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Through the Eyes of an Artist:  
Engaging Teaching Artists in Educational Assessment

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Professional teaching artists offer a unique and vitally important set of skills and perspectives to children and schools. They see and interact with students very differently than most other adults in the school. Their perceptions of students -- what they observe and value, and how they respond to and nurture students' abilities -- often directly challenge traditional ways of perceiving, judging, and evaluating students in schools. When classroom teachers tell teaching artists, as they often do, "some of my most difficult students really shined in your class today" or "she shocked me. I can't believe that she could concentrate and participate like that" they reveal their own capacities to see their students with fresh eyes. The narrow ways in which schools typically measure students' intelligence, achievement, and potential guarantee that many highly creative, expressive, smart students will be unappreciated, or worse, punished for the very qualities most appealing to teaching artists. By nurturing, recognizing, and articulating students' positive artistic behaviors and talents, artists can raise appreciation, understanding, and expectations for teachers, peers, and the students themselves.

Teaching artists rarely have the chance, however, to carefully collect and share their observations and perspectives about students. While many artists routinely use techniques of performance-based assessment in their professional work, far fewer have the training or the time to apply those methods systematically and fairly in educational settings. They come to teaching for a variety of reasons, often with no formal pedagogical training. The limited amount of time teaching artists have with students and the desire to give everyone a positive experience can make them disinclined to grade or test students.

This multiple case study investigated the experiences of six professional teaching artists who have implemented the Talent Assessment Process in Dance, Music and Theater (D/M/T TAP), a systematic, multi-session, observational assessment process (ArtsConnection, 1993;

1996) in schools in New York City and Cleveland, Ohio. We were interested in how the artists' perspectives of students were shaped, how their own background and professional experiences had contributed to their approach to teaching, and how the process of careful looking and assessing children affected their teaching. We considered the artists' life experiences, their training as artists and as teachers, their attitudes toward children, teachers, and schools, and the choices that led them to teach in public schools (Oreck & Piirto, 2004).

### **Overview**

ArtsConnection, a New York City arts in education organization, developed the Talent Assessment Process in Dance, Music and Theater<sup>1</sup> in the early 1990s. The process was originally created and tested in ten New York City public schools through two U.S. Department of Education Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education grants and has since been replicated in other parts of the country with a range of student populations and teaching artists (Ohio Department of Education, 2004). The assessment was created to select students for advanced classes in their schools and in professional, community-based studios. The assessment criteria were developed by teaching artists representing a wide range of styles, techniques, and cultural backgrounds<sup>2</sup> and with activities developed by teaching artist teams. Classroom teachers (and other school specialists, if available) serve as assessors, along with a team of two teaching artists.

Teams teach intact classes of 15-30 students including special and bilingual education classes. Two arts instructors and a classroom teacher or specialist rate all of the students on a written checklist. Scores are tabulated from all observers using both specific traits and a holistic overall score. Students have annual chances to be assessed. Research on the process has shown the results to be valid and reliable, with selected students roughly representative of the full

student population, including students with no prior formal arts instruction, different economic backgrounds, academic profiles, English language abilities, and special education needs (Oreck, Baum & Owen, 2004; Oreck, 2004a). Further, it has been shown to be an excellent predictor of success in rigorous arts instruction (Oreck, Baum & McCartney, 2001).

The details of the process are described in depth elsewhere (Baum, Owen & Oreck, 1996; Kay & Subotnik, 1994; Oreck, 2004a; 2005) but to summarize the key ideas that have made this assessment successful we highlight: (a) clearly defined assessment criteria stated as observable behaviors which can be recognized by experts and non-experts alike; (b) activities that are appropriately varied, challenging, and authentic to the art form; (c) class structure and facilitation that minimizes tension and allows all students to be seen and heard in each class period; and (d) an easy scoring system that minimizes distractions to students and observers. A critical aspect is the post-class conversation between assessors (teaching artists, classroom teachers and, at times, other school specialists). After each assessment class, observers meet for about 10 minutes to discuss their scoring for all students, regardless of ability or ranking. Classroom teachers rarely, if ever, have the chance to see their students engaged in the arts (usually held during teacher preparation periods), much less have an in-depth conversation with a professional artist about their students engaged in arts processes. Likewise the teaching artists benefit from the opportunity to hear teachers' perspectives and knowledge of their students.

