

Demonstration-Lecture

Introduction to Demonstration-Lecture

Demonstration-lecture is one of the Four Studio Structures described in *Studio Thinking 3: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* (2022). The Four Studio Structures are what the authors observed in visual arts classrooms when they sought to better understand what happens in a studio classroom. The structures are how they saw teachers organize their studio space, timing, and interactions in the classroom to nurture studio habits of mind (see previous chapter “[The Studio Structures and Habits of Mind.](#)”)

The demonstration-lecture structure of a studio classroom provides background knowledge and context for the art form or for the selected project. The teacher delivers necessary information regarding the problem or project to be addressed; describes and defines the requisite skills, processes, and tools that students will use; and, furnishes examples of work (either by professionals or by other students) that could inform the way students approach their work. Questioning strategies, anecdotes, and connections to prior learning experiences to extend understanding are also part of demonstration-lecture.

Demonstration-lecture can introduce a project or be used to answer authentic questions as they arrive, providing a scaffold to propel the work as students create. It is essential that students know how to use the space and materials safely before they can begin. Early in the year, this type of instruction often comes first. As student skill and confidence grows, it might occur at the beginning of a project or lesson or be threaded throughout the art making as students navigate choices and more need information.

The authors of *Studio Thinking* describe demonstration-lecture:

- Teachers (and others) deliver information about processes and products and set assignments
- Information is immediately useful to students for class work or homework
- Information is conveyed quickly and efficiently to reserve time for work and reflection
- Visual examples are frequent and sometimes extended
- Interaction occurs to varying degrees

In the studio classroom, arts educators don't need to spend a lot of time providing direct instruction and presenting what to do or how to do it. They give just enough time to provide structure and support; a little goes a long way, especially if your hope is for students to take ownership, exercise their own creative choices, and assume the risk of exploration and experimentation.

Demonstration-lecture and Lecture-demonstration

Demonstration-lecture should not be confused with the term "lecture-demonstration," which is a type of presentation or performance meant to inform a formal audience. Student work or performances can be accompanied with narration to provide the audience with an explanation or "lecture" alongside the presentation.

Professional artists frequently use this same format in schools. See a list of arts organizations providing lecture-demonstrations in schools throughout the state of Utah at popsutah.org.

Demonstration-Lecture in Dance

In dance, demonstration-lecture is often threaded throughout the session as the teacher provides content and information for movement problems to be explored when the students are at work. This is when background information is shared to help students build skill and refine their technique in the classroom activities that follow.

The "demonstration" portion of demonstration-lecture includes modeling the desired movement or movement quality described by the verbal instruction. In dance instruction this strategy is referred to as "modeling." A teacher might perform the series of movements assigned for students to replicate or model the energy quality they would like to see in the student's performance. When a teacher dances for or alongside their students they can inspire further creative exploration and boost student's motivation to explore movement with more energy and originality. Modeling can also be provided by selected students or videos.

Demonstration-lecture in dance does not always propel students to work on choreography, improvisation, technique, or performance. Demonstration-lecture could probe learners to question dance works, analyze the role of dance throughout history, and appreciate the purpose for cultural and folk-dance forms.

EXAMPLES OF DEMONSTRATION-LECTURE IN DANCE

- "This dance was created by Bill T. Jones, a modern dance choreographer in New York City. He loved to use patterns of simple gestures in his choreography. After watching the clip, when I snap my fingers, show me one of the gestures you remember from his dance."
- "The difference between a swing and a sway is in their relationship with gravity. With swing you are allowing gravity to pull you towards the earth, with sway you are opposing gravity. A swing is often called an undercurve because it makes a "u" shape curve through the air, like the mouth in a smiley face. A sway is an overcurve where your movement follows the path of a frowny face. Imagine a crowd waving their arms above their heads to a slow ballad at a concert. This is what it looks like to sway with your arms."
- "What do you think of when you hear the word chance? Chance refers to an unpredictable event or series of events. Choreographer Merce Cunningham is known for making dances by chance. He would roll a dice to determine how many dancers went on stage or draw a title from a hat to determine the music that should accompany the dance. We are going to make our own chance dance by flipping a coin to determine the energy quality of each movement in our sequence. Heads means we perform a sustained fall; tails means we perform a vibratory fall."
- "When I snap my fingers, spread out into the space and make a round shape. When I play my drum, move through the general space, the space we all share. You will travel like a cumulus cloud. Cumulus clouds have flat bottoms and round, fluffy tops. They are often described as puffy, cotton-like, or fluffy. The word cumulus comes from the Latin word cumulo, which means heap or pile. How can you move like a heaping pile of fluffy, cotton-like clouds?"

