Unit 04: Type and Design

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

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the critical role typography plays in graphic design and visual communication. Instruction introduces the history and evolution of type design, exploring its use in organizing information, establishing hierarchy, communicating tone, and strengthening overall design effectiveness. Students will master foundational typography principles, including font classification, readability, alignment, spacing, kerning, leading, tracking, and visual hierarchy, alongside professional type vocabulary. Through guided demonstrations, analysis of professional examples, and hands-on creative activities using Adobe Illustrator, students will examine type as both a functional tool and an expressive visual element. They will apply this knowledge to create original letterforms and dynamic typographic compositions, culminating in a hands on final project. This unit emphasizes how typography influences audience perception across print and digital media, fostering an appreciation for type as a powerful tool for both information delivery and artistic expression

Revised: August 2026

Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions:

- How does typography influence the success or failure of a design, and why is type selection such an important part of visual communication?
- In what ways can typography function as both a communication tool and a visual design element within a composition?
- How can type itself become a form of artistic expression and creative design?
- What creative and technical processes are involved in the development of effective type and letterform design?
- How do designers use typography to establish hierarchy, mood, and audience engagement?
- Why do different typefaces communicate different emotions, messages, and brand identities?
- How can typography enhance readability while also strengthening the overall visual impact of a design?
- In what ways does typography shape the way people interpret and respond to visual media?
- How do designers ensure typography is accessible and inclusive for all audiences, including those with visual and reading impairments?

Enduring Understandings:

- Letterforms are constructed from carefully designed shapes and structures that work together to create readability, balance, and visual appeal. Understanding the relationship between shape and typography helps designers create type that communicates effectively while maintaining strong aesthetic qualities.
- Different type styles and font families convey unique expressive qualities and emotional tones. Designers strategically select typography to reinforce mood, personality, audience appeal, and the overall message of a composition.
- Typography is not only a communication tool but also a visual art form and an essential component of graphic design. Type can function as imagery, create emphasis and hierarchy, and serve as a powerful element of visual expression within a composition.
- Effective typography combines creativity and technical precision, requiring designers to consider spacing, proportion, alignment, contrast, and readability when developing successful visual communication.
- The design of type influences how viewers interpret information and engage with media, making typography one of the most important elements in both print and digital design.

Objectives

Students Will Know:

- How to apply typography in an expressive and purposeful way that communicates ideas clearly, effectively, and memorably to an audience. Students will explore how designers use font choice, spacing, alignment, hierarchy, scale, and composition to guide the reader's eye and enhance readability while also creating visual interest and emotional impact. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how strong typographic design reduces visual confusion and allows information to be communicated with clarity and efficiency.
- How to design and create original letterforms by applying an understanding of shape, proportion, balance, and composition. Students will experiment with constructing custom typography and stylized characters that reflect creativity while maintaining readability and visual consistency. Through sketching, refinement, and digital development, students will explore how typography can function as both written communication and artistic expression.
- That typography is an essential component of graphic design and visual communication. Students will examine how type influences branding, advertising, packaging, websites, posters, and digital media, and how effective typography strengthens the message and overall success of a design. They will develop an understanding that typography is not simply the placement of words, but a critical design element capable of establishing tone, hierarchy, mood, and audience engagement.
- The foundational vocabulary associated with typography and letterform design, including terms such as ascender, descender, serif, sans serif, x-height, baseline, counter, kerning, leading, tracking, and alignment. Students will learn how these structural components affect readability, style, and visual organization within a composition. Developing fluency in typographic terminology will enable students to analyze professional work, participate in critiques, and communicate design concepts with greater confidence and professionalism.
- How typography combines technical precision with creative problem-solving. Students will learn that successful typographic design requires careful attention to spacing, proportion, readability, and composition while also allowing opportunities for artistic experimentation and innovation.

- How designers use typography to create hierarchy and direct viewer attention. Students will explore how variations in size, weight, spacing, and placement help organize information and communicate importance within a layout, making visual communication more engaging and effective.

Students Will Be Skilled At:

