Graphic Design for 21st Century Presentations: Integrated Art & Technology Curriculum

Matthew Hagaman, Kim McHenry

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Teachers often feel prepared to help students do high-quality research, but not every teacher feels prepared to help students organize information using effective visuals.

This curriculum is meant to help general education and content-area teachers give students valuable knowledge in a small amount of class time. Each mini-lesson in this set of eight should take around ten minutes each, yet be enough to give students the skills and tools they need to create communicative graphics of which they can be proud.

Lesson 1: Starting Strong
Beginning with a strong title, thesis, and/or tag-line, students learn to focus their energy and attention on the most relevant research elements.

Lesson 2: An Introduction to Imagery
As students begin research and gathering images, they learn to consider the role imagery might play in a final poster or presentation, choosing the most meaningful images using search tools.

Lesson 3: Flow of Information
Before visuals are developed, students consider how their topics and details might be naturally grouped.

Lesson 4: Principles of Design
Students use shape-based examples and non-examples to consider how alignment, balance, emphasis, movement, and proportion affect design.

Lesson 5: Preliminary Sketches
To extend the previous lesson, students practice design principles using real-world examples. They add and apply the concepts of repetition and unity as students begin sketching their own layouts.
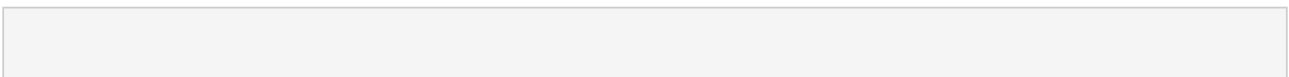
Lesson 6: Peer Critiques
It may be difficult for students to implement all elements of design in their initial sketches, so students are given time to solicit suggestions for improving their design mock-ups.

Lesson 7: Textual Styling
Students enjoy choosing fun fonts, but there are a number of factors they should consider. In this short lesson, students learn to choose appropriate styles for meaning and readability.

Lesson 8: Review with Color and Contrast
With posters nearing completion, students learn to use color and contrast to enhance rather than distract from the information on their poster.

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