Photography: Darkroom to Digital - Unit 2 - Digital Photo

Unit Focus

This five-week instructional unit serves as a rigorous transition where students evolve from casual hobbyists into intentional photographic artists by mastering key Profile of a Graduate competencies. Structured as a progressive scaffold, the curriculum moves from the mechanics of the Exposure Triangle to high-level multimedia synthesis, requiring students to demonstrate Design by developing strategic plans that examine the impact of technical choices on finished products while purposefully refining work based on feedback and reflection. As students navigate diverse environments from controlled studios to unpredictable ecosystems and fast-paced photojournalism, they must also exhibit Self-Awareness by reflecting on technical strengths, managing time effectively across varied tasks, and staying motivated to achieve professional outcomes. Ultimately, students prove they can maintain technical correctness while prioritizing creative vision and professional ethics, using experiences to provide specific evidence of growth in these capacities. Students will also continue to explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are influencing the field of photography from concept development to post-production, while learning to navigate these tools in an ethical and responsible manner.

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

Standard(s)

Connecticut Goals and Standards
Technology Education (CTE)

- View file names on a storage device. (TE.CADD.C.14)
- Store, copy, move, and retrieve information to/from various drives. (TE.CADD.C.15)
- Rename and backup files. (TE.CADD.C.16)
- Identify the components of the design process: define the problem, brainstorm, research, develop solutions, prototype, test/evaluate, and communicate results. (TE.ET.H.25)

National Core Arts Standards
Visual Arts: HS Accomplished

- Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art-making. (VA:Cn10.1.HSII.a)
- Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision. (VA:Cr3.1.HSII.a)
- Analyze, select, and critique personal artwork for a collection or portfolio presentation. (VA:Pr.4.1.HSII.a)

Transfer

Students will be able to independently use their learning to...
T1 Create intentional visual narratives by manipulating light, composition, and technology to evoke specific emotional responses in an audience.
T2 Analyze and Critique visual media using professional vocabulary to evaluate the technical and ethical impact of images in a global context.
T3 Curate a professional digital identity that documents their growth, process, and mastery of a craft for a real-world audience.

Meaning

Understanding(s)

Students will understand that...
U1 Intentionality: Mastery in photography comes from controlling variables (aperture, shutter speed, ISO) rather than relying on chance.
U2 The Power of Light: Light is not just a requirement for visibility; it is a tool for emotional impact and "visual guidance."
U3 The Intentional Eye: Professional photography is not an "instant" act but a deliberate process of decision-making regarding light, time, and framing.
U4 Light as Language: Light is the primary "ink" of photography; its quality, direction, and intensity fundamentally change the story being told.

Essential Question(s)

Students will keep considering...
Q1 Professional: How does the process of curation and reflection in a digital portfolio transform a student from a learner into a professional practitioner?
Q2 Ethical: What are the legal and ethical responsibilities of a photographer when documenting reality or engaging with diverse communities?
Q3 How does a photographer move from "getting lucky" to producing high-quality work consistently?

Stage 1: Desired Results - Key Understandings

- Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences. (VA:Re7.2.HSII.a)

MPS AI Literacy Framework

AI Literacy

- The capability of generative AI, particularly large language models (LLMs), to generate humanlike content can make it difficult to distinguish fact from fabrication, increasing the potential to generate misinformation, deepfakes, or manipulative materials. (K4.3)

Madison Public Schools Profile of a Graduate

- Design: Engaging in a process to refine a product for an intended audience and purpose. (POG.2.2)
- Self-Awareness: Examining current performance critically to identify steps/ strategies to persist. (POG.4.1)

U5 Visual Literacy: Mastering the "grammar" of composition (leading lines, rule of thirds, etc.) allows a photographer to guide a viewer's eye and move from passive capturing to active constructing.
U6 Communication: A photograph is a "visual vocabulary" that communicates complex stories to diverse audiences without the need for words.
U7 Ethics & Citizenship: Photographers hold power as historical witnesses and must balance artistic expression with legal boundaries and ethical responsibilities.

Q4 How do technical constraints (chemistry, manual camera settings) actually foster creative freedom?
Q5 In a world saturated with "snapshots," what makes an image a "story"?
Q6 Why is the ability to critique and be critiqued essential to the growth of an artist?

Acquisition of Knowledge and Skill

Knowledge	Skill(s)
Students will know... **K1** Technical Mechanics: The triangular relationship between Aperture, Enlarger Height, and Exposure Time. **K2** Compositional Grammar: Principles of design, including leading lines, the rule of thirds, value (negative space), and point of view. **K3** Studio Lighting: The six types of portrait lighting and how to replicate them using both artificial and natural sunlight. **K4** Technical Vocabulary: Terms like Aperture (f-stops), ISO, Shutter Speed, Depth of Field, and Negative Space. **K5** Compositional Rules: Rule of Thirds, Leading Lines, Point of View, and the Principles of Design **K6** Lighting Types: The six types of in-studio lighting and their natural-light equivalents.	*Students will be skilled at...* **S1** Critical Analysis: Evaluating information critically and identifying patterns in their own work and the work of peers (Critical Thinking). **S2** Digital Curation: Building and organizing a Google Site portfolio to serve as a professional digital archive **S3** Physical Craftsmanship: Using a mat cutter with precision to prepare work for a gallery exhibition.