The multi-rater, multi-session, multi-criteria, collaborative format of the assessment is complicated to schedule and challenging to teach and assess. The dual goals of identifying students for advanced instructional programs and of raising awareness of positive artistic behaviors among low achieving students in the academic classroom, required a high level of engagement with academic teachers and school specialists.

### **Assessment Training**

Assessment training consists of four daylong workshops followed by a complete administration of the assessment process during which participants are observed and evaluated. The teaching artist team (representing different styles and cultures when possible) uses a framework to create their own set of activities for the five assessment sessions. The specific activities come from each artist's own teaching practice and are designed to allow as many of the behavioral indicators as possible to be assessed in every session, with a changing central emphasis each session.

Regardless of the particular artistic style or technique employed, the classes reflect authentic practices in the art form and engage students in complex activities that involve problem-solving, improvisation, memory, cooperation, and the ability to take and use direction and feedback.

The biggest challenges for teaching artists in learning to administer the assessment have been the need for increased structure in class planning and facilitation, and the necessity to minimize verbal instructions. Every student must have a chance to try every exercise, and they must be grouped to allow each student to be seen and heard. The process of choosing activities, adapting them for assessment, trying them out with colleagues, and then structuring the complete five-class assessment workshop series is the primary work of the four day training.

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study was designed to probe how artists' experiences, motivations, and backgrounds helped shape what they offered to students, teachers, and schools and to examine how their work in schools contributed to their overall artistic careers. The research questions fell into three general categories – 1) personal background and experience, 2) teaching practices, and 3) attitudes toward children, teachers, and schools. Specific questions to be investigated included:

- (1) How did various aspects of the artists' lives, including their current and past artistic practice, cultural and ethnic background, parental influences, educational background, financial needs, shape their teaching, their approach to assessment and their attitudes toward children and talent?
- (2) What motivated the artists to teach, how did they learn to teach, and how did their professional experiences affect their pedagogy and approach to teaching?
- (3) How did participation in the assessment process affect the artists' teaching practice?

Participants were interviewed in their homes, using the Seidman (1998) protocol of three separate one and one-half hour interviews. All interviews were videotaped and transcribed<sup>3</sup>. The interviews were conducted by one researcher and viewed and coded by both researchers with an open-coded classification system (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), using Nud•ist 6.0 (QSR, 2003) software. Documents were reviewed, including the federal grant proposals and reports, papers presented at several national and international conferences, and published studies on this assessment process. Teaching artists were also observed and videotaped during assessment and advanced instruction.

### **Participants**

Six teaching artists in dance (2), music (2) and theater (2) from New York City (3), and Cleveland, Ohio (3) took part in the study. The artists represented a range of artistic styles and techniques and of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The six highly experienced artists (10-25 years of teaching) were considered “master” teaching artists by the arts in education organizations that employed them. Each had conducted the assessment process between 4 and 20 times. The participants – Terry (African American dancer), Lenore (African American musician), Betty (African American musician), Julia (White dancer), Lisa (White actor/director)

and Tony (White dancer) – were between 37 and 52 years of age. Pseudonyms have been used throughout.

### **Summary of Findings**

The study revealed a number of common themes despite the variation in approaches, methods and background experiences of the teaching artists. The themes clustered around: 1) motivations for teaching; 2) relationship and balance between teaching and art-making; and 3) development of personal approaches and pedagogy for teaching and assessment. A brief summary of themes and accompanying participant narratives follows.

#### **Motivations for teaching**

The artists all described personal childhood experiences and challenges they faced as adults that directly influenced their original decision to teach and their continued passion for teaching.

Betty: I have inner turmoil and those kinds of challenges, and that is the reason for the music, reason for me doing what I do, reason for my love of children and my compassion for them in a different way. I identify with children who are lost, who are struggling, who have issues, you know, because I feel like that child is still in me, so vibrant in me.

The artists identified with students on many levels. The artists' uncertain financial situations, personal struggles faced and overcome, their identities as rebels or outsiders, and their artistic talents and perspectives, drew them to their students and vice versa.

