Justification

Newspaper Design Unit
By Justin Raisner

User assumptions
This unit has been designed for high school students entering Journalism 2 and 3 as an introduction to design concepts for print media. The students are 10th through 12th graders at a school with a tradition of excellent school newspapers, so they go into this class knowing the stakes are high. Students enrolled in this class will already have produced content for both the school newspaper and the school news website.

This unit will occur near the beginning of the school year. Journalism students must become proficient in elements of design so they can effectively and intelligently create their own design layouts for the school newspaper. These students are the editors of the high school newspaper, and part of their learning outcomes that will be assessed is the ability to design newspapers.

Students for whom this unit is intended are very eager to learn and improve their skills. All of these students have taken journalism classes as a prerequisite, and they have been selected as editors based on their aptitude and attitudes. This is the leadership team of the school newspaper staff, and they all want to excel to continue the award-winning tradition.

Students taking this lesson will have learned about libel, copyright, ethics, and basic journalism skills. In the previous semester, students will have participated in the design process as part of the design team (although not as primary designers). Part of advancing to Journalism 3 includes basic aptitude with computer systems, so the students will be able to log on, open files, locate and save files from the Internet or the network, and share files via Google.docs. Students will have been given an introductory lesson on Adobe inDesign, so they will be able to import images and execute the design ideas presented by this unit.

Graphic Descriptions

Image 1
http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/raisnerj/506/images/badideas.jpg

I did a google search of bad images to find these. The point of this visual is for students to make an early connection with how important design is by showing ridiculously bad designs.
To separate the bad designs, I boxed them subtly using color and lines to make rectangular containers. “Squares and rectangles can contain information, facilitate comparisons, focus attention, and show hierarchy” (Lohr, 2008, p. 250).

Image 2
http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/raisnerj/506/images/newseum.jpg

These images will be used to spark a discussion of type choices. Examples from http://newseum.com – used as part of the introduction, this website lists the best newspaper layouts of each day.

I plan to call attention to the concept of font spacing and distortion to achieve the desired look. I will point out the fact that the DEAD. on the Bin Laden fron page is large, but the four letter word is spaced out intentionally to fill space and give it an intentional design. It is important to emphasize that “. . . kerning is performed to improved the appearance of a heading” (Lohr, 2008, p. 237).

Image 3
http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/raisnerj/506/images/carp.jpg

This is the CARP visual of the student planner. This is used for students to take notes of and show examples of the execution.

This is a clean, simple design used to point out very clearly the four CARP elements. I used the student planner as an example because it is something all of them have seen without even realizing the intentionality of the design.

Image 4
http://edtech2.boisestate.edu/raisnerj/506/images/carpexample.jpg

This image effective points out how each of the CARP elements are used in a newspaper layout. This is based on the newspaper published by the school last April, so all the students will have seen it. The students generally felt that this was a very good design, but this visual will help to illustrate why it worked well.

One thing that I will point out to students is the concept of repetition. “When you employ repetition, you take some element of a visual and use it again” (Lohr, 2008 p. 203). In this case, the green circle of the Starbucks cup was repeated by the green circle of the pie chart. This helps readers see the relationship and connection between the two things.

Another thing I will call attention to is the concept of proximity. As stated by Lohr (2008) “When elements are close together, they seem related” (p. 203). The Starbucks cup, the graph, and the stats are all close together.
This image is the basis for what will be used in the later graphic organizer. It is a front page mock-up with newspaper-design concepts of Masthead, lead story, dominant headline, dominant visual, balance, and above-the-fold highlighted. This will be used for students to write in notes and understand that designs must incorporate and account for these concepts.

With this design I wanted to make sure to “choose colors to make important information stand out...” (Lohr, 2008, pg. 267). Since the students are taking note, they should easily be able to identify the bright red spots as important information that needs to be copied.

It is also important to note at this time the importance of headlines and photograph placement. Headlines are often used by readers as proxies for the full content of news articles (Althaus et al. 2001), therefore it is very important to place more emphasis on them.

