

Teaching Tip: Studio-based Learning

Studio-based learning is a problem-based learning teaching method that can be used when students work on a project or a problem. The classroom functions as an art studio would, with the teacher walking around the class answering questions and giving feedback to students on their work. This is one of the great benefits of studio-based learning, since other students overhear the feedback and comments, which may help correct misconceptions students were either too nervous to voice or unaware they even had.

The goals of studio-based learning are to give students the opportunity to engage in an authentic learning experience where they can get immediate feedback on their work from the teacher and their peers. Studio-based learning has traditionally been used in fields like fine arts and architecture. However, this kind of teaching can be applied in any field were you can have students working on a project or a problem.

Planning a Studio-based Lesson

The key to studio-based learning is that students have to create something (a learning artifact) that puts together skills and knowledge. This “object,” whether it’s a work of art, a three-dimensional model, or an explanation of a solution to a problem, should require students to combine a number of skills they are learning in the course, allowing them to apply, analyze, evaluate and finally create (see Bloom’s Taxonomy). The learning activity should also be connected to a specific course competency.

You don’t have to give students step-by-step instructions on how to create the final product, but they should be given clear instructions on the expectations for their final product. The goal of studio-based learning is to allow students to plan this process for themselves with the knowledge they have gained already from the course. Your role as a teacher will be to help guide students as they are working on their projects.

For more detailed information on designing and assessing studio-based learning check out the University of New South Wales Australia’s page on Assessing Studio-based Learning.

Examples of Studio-based Activities

- Visual arts drawings, paintings, posters, collages, or portfolios
- Three-dimensional models, architectural drawings, or prototypes (e.g. Circuit Boards)
- Solution proposals for Case Scenarios, Business Plans, Proposals, and Budgets
- Solving complex problems that require an explanation of the solution
- In-class essay or assignment workshops

"Painting students art league school" by George - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons
• Research based projects done in class
• Creative or art projects expressing key concepts of the course
• Musical compositions, Poetry Writing
• Science models
• Concept Maps, Mind Maps, Diagrams, or Flow Charts
• Curriculum Vitaes, Business Cards, and Advertising Campaigns

Teamwork or Going at it Alone

Studio-based learning can be done in groups or individually. The key is that students are working on projects in the presence of their peers. Whether they are working on their own project, or on a group project, this gives them the opportunity to see what other students are producing, compare it with their own work, and ask questions and get feedback from their peers and the teacher. “Studio classrooms are ideal for helping students think about their learning and develop better lifelong learning skills” Source: Geoscience webpage on studio teaching.

Additional Resources

The Studio Teaching Project toolkit for designing studio-based activities and assignments.
The Science Education Resource Center of Carleton College’s Geoscience webpage on studio teaching

For more information regarding studio-based learning, please contact us at the PDO!