Video Case of Demonstration-Lecture with Math

Kelleen Leslie, a fourth-grade teacher in Utah, leverages the studio learning structure of "Demonstration-Lecture." She reviews geometric terms and provides the students with giant rubber bands and verbal instructions on what geometric vocabulary word to creatively express.

<https://youtu.be/A7Ykiyy2RI0>



Photo by Samuel Jake

Demonstration-Lecture in Drama

Generally, the initial experiences in a drama lesson are meant to help students authentically explore and discover the lesson objectives for themselves. The instruction the teacher gives related to the objective of that experience, whether before or after the experience, is the Demonstration-Lecture that either solidifies the ideas students discovered in their experience or propels them to explore in their next drama experience where the described drama concepts and skills can be practiced while the students are working. The demonstration-lecture also can convey the background information students need to connect to the historical or cultural significance of the piece they are exploring.

Of course, students will need to receive directions from the teacher in order to participate in the initial drama experiences, but giving directions is different from the direct instruction or demonstration-lecture that follows these experiences. The demonstration-lecture clarifies and makes connections to the learning objectives that have been set for the lesson, not just setting parameters for the class activity or behavioral expectations. For example, while giving instructions would include inviting students to find three gestures for their character, the demonstration-lecture would further explain the purpose of gesture and strategies for improving gestural choices.

EXAMPLES OF DEMONSTRATION-LECTURE IN DRAMA

- Exercises/games the teacher plays with the students. These exercises show students full body/mind/voice commitment and range.
- Perhaps a teacher will tell a story, play a game, facilitate an improv, manipulate a puppet, in which the teacher can embody not only performing skills, but ensemble skills. The teacher nudges students to a vision of theatrical expression.
- The teacher asks questions that students answer either through speech or through body/voice, space, or design choices.
- Questioning drives the learning forward and with a sort of give-and-take the teacher takes cues from the students as to their interest in the area of focus within the subject of exploration the students are working on. This procedure highlights the inherently collaborative nature of drama and the balance between the individual and ensemble.
- Working from a playmaking perspective, demonstration-lectures could focus on how to integrate history, fantasy fiction, and current events into an original work.
- Demonstration-lectures could showcase ways to transform text (e.g., picture books, chapter books, etc.) into a performance text. Using Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* as an example, participants—acting as a collective Max—are asked to: find where they stored their wolf suits, put them on, make the three kinds of mischief that the book's Max engages in, and sing or shout a choral, "Wild thing!" and individual renditions of, "I'll eat you up!" Then, there is a shift to three participants, who assume the role of Max's mother. These three are questioned by the other participants (e.g., "Is Max always so temperamental?" "Is Max an only child?" "Where is Max's father?" "How does Max do in school?" etc.). Then, the scene shifts to the boat trip with participants evoking waves and Max traveling across space and time, taming the Wild Things, being crowned king, orchestrating the wild rumpus, falling asleep and, finally, returning home, where his supper is still warm.

Video Case of Demonstration-Lecture with Process Drama

Watch the beginning of this video clip to see Evelyn, a drama teacher in New Zealand, set-up a process drama with a quick demonstration-lecture (watch from 1:58 - 3:28) <https://youtu.be/APoU5nM8Qwk?t=118>



Photo by Samuel Jake

Demonstration-Lecture in Media Arts

As in dance, demonstration-lectures in film and media arts are often threaded throughout the process of creating a finished work. One discrete session could have several demonstration-lectures, or one demonstration-lecture could generate exploration of a concept or topic for several sessions.

EXAMPLES OF DEMONSTRATION-LECTURE IN MEDIA ARTS

- Pre-production elements include illustrative "tasks" (e.g., students are given a box and are charged with 'telling' the story of the box either individually or in small groups). This creates an arc which spans from brainstorming to the creation of some number of sentences, attached to the beginning, middle, or end).
- The demonstration-lecture could explore: types of shots (e.g., establishing, wide, medium, close-up); Foley elements (e.g., a door opening, footsteps, the hum of a refrigerator); voice overs; choice of setting; storyboarding (i.e., how to use stick figures or more realized 3D drawings to define the shot, and describe all key elements).
- Each piece of the above sequence could propel student work for a single class session or many sessions. The goal is ultimately to move beyond the heuristic "story of the box," to a story conceptualized from inciting incident, to rising action, through to climax and denouement: a story that is conceived, shot, edited, and produced by a team of students.

