- Teacher assessment of student projects and participation will be conducted using project rubrics, critiques, quizzes, and observation of student growth throughout the unit.
- Students will utilize a structured feedback framework to provide constructive feedback during peer reviews.

Assessment

Formative

Students will be evaluated through daily exit tickets, quizzes on design principles and Adobe Illustrator, and participation in guided discussions. Additionally, they will engage in peer critiques and instructor conferences to refine their logo concepts and demonstrate their overall understanding.

Summative

Benchmark exams: Midterm Exam/Final Exam

Submission of final projects

Alternative Assessment

Present the project to peers and/or the community.

Complete writing prompt: Write a reflection defending your personal logo design choices, specifically analyzing how your use of typography and color psychology communicates your identity.

Materials

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  - Online design examples, tutorials, and step-by-step instructional guides demonstrating the use of Adobe Illustrator tools, design techniques, and professional graphic design practices.

- Teacher-created demonstrations and instructional presentations modeling design concepts, software techniques, creative problem-solving, and project expectations.
- Former student examples showcasing successful projects, logo designs, layouts, and applications of the elements and principles of design to provide students with reference points and inspiration.
- Professional graphic design samples from advertisements, logos, branding materials, websites, posters, packaging, and digital media used for analysis and discussion.
- Printed and digital handouts covering Adobe Illustrator tools, keyboard shortcuts, vocabulary, design terminology, project guidelines, and design process strategies.
- Class notes and guided lecture materials related to the elements and principles of design, typography, color theory, composition, branding, and visual communication.
- Instructional reference sheets and design process organizers to support brainstorming, sketching, concept development, and project planning.
- Assessment rubrics outlining project expectations, grading criteria, technical skills, creativity, craftsmanship, and participation requirements.
- Critique guides and peer review worksheets to support constructive feedback, reflection, and discussion during the design process.
- Adobe Illustrator software for creating digital illustrations, logos, compositions, and design projects.
- Computers or laptops capable of running Adobe Illustrator and supporting digital design work.
- Digital projector or interactive display for teacher demonstrations, presentations, and group critiques.
- Sketchbooks, drawing paper, or brainstorming worksheets for thumbnail sketches, concept development, and planning activities.

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

1.5.12prof.Cr	Creating
	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.
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.Cr2a	Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
1.5.12prof.Cr2c	Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.
TECH.K-12.1.4	Innovative Designer Students use a variety of technologies within a design process to identify and solve problems by creating new, useful or imaginative solutions.
TECH.K-12.1.4.a	know and use a deliberate design process for generating ideas, testing theories, creating innovative artifacts or solving authentic problems.
1.5.12prof.Pr4	Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.
TECH.K-12.1.4.b	select and use digital tools to plan and manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks.
TECH.K-12.1.4.c	develop, test and refine prototypes as part of a cyclical design process.
1.5.12prof.Pr4a	Analyze, select and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation.
1.5.12prof.Pr5	Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
1.5.12prof.Pr5a	Analyze and evaluate the reasons and ways an exhibition is presented.
1.5.12prof.Pr6	Conveying meaning through art.
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.
1.5.12prof.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
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.
1.5.12prof.Cn	Connecting
1.5.12prof.Cn10	Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
1.5.12prof.Cn10a	Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.
1.5.12prof.Cn11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding.
1.5.12prof.Cn11a	Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions and history may influence personal responses to art.
1.5.12prof.Cn11b	Describe how knowledge of global issues, including climate change, may influence personal responses to art.
I	Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
I.A.2	Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
I.B.1	Using evidence to investigate questions.
I.B.2	Devising and implementing a plan to fill knowledge gaps.
V	Explore: Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.
IV.B	Learners gather information appropriate to the task by:
IV.C	Learners exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by:
III	Collaborate: Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.

Integrated Accommodation and Modifications, Special Education students, English Language Learners, At-Risk Students, Gifted and Talented students, Career Education, and those with 504s

Instructional Accommodations

- Provide step-by-step written and visual instructions for all design projects and software demonstrations.
- Break larger assignments into smaller, manageable tasks with interim deadlines and check-ins.
- Use modeling and teacher demonstrations before independent student work.
- Provide guided notes, vocabulary lists, and graphic organizers for lectures and presentations.
- Offer repeated directions and clarify expectations verbally and visually.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary related to graphic design, Adobe Illustrator tools, and design principles.
- Allow students to access recorded demonstrations or tutorial videos for review at their own pace.
- Provide exemplars and sample projects to reinforce expectations and concepts.
- Use frequent comprehension checks during instruction and demonstrations.
- Provide one-on-one or small-group instructional support when needed.

Assignment and Assessment Modifications

- Allow extended time for quizzes, projects, and class assignments.
- Reduce the number of required design variations or sketches without compromising learning objectives.
- Modify project complexity based on student ability levels while maintaining core standards.
- Allow oral explanations or presentations in place of written reflections when appropriate.
- Provide alternative assessments such as guided critiques, interviews, or portfolio conferences.
- Use simplified rubrics with clearly defined criteria and visual supports.
- Permit revisions and resubmissions after feedback and teacher conferencing.
- Grade based on individual growth, effort, and mastery of essential skills when appropriate.

Technology and Software Supports

- Provide access to assistive technology tools, including text-to-speech and speech-to-text software.
- Allow use of adaptive computer equipment, alternative mice, keyboards, or styluses if needed.
- Create keyboard shortcut reference sheets and simplified tool guides for Adobe Illustrator.
- Provide templates, partially completed files, or scaffolded starter documents.
- Allow students to zoom in on workspaces or use accessibility settings within software programs.
- Offer digital copies of handouts and notes for organization and accessibility.

Classroom Environment Accommodations

- Preferential seating near instruction or teacher demonstrations.
- Provide a distraction-reduced environment for assessments or focused project work.
- Allow movement breaks or flexible seating options as needed.
- Maintain consistent classroom routines and clearly posted daily objectives.
- Use visual schedules and checklists to support organization and task completion.
- Provide additional time for transitions between activities or software tasks.

Organizational and Executive Function Supports

- Assist students with project planning, time management, and organization of digital files.
- Provide project timelines with checkpoints and reminders.
- Use task checklists and progress-monitoring sheets during long-term projects.
- Help students organize digital folders and save work appropriately.
- Encourage use of planners, calendars, or digital reminders for assignment deadlines.

Social-Emotional and Communication Supports

- Encourage participation in peer critiques using structured sentence starters and guided feedback forms.
- Provide positive reinforcement and encouragement throughout the creative process.
- Allow students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways.
- Support student self-advocacy by encouraging questions and clarification requests.
- Create opportunities for collaborative learning with supportive peer partners or groups.
- Foster a classroom culture that values creativity, effort, revision, and individual growth.

Fine Motor and Processing Accommodations

- Allow additional time for precise digital design work requiring fine motor control.
- Provide alternative methods for sketching or brainstorming, including digital sketch tools.
- Reduce repetitive drawing or tracing requirements if they create unnecessary barriers.
- Allow students to verbally explain concepts before translating ideas into digital formats.

English Language Learner and Reading Supports (when applicable)

- Pair visual examples with written directions.
- Simplify complex reading materials and provide audio or translated supports when available.
- Reinforce concepts through demonstrations and hands-on learning opportunities.
- Provide sentence frames for critiques, reflections, and project discussions.

Collaboration with Support Staff

- Coordinate with special education teachers, case managers, counselors, and related service providers to ensure accommodations are consistently implemented.
- Maintain ongoing communication regarding student progress, challenges, and successful strategies.
- Adjust instructional pacing and supports based on individual student needs and documented accommodations.