Also worth noting is that “the newspaper is a hierarchical medium, so it uses a set of priority “markers,” . . . to draw readers’ attention to certain stories (Buchanan, 2009, p.71).

This image effective points out how each of the key terms one the graphic have an impact on the readability and legibility of text. The images of the newspapers with different mastheads are actually newspapers published by the class with varying degrees of legibility.

I laid them on top of one another with drop shadows to create the illusion of depth. I also added the emboss effect to the arrows that point out the different mastheads to further the depth illusion. “Shadows give an image dimension, or depth . . .” (Lohr 2008, p 272). Each element has drop shadows turned on to help with the symmetry of the design. I also used guidelines to line up the different shapes’ tops and bottoms - even though they are different, they start and end at the same place.

The design also uses white space to create separation between the different elements. Although there is a lot of information in the design, the ideas are separated and grouped by the barriers created by the white space.

The other thing I did was add color to the middle box and flipped the text font to white to emphasize what I wanted people to see as the main information in the design. By adding the color, it puts it in the “figure” instead of the ground. “The figure is typically the information that visual designers want to stand out” (Lohr 2008, p. 100)
This challenge activity should be printed as a handout and displayed on the board. The challenge asks students to create a graphic with PowerPoint using only text that will represent the mood of the words assigned. This is important to show students that “type can be an organizing shape” (Lohr, 2008, p. 215).

This information is presented using a top to bottom structure - a natural hierarchy of information. Clarke (1991) suggests top down graphics assist students in their ability to understand and process information.

In designing this graphic, I wanted to make sure to draw students eyes to the directions. I chose to make the simple directions a large type font at the top of the page. As stated in our text, "Simple shapes such as lines and arrows, larger or bold typeface . . . act to draw attention" (Lohr 2008, p. 123). Also stated in the text was the importance of putting the more critical information near the top because we are programmed to place more importance on information that is higher up.

I also used color and depth techniques to make sure the spots that required attention and feedback from the students would be more obvious. This effectively makes the graphic organizer easy to understand with minimal directions needed.

The purpose of creating a graphic organizer for this is not only because it can demonstrate the students’ knowledge, but it is also an effective strategy for students to commit the information to memory (Marzano et al., 2001). Since this is key information they will need to complete the project at the end of the unit, it is important that it is remembered accurately.

**Lesson Plan Design Process**

*Clearly and fully describes a step-by-step process of following the instructional model for the unit*

**Day 1:**

*Intro:*
Show bad design examples [LINK]
Show sample front pages from various newspapers. Ask students what is good and what is bad about each. [LINK] Have students write down one like and one dislike about each.
Engage the class in a discussion to solicit opinions of good and bad.
Direct Instruction:
Display the visual of the newspaper front page. Students will take notes of the key vocabulary terms and sketch their own front page in their notes.

Display the first CARP visual and explain the four key terms. Display the second CARP visual of the newspaper front page for students to take notes of.

Practice/Group Task:
In small groups, students will review magazine samples and find examples of the elements from the notes. Students must find one page to present to the class.

Day 2:
Intro:
Show side-by-side examples of good and bad uses of typography. Discuss what makes something good or bad.

Direct Instruction:
Students will take notes on typography concepts. Show the example image and pass out worksheet that explains the typography assignment.

Practice/Group Task:
Students will work in pairs using the computers to complete the typography assignment.

Day 3-4:
Intro:
Students will complete the graphic organizer that tests their knowledge of newspaper design concepts. (These concepts will need to be identified on their final designs).

Direct Instruction:
Students will be split into small groups and given the design task. Students will be given copies of JEA magazine and copies of the design challenge activity.

Practice/Group Task:
Challenge activity:
Students will work in groups to recreate a design example from the JEA magazine. Students will use Adobe InDesign to replicate the design from the magazine. Once completed, students will print out designs and hand write what the design elements included are.
References


Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). Classroom Instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 72-83