Demonstration-Lecture in Music

Demonstration-lecture in a music class often includes giving instructions for students-at-work activities that include singing, playing, listening, moving, creating/composing, reading, and writing music. Often the demonstration-lecture

structure is interactive as students are encouraged to use active listening or participation as a teacher models, performs, or plays music. In music class, demonstration-lecture and students-at work structures usually switch back and forth throughout the entire time.

During demonstration-lecture, the teacher is making concepts conscious, actively engaging students in developing their understanding of what is being shown and giving a framework for music-making activities. As soon as the students begin the process of making music it moves from the demonstration-lecture structure to the students-at-work structure.

Specific examples of demonstration-lecture found in music classrooms might include modeling singing versus speaking, naming specific musical elements found in the music, showing how to play a new singing game, giving initial experiences with part singing by singing something different from the students, modeling conducting techniques, and so on. These demonstration-lectures offer just enough information to get students launched into making music themselves.

EXAMPLES OF DEMONSTRATION-LECTURE IN MUSIC

- [Teacher sings an example in head voice.] "Singing in your head voice sounds light, bright, and unstrained. It feels as if the sound is flying or spinning out of your mouth. When singing in your head voice you will feel vibrations in your head, cheeks, and mouth, not your chest. Try these warmups to practice using your head voice."
- "In duple meter, a quarter note is one sound in one beat and it looks like this. A quarter rest is one beat of silence and it looks like this. On my cue, we will play and repeat this combination of quarter notes and quarter rests all together."
- "A musical motif (or motive) is a short series of notes, a musical phrase, or a rhythm that a composer repeats throughout a piece of music. In the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven used the rhythmic motive short-short-short-long. Look at the score as you listen to this recording. Circle the short-short-short-long motive on the score whenever it is played."
- "This song is a happy celebration song. Put joy and excitement in your voice, face, and body as you sing it."
- "Watch as I do the steps of the dance and sing the song. Listen for the word that I sing when I change directions."
- "Listen as I sing and do body percussion to this folk song. Where do the claps occur?"

Video Cases of Demonstration-Lecture with Music

Watch Molly, a music teacher at J and C Academy in England, as she provides a demonstration-lecture for her students before they practice performing the difference between beat and rhythm (watch from 1:52-2:52) [\[a\]](https://youtu.be/tNbLX2wX4Bs?si=icR7UrC_310_U3VI&t=112).
https://youtu.be/tNbLX2wX4Bs?si=icR7UrC_310_U3VI&t=112

In this video Emily Soderborg and Brenda Whitehorse prepare an auditorium of educators to sing Shí Naashá through demonstration-lecture (start at 1:02) <https://youtu.be/loQvPkIkm6E?si=0bagK49PANlyh3LS&t=61>



Photo by Samuel Jake

Demonstration-Lecture in Visual Arts

As noted above, demonstration-lectures as part of visual arts curricula seem pretty clear-cut: the requisite skills, processes, and tools relevant to the project/problem at hand are demonstrated; models of similar work are explored; and often, the teacher/mentor provides a brief overview of how/where/when similar works occur in the visual arts canon, and by whom.

EXAMPLES OF DEMONSTRATION-LECTURE IN VISUAL ARTS

- Demonstration-lecture could involve presenting students with an 8" by 8" box and some found objects, such as old license plates, twigs, pieces of fabric, etc., and challenging them to design their own 3D work using these elements while also connecting their work with the work of at least one peer.
- Demonstration-lecture could be used to teach a technique such as tempera batik (with shallow space and heavy black-out lines), giving the students a charge to change the world through their composition.
- Demonstration-lecture could inform students of the history and purpose behind a historical work of art before inviting students to work to create their own work of art to achieve a similar purpose. For example, students could be shown the World War II poster featuring "Rosie the Riveter," given a description of what propaganda is, and asked to create their own poster to persuade viewers to a certain action.

Video Cases of Demonstration-Lecture with Literary Arts and Visual Arts

In this video Cassie Stephens, elementary arts educator in Tennessee, demonstrates how she uses a poem, "Larry the Line," to engage students as they are introduced to the concept of line (start at 1:21).

[Teaching Art: Line](#)

And here she is again, dressed as a ninja turtle with a sequin bow in her hair, introducing kindergarteners to self-portraits, portraits, and Van Gogh (start at 3:10): [Art Teacherin' 101: Episode 23 KINDERGARTENLAND](#)



Photo by James Huston

Read about the other three Studio Structures for Learning:

- [Students-at-Work](#)
- [Critique and Reflect](#)
- [Performance and Exhibition](#)



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