

**Unit 2: Animating with After Effects**  
**Motion Graphics & Animation**  
18 Classes

*Rev. May 2025*

**Essential Questions**

- How can motion graphics and visual effects be used to communicate ideas, tell stories, or influence an audience?
- What techniques and tools in After Effects help turn static elements into dynamic, engaging visuals?

**Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals**

**EU 1:** Motion graphics combine design, animation, and storytelling to effectively communicate messages and enhance visual experiences across media.

- Analyze how motion graphics are used in various media (e.g., film, advertising, social media) to inform, entertain, or persuade.
- Students will apply design principles (such as balance, contrast, hierarchy, and rhythm) in animated compositions.
- Students will create projects that use animation to visually enhance storytelling or communication.

**EU 2:** Mastery of digital tools like After Effects requires both technical skill and creative problem-solving to bring static elements to life.

- Students will develop proficiency in After Effects tools including keyframes, masks and effects.
- Students will troubleshoot and refine their work using critical thinking and experimentation with animation tools.

**Standards**

**ISTE Standards**

- Standard 3. Knowledge constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
  - 3a. Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
  - 3b. Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.

- 3c. Students curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.
- 3d. Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
- Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.
  - 6b. Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
  - 6d. Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for their intended audiences.

## ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

**Competency 1:** Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

**Competency 2:** Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

**Competency 3:** Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

**Competency 4:** Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

**Competency 5:** Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

## Unit Content Overview

### 1. Foundational Concepts:

- **Understanding After Effects:** Introduce the interface, project structure, and basic terminology.
- **Layers and Compositing:** Explain how layers are used to build animations and understand different layer types.
- **Keyframes:** Teach students how to use keyframes to animate properties like position, scale, and opacity.
- **Basic Animation Techniques:** Introduce concepts like easing, interpolation, and motion paths.

### 2. Hands-on Projects and Activities:

- **Simple Animations:**  
Guide students through creating simple animations like a logo reveal, a bouncing ball, or a character moving across the screen.
- **Text Animations:**  
Teach students how to animate text, create titles, and add basic effects.
- **Visual Effects:**  
Introduce basic visual effects like masking, shape layers, and 3D transformations.

- **Importing and Exporting:**  
Teach students how to import images, video, and audio into After Effects and export their projects in different formats.
3. Beyond the Basics:
- **Parenting and Grouping:** Introduce the concept of parenting to create complex rigs and movement.
  - **Expressions:** Provide a brief introduction to expressions, focusing on using them to animate simple properties.
  - **Color Correction and Grading:** Teach basic color correction and grading techniques to enhance their animations.

### Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

#### Students will be able to...

- Navigate the After Effects interface and explain the purpose of the timeline, composition window, and tools panel.
  - *What do you think motion graphics are, and where have you seen them used?*
- Use and organize layers to build a basic composition with multiple visual elements.
  - *How is building a project in After Effects like stacking paper or drawing on transparency sheets?*
- Create and adjust keyframes to animate an object's position, scale, or opacity.
  - *What does a "frame" mean in animation, and what happens when we change something from frame to frame?*
- Animate objects using position, scale, rotation, and opacity with keyframes.
  - *What kind of movements make animations feel realistic or smooth?*
- Use Easy Ease and the motion graph editor to make animations feel more natural.
  - *Why might a ball bounce differently than a robot moves?*
- Create a short animated scene using at least two animated objects and a background.
  - *If you could animate one object to do something funny, what would it be?*
- Add timing and sequencing to multiple layers for a coordinated animation.
  - *What happens when you try to animate two things at once? How do you control the timing?*
- Use pre-compositions to organize and group simple animated scenes.
  - *Why might it be helpful to group certain things together before animating them?*
- Add and animate basic text using position, scale, and opacity.

- *What kinds of text animations do you notice in movie titles or YouTube intros?*
- Use built-in text animator presets and customize them.
  - *How can the way text moves give it a certain feeling or attitude?*
- Create a title sequence using multiple animated text elements with transitions.
  - *What makes a good title screen memorable or exciting?*
- Apply built-in effects (like glow, blur, or drop shadow) to enhance a composition.
  - *What's your favorite visual effect from a movie or game? What made it cool?*
- Use green screen footage and keying tools to composite video into a new background.
  - *How do filmmakers make it look like someone's standing on the moon or flying?*
- Combine multiple effects and layers to create a short visual effects scene.
  - *What happens when you start layering effects together? Can too many effects ruin a scene?*
- Import assets and export a finished animation using proper settings.
  - *Why do you think it's important to use the right file type when saving or sharing a project?*
- Use parenting to link objects together for coordinated movement.
  - *If one object moves and brings another with it, how could that help in animation?*
- Use basic expressions (like wiggle) to automate animation behavior.
  - *What if you could tell your animation what to do using a little bit of code?*
- Adjust color, brightness, and contrast to improve the visual tone of a scene.
  - *How does changing colors or lighting change the mood of a video?*

### **Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction**

- Daily Warm Up Activities
- Lecture slides with guided note-taking
- Flexible grouping
- Exit slips
- Graphic Organizers
- Creating authentic connections for students
- Rephrasing and restatement of information and concepts
- Student use of headphones
- Independent reading
- Outlining of text

### **Assessments**

#### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:**

- Do Now
- Animation Activities

- Student discussions and responses
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers

**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:**

Unit Task - “Animate the Words”

**Unit Task**

**Task Name:** *"Animate the Beat: Synced Text Motion Video"*

**Description:**

Students will choose a short audio clip (30–60 seconds) from a school-appropriate song, speech, or interview. Using After Effects, they will create an animated text video that syncs the on-screen words to the audio. Students must creatively animate the text using timing, transitions, color, and movement to reflect the tone and rhythm of the audio. This project emphasizes timing, expression, and visual storytelling through text (EU 1, EU2)

**Unit Resources**

Adobe After Effects