

Beginning Art

8th Grade • 3rd Period • Semester Course

KEN MORRILL | VISUAL ART & DESIGN

Investigate • Design • Make • Reflect

Course Overview

Beginning Art is a semester-long studio course in which students use art and design to investigate identity, culture, communication, and real-world problems. Students will build technique while making increasingly independent choices, documenting their process, participating in critique, and explaining the thinking behind finished work.

What Students Will Learn

- Use the artistic and design processes to develop, test, revise, and complete original work.
- Apply composition, color, value, form, space, and visual hierarchy with intention.
- Connect artwork to identity, culture, artists, audiences, and contemporary issues.
- Give and use specific feedback during critique and revision.
- Present work professionally and communicate decisions through artist statements and reflection.

Semester Learning Plan

The sequence may shift to support school events, interdisciplinary projects, material availability, and student learning needs.

Unit	Focus
1. Identity & Visual Voice	A self-portrait or identity-based work using symbolism, composition, observation, and personal choice.
2. Artists, Culture & Perspective	Research and studio work inspired by diverse modern and contemporary artists, with attention to context and respectful interpretation.
3. Graphic Communication	Logo, poster, campaign, or visual identity work using typography, hierarchy, color, and audience awareness.
4. Design Thinking Challenge	A student-centered product, environment, or experience developed through a design brief, prototypes, feedback, and revision.
5. Collaborative / Public-Facing Work	A mural, exhibition, installation, or themed contribution that connects individual ideas to a larger system.
6. Portfolio & Reflection	Curated evidence of process and final work, including critique, revision, presentation, and a written reflection.

How Grades Work

Total-points system.

Grades are calculated by dividing points earned by points possible. There are no weighted grading categories. Major projects will usually include multiple scored components so students receive feedback while work is still in progress—not only after the final product is submitted.

- Process evidence: brainstorming, research, sketches, storyboards, plans, tests, drafts, and productive studio work
- Application: use of course concepts, techniques, tools, and vocabulary
- Revision: response to critique, problem-solving, improvement, and persistence
- Final communication: craftsmanship, completion, presentation, artist statement or reflection

Important grading notice: Beginning July 1, 2026, South Carolina law prohibits a public school or district from requiring a teacher to assign a minimum score higher than a student's actual performance (S.C. Act 204 of 2026; S.C. Code §59-29-250(A)). Grades in this course therefore reflect demonstrated evidence on a 0–100 scale; there is no automatic 50-point floor.

Project-Progress Guideposts

These guideposts describe common points on the continuum. Scores between the listed ranges represent evidence that falls between the neighboring descriptions. Rubrics and point values will identify the requirements for each assignment.

Score guidepost	Evidence of progress
0	No evidence submitted for the project component.
50–58	Some work is present, but substantial revision is needed.
72–78	The work is developing and moving toward the project goal.
80–88	Project progress is going well; key expectations are being addressed.
90–96	The project is entering its final stages with strong progress.
98–100	The component is complete and meets or exceeds all expectations.

Missing Work, Revision & Deadlines

- A missing component earns no points until evidence is submitted; a zero communicates that no assessable evidence is currently available.
- Students should submit work by the posted deadline and communicate early when an absence, technical problem, or other barrier affects progress.
- Revision is part of art and media production. When revision is offered, students must use feedback and resubmit within the announced window.
- Work submitted after a deadline will be handled according to current school and district policy.

AI Use in This Course

AI may be used only when Mr. Morrill explicitly authorizes it and only for advanced brainstorming, research assistance, or reflection on a student's own work. When AI is used, the approved classroom platform will be MagicSchool AI.

- AI may support thinking; it may not replace the student's artistic decisions, original production, or explanation of learning.
- All writing begins on paper. Students may type a revised version only after receiving feedback from Mr. Morrill.

- Students must be able to explain, verify, and take responsibility for every idea, fact, image choice, and written statement they submit.
- AI-generated final artwork, video, scripts, artist statements, or reflections are not permitted unless a specific assignment explicitly says otherwise.
- Unapproved AI use may result in the work being returned for an original redo and will be addressed under school academic-integrity procedures.

Studio / Production Expectations

Be ready: Enter, review the learning target, gather materials, and begin the opening task promptly.

Make the process visible: Keep sketches, plans, tests, drafts, source notes, critique feedback, and revisions.

Use time responsibly: Remain engaged in the current stage of the project and ask for help before becoming stuck.

Respect people and ideas: Offer specific, constructive feedback; seek consent; and avoid harmful, discriminatory, or inappropriate content.

Care for the space: Use tools correctly, conserve materials, store work carefully, and complete cleanup before dismissal.

Protect original work: Credit sources and collaborators; follow copyright, fair-use, privacy, and academic-integrity expectations.

Materials & Technology

- Pencil and eraser
- Sketchbook or teacher-provided process paper
- School-issued device when assigned
- Teacher-provided studio and digital art materials

Students should not bring expensive or specialized materials unless a request has been communicated in advance. Alternatives will be provided when possible.

Safety & Equipment

Students must use tools and materials only as demonstrated, wear required protective equipment, keep aisles and work areas clear, report spills or damaged tools immediately, and follow all cleanup procedures.

Collaboration, Critique & Student Voice

Students will sometimes work in teams, but each student is responsible for documenting an individual contribution. Critique is a learning conversation: students describe what they notice, connect feedback to the project goal, ask questions, and suggest useful next steps. Students will have meaningful choices in subject, format, role, or solution whenever the project allows.

Family Communication & Support

Families should review posted grades and assignment information regularly through Backpack. Questions about progress are most helpful when they identify the specific assignment or project component. Students are encouraged to speak with Mr. Morrill during class and use announced support or revision opportunities.

Acknowledgment

Students and families should review this syllabus together. Course plans may be adjusted to meet student needs, school schedules, safety requirements, or updated school and district policies. Any significant change will be communicated.

Student name: _____ Class period: _____

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____