Lenore: I am on the other side of all of it. And that's why when I go and teach children, especially children that are growing up in the same environment that I grew up in -- when I talk to them it's not lip service, they really hear me. There was shooting [in my neighborhood] so I started playing my drum on the front porch the day I moved in to change the energy on the block. And because I was playing my drums the children came. I would teach them how to play drums and then later I got a couple of old computers and I had a first floor empty bedroom and I turned it into a recording studio for the kids in the neighborhood, especially the young men to give them something to do because it's like it is around here, there's nothing to do.

The teaching artists frequently recalled their own teachers and mentors and felt that the quality of arts teaching experienced in childhood was a guiding force in their own careers.

Julia: I started dancing with Carolyn Tate, who was just one of those inspirational teachers for me, right from the beginning. She had really high standards, and she really pushed. And I liked being pushed, and I like to think that I've taken that into my own teaching... You know, there's that delicate art of identifying when students are in a place where they're satisfied with their own performance, and don't realize that they could go a little farther, and she never let me rest in that place of contentment.

A commitment to sharing the art form as it was shared with them – its skills, techniques, style, and history – was also a powerful motivator.

Terry: I guess it's basically, you're ordained, or blessed by your teacher – “you're good enough to do this” -- and you apply yourself, then you can. I felt it was a need that children, our society, learn to appreciate folkloric dance, and the culture behind that, to bring about a better understanding and appreciation... As teachers we touch other people's lives, we touch children's lives, we touch communities' lives, we touch our families' lives through knowledge.

Lisa: You're passing on your culture. You're passing on what the arts are. People enjoy their culture more when they understand the rules. They enjoy a story more when they can see how it has a beginning, middle, and end, or a sequential cause and effect. And when you know the rules and see them followed or see them broken, both of those are entertaining, I think that that's really important.

Clearly, for these people who had taught a long time, the rewards of teaching offered continuing motivation. All of the teaching artists had opportunities to teach in different parts of the US and around the world, and found great satisfaction in teaching diverse groups of people.

Lisa: I think it's fun. I like to teach. I like to teach in a place like New York City. I like to be asked to go other places and teach because you see the world that way. I would never have been in the South Bronx. I would never have known someone from Russia. I would never be the only white person in the building. I get to go to Amsterdam and work with people from Latvia. I get to work with people of many different ages. I work with stroke patients and had people who work with them marvel at why they can remember the improvisations when they can't remember where they live.



### **Balance Between Teaching And Art-Making**

The artists eschewed full time employment or certification as teachers and had declined opportunities for college professorships and other more secure jobs. While three of the six had held full time teaching jobs for short periods in the past, at this time in their careers they felt that such work would not allow them to adequately pursue their art. The life of a teaching artist gave them flexibility and freedom from the rigid schedule of the school semester. Though they lived with little financial security, large yearly fluctuations in income, and no employee benefits, they didn't perceive themselves to be poor. They trusted that money would come when they needed it, and were able to maintain a lifestyle that was adequate to their needs.

Betty: I could make a lot of money being a schoolteacher . . . But I would not be happy because I would feel like a bird in a cage, so I wouldn't be happy, and that would translate to the children. I would resent being there because I like the freedom of a workshop.

Issues around money featured prominently in the artists' efforts to find a balance between teaching and art-making.

Lenore: I have to eat. I would prefer to not have to teach all the time not because I don't like it because I truly love teaching. I get a great joy out of teaching but because I have to teach I don't have as much time to create so I am always having to find a week where I can sit and let God talk to me and let the music come out. So I teach because I have to eat.

They were not, however, unaware of the precariousness of their situation and the physical and psychic demands of their career choices.

Lisa: My future is very much not taken care of, and [at] some point it's going to come crashing home how dreadfully irresponsible I've been on that sort of financial plane . . . Our work is very physical, and that's getting hard. I'm really aware of how much older I am than the classroom teachers.

Betty: I realized that this is something I was supposed to be doing. My challenge is that because I use my voice as my main teaching tool and it is also my instrument, that's become an issue for me.

Julia: I can feel when the balance is off. I feel like there have been shifts in the past twenty years. There was a time when I was teaching as much as I could, which got up to some ridiculous number like twenty-three classes a week. Probably before I hit thirty, I said, “that’s too much.”

In addition to the physical toll of arts teaching, maintaining a career requires extensive time for administration, marketing, planning.

