

Preparing for the Teaching Demonstration

About the Teaching and Learning Center

The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) was founded in 2015 to create new opportunities for Graduate Center students to evolve as educators. Its work includes preparing new college teachers for their entry into the classroom, guiding developing teachers as they refine their practices, and helping experienced teachers think through how to best apply their teaching experiences in the next stages of their careers, whether those careers be inside the classroom or out. The TLC offers a series of workshops and professional development for new and experienced Grad Center teachers, and collaborates with sister units across the Graduate Center and CUNY on special projects meant to empower CUNY's faculty and students to get their most out of their time teaching and learning together.

On the Teaching Demonstration

Let's begin by acknowledging that this is perhaps the most unnatural of the exercises that you may be asked to perform during a campus visit. Good teaching requires the time to build up a rapport and trust with a group of students, to develop a sense of community within the classroom, to layer information and activities in ways that build students towards deep knowledge of course material. And a good course exists within a curriculum.

All of these elements are absent from the teaching demonstration. The purpose of the demonstration is to help your potential colleagues assess whether you can manage classrooms and courses that will likely vary in character and nature during your potential tenure there. Your goal is to demonstrate mastery of subject matter and engagement with the methodologies necessary to build students towards their own version of that mastery. This is an easy thing to do badly, and a difficult thing to do well. You'll need a plan, and also to prepare in a way that builds enough internal confidence so that you can depart from the plan if you sense the need to do so (as any experienced and committed teacher will do).

Gathering Info

- Will there in fact be a Teaching Demo and, if so, what form it will take?
- Will you be taking over an existing class or teaching faculty?
- Will you be teaching a whole class, or just a lesson?
- If an existing class, ask for the syllabus. Are the students majors? What le

What is the course? What have they read, and what will they have read for that day?

- If it's for faculty, ask if you can select and distribute readings... then, be prepared for faculty to challenge you on your selections, and/or for none of them having done the reading
- Ask about the technology in the room?
- How much time will you have?
- In the position, will there be an expectation that you teach in a range of instructional modes (f2f, hybrid, online).

Preparing

- Prepare a lesson or a class using the information you've been able to gather as a guide.
- If an intro or General Education course, for instance, you should prepare to take additional steps to define concepts and to generalize the lessons within the trajectory that those students would ostensibly face going forward, given what you understand about the curriculum at the College. (Do some research to understand where the class you're demonstrating fits into the curriculum.
- If the course is for majors or specialists, assume you can dig deeper into disciplinary questions, methodologies, and norms.
- Think about resonances with the rest of your portfolio. This is one piece that contributes to the whole picture of you as a candidate, but this piece is not isolated from the others. Just as a job talk and an interview might illuminate your abilities as a teacher, so can the teaching demonstration reinforce other components of your work. Look for those moments and consistencies and try to insure they're artfully crafted. Look also for inconsistencies and attempt to fix them.
- Build confidence... only way to do so is to prepare, prepare, prepare, to know the subject back to front.
- if you've not taught, come see us

Components of a Strong Teaching Demonstration

- Organization: be sure those in the room know you have a plan, a structure, and strong themes for the session in mind.
- Awareness of time: the class should be active and engaged, and build towards a conclusion. There is no last time or next time, which are so regularly drawn upon in our teaching, so you want your lesson to be concise, coherent, and (as much as it can be) contained.

- Mixes modes (but not too many)
- Think about the modes of the courses you'll likely be teaching should you get this position, and make sure those are represented in your plan
- Lecture, small discussion, composition with peer-review
- Uses technology (whether digital or analog) smartly, efficiently, and purposefully

Practicing

- Hard to do. Whereas mock job interviews or job talks are regular and easy to arrange, it's more difficult to recreate the conditions necessary for an effective dry run of a teaching demonstration. Use existing class time to try out components of the demonstration; write up your reflections afterwards. Talk through the structure with colleagues and with TLC staff to look for holes or points where you may trip. If you are lecturing for part of the lesson, practice that out loud in front of a mirror, or your partner, or your dog. Look specifically for breaks in logic, connections to the themes you've laid out

In the Room

- Be serious, but be relaxed.
- Consider introducing your demonstration with some metacognitive commentary on how you've structured it
- Roll with it, don't get flustered