- Creating recognizable and expressive letterforms through the use of Adobe Illustrator's Pen Tool. Students will learn how to construct custom typography by creating and editing anchor points, curves, and paths with precision and control. Emphasis will be placed on developing letterforms that balance creativity with readability while exploring how shape, proportion, and line quality contribute to effective typographic design.
- Using the Type Tool and the Type on a Path Tool to create dynamic typographic compositions. Students will explore how text can interact with shapes, curves, and custom paths to enhance visual communication and create more engaging layouts. Instruction will focus on how designers use type placement and movement to guide the viewer's eye and reinforce a design's message.
- Adjusting the size, weight, and stroke of typography to create hierarchy, emphasis, and visual contrast within a composition. Students will experiment with scaling type, modifying stroke thickness, and manipulating typographic elements to achieve balanced and visually effective designs.
- Researching, downloading, installing, and organizing professional typefaces for use in graphic design projects. Students will learn how to properly unzip font files and upload typefaces into Adobe font management systems while discussing the importance of font selection in professional visual communication. Emphasis will also be placed on copyright awareness and the ethical use of digital design resources.
- Rotating, reflecting, and transforming typography to create visually dynamic compositions and experimental typographic arrangements. Students will explore how movement, symmetry, and orientation can influence mood, emphasis, and audience engagement within a design.
- Converting typography into outlines and modifying letterforms using the Direct Selection Tool. Students will learn how to manipulate anchor points, curves, and paths to customize type, create original typographic artwork, and transform standard fonts into expressive visual forms. This process will encourage experimentation with shape, distortion, and creative typography.
- Applying drop shadows and layered visual effects using commands such as CTRL+C and CTRL+B to duplicate and position objects behind original artwork. Students will explore how these techniques can create depth, dimension, contrast, and emphasis within typographic compositions while strengthening the visual impact of their designs.
- Using locking and unlocking functions to manage complex compositions efficiently within Adobe Illustrator. Students will learn organizational strategies that improve workflow, maintain design accuracy, and allow for easier editing of layered artwork and typography.
- Utilizing the Warp Effect functions in Adobe Illustrator to creatively manipulate text and create expressive typographic effects. Students will experiment with a variety of warp styles, including Arc, Arc Upper, Arc Lower, Arch, Bulge, Shell Upper, Shell Lower, Flag, Wave, Fisheye, Inflate, Squeeze, and Twist. Through these exercises, students will explore how distortion and movement can add personality, energy, and visual interest to typography while reinforcing the overall concept and communication goals of a design.
- Combining technical Illustrator skills with the principles of typography and design to create original typographic compositions that communicate ideas creatively and effectively. Students will strengthen both their artistic expression and technical proficiency while learning industry-relevant digital design practices.

Learning Plan

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    - Introduce and review the unit's essential questions, encouraging students to make meaningful connections between typography, visual communication, and creative problem-solving throughout the learning process. Discussions will focus on how typography can function as both a communication tool and a visual image within professional graphic design.
    - Teacher-led presentation and demonstration on the creation of custom letterforms and the manipulation of typography using Adobe Illustrator. During instruction, students will complete guided notes and handout activities designed to reinforce typography vocabulary, technical processes, and design concepts. The instructor will revisit the Pen Tool and demonstrate advanced techniques for creating, editing, and refining vector shapes and letterforms using interactive whiteboard demonstrations and step-by-step modeling.
    - Students will recreate instructor-led demonstrations to practice technical skills and reinforce understanding of the design process. Completed practice exercises will be presented to the instructor for formative assessment to ensure comprehension of the tools, techniques, and procedures involved in creating expressive typographic forms.
    - Collaborative class activities and discussions will engage students in solving design challenges using the Pen Tool and typography-based compositions. Students will apply creative thinking and technical skills to explore how type can communicate meaning, create imagery, and strengthen visual impact within a design.
    - Research-based class activity in which students investigate international cities and identify the visual characteristics that define them. Students will analyze landmarks, architecture, animals, symbols, cultural imagery, typography styles, and other recognizable elements associated with their selected cities. This research process will help students develop concepts and visual references for their typographic illustration project.
    - Introduction and review of the unit design project: *Using Type as Image.* Students will receive a project handout outlining objectives, requirements, and assessment criteria. Using Adobe Illustrator exclusively, students will design and create three recognizable illustrations constructed primarily from typography. Each illustration will visually represent an international city chosen by the student through the creative use of the city's name and typographic manipulation techniques.
    - Students will apply typography as both text and image by transforming letterforms into recognizable visual compositions. While additional illustrative elements may be incorporated when necessary, typography must account for at least 90% of the final composition. Emphasis will be placed on creativity, readability, craftsmanship, composition, and the successful integration of type and imagery.
    - Throughout the project, students will utilize Illustrator tools and techniques including type manipulation, outlines, scaling, rotation, reflection, warp effects, and custom letterform creation to develop visually engaging and conceptually strong typographic artwork. Instruction will emphasize experimentation, revision, and creative exploration as essential parts of the design process.
    - Ongoing teacher facilitation, individualized support, and technical assistance will be provided throughout the unit to accommodate varying skill levels and encourage artistic growth, problem-solving, and mastery of professional digital design tools.
    - Student presentations and structured class critiques will provide opportunities for peer feedback, discussion, and reflection on the effectiveness of typography, composition, and visual communication within each project. Students will practice using professional design vocabulary

to evaluate and discuss creative work.
- Final projects will be assessed through teacher evaluation and student self-assessment using a rubric aligned with unit objectives, technical proficiency, creativity, application of typography principles, and overall effectiveness of visual communication.

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

Design and create the final project (Using Type as Image), designing three recognizable typographic illustrations of selected international cities.

Benchmark assessments: Midterm Exam/Final Exam

Alternative Assessment

Present the project to peers and/or the community.

Complete writing prompt: Complete a writing prompt analyzing the typographic choices, mood, and visual hierarchy of a professional design piece.

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

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.
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.Pr5a	Analyze and evaluate the reasons and ways an exhibition is presented.
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.Re7a	Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
1.5.12prof.Re7b	Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual arts.

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.Re9a	Establish relevant criteria in order to evaluate a work of art or collection of works.
1.5.12prof.Cn	Connecting
1.5.12prof.Cn10a	Document the process of developing ideas from early stages to fully elaborated ideas.
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.