Tony: Basically we’re understaffed and we do too much of the administrative work. We end up having to do it, but unjustly so. We shouldn’t be doing all of that work. It compromises us because we are so burdened with administrative work. We work a lot. We hope to work more artistically and less administratively.

Despite these challenges, all of the artists expressed the opinion that their professional work fed their teaching in many ways and vice versa. As Lisa put it, “when you teach what you do, you become better at it.”

Julia: On the one hand, it seems, the teacher dominates, and that’s partly financial. On the other hand, it seems that the artist is never not there. So the artist is always in the teacher. My perspective as a teacher, I think, is an artistic one . . . My dancing changed for the better, and became richer when I began teaching. When you’re a teacher you have to lose your inhibitions, you’re putting yourself out there fully, freely, and I think it broke a shell that I had developed as a performer.

### **Development Of Personal Approaches**

All of the artists had attended college, but several had not graduated, for financial or personal reasons. Only two of the artists had attended formal classes in pedagogy in their art form. The others learned to teach in less formal ways, through their own arts instruction and through observing master teachers and mentors. All had received some pedagogical training (concerning classroom management, curriculum design, and other related topics) through arts-in-education organizations and arts council programs. Their approach tended to be intuitive, however, and in the case of this experienced group, it had been shaped and honed over many years.

Lenore: I didn't learn how to teach, I just teach and I watch people . . . I sit and I listen. Like tonight I'm doing a workshop. It starts at 6:00 I will show up at 5:15 and I'll sit and watch all the people that are setting up and I'll watch all the children as they come in. And I'll get a feel for everybody and everything and so this evening by the time I start to teach I'll know what that community needs to hear.

**Personality characteristics.** The kinds of artistic risks and creative impulses the artists follow reflect personality characteristics, such as flexibility and tolerance of risk that also shaped their approaches to teaching.

Julia: I can't be self-conscious as a teacher. I can't be questioning what I look like, whether this is—good—it has to be completely out there. I have to do whatever needs to be done to get the idea across. I have to focus. It's commitment and it's that risk-taking element— that became clear as soon as I started teaching.

Lenore: My greatest asset as an artist is that I am willing to take risks. I'm willing to try new things, I'm willing to be different from everybody else and I think that's what makes me very successful as an artist and have people come and see.

**Spirituality and ritual.** Four of the artists spoke of their creative process in spiritual terms and had certain rituals through which they received inspiration to create. Two of the three African-American women in the study practiced the Yoruba religion, which supported and deepened their practice of African-based music and dance.

Terry: Having a spiritual foundation, for me, has come about not just through the church but through finding the roots behind my identity, or the roots behind my ancestry. I think that the drum or the dancing presented that self to me and had it not been for that, I probably would have either connected towards African ancestry or practices, or religion in a different way or a different method . . . I think that everyone moves with their art form in spirit in some kind of way, and it's some kind of reflection of their inner creativity; that's the way I look at worship as well.

**Shaping one's own curriculum.** One of the distinctive aspects of the artists' work with students was that they tended to develop their own curriculum. While they may have used material from other sources and certainly used some established techniques, they had the

freedom and skills to shape their own classes. The freshness and flexibility of their approach appeared to be one of the aspects of their teaching that was most appealing to students.

Betty: I write all of the music that I use with the children . . . I didn't want to use the traditional children's music, I wanted the children to be excited, and have to hear different things to be motivated to want to sing this music and so I said, let me write it, let me write a funky tune, let me write South African tunes, let's do a jazz suite and all that.

**Benefits of the assessment training.** None of the artists had previously conducted systematic talent assessment. All said they used a great deal of careful observation and evaluation in their professional work but the experience of applying these skills in the school environment helped them to look at children and their talents differently, to define and articulate characteristics they observed, and to be more aware of *all* of the students in the class.

Tony: I learned a lot and it developed my eye in my assessing abilities even through auditioning. How do you see a room full of people and really make the best choices? So it honed my assessment skills and it also honed my skill to create lessons so I could see what I want to see. There are students who are beautiful technically, they can do the exercises, but they are not creative. And some are creative, like wow, but they can't do choreography—they can't count or they can't stay in a line but they're wonderfully creative. So I learned a lot about that and I really can see kind of a whole person much more quickly than I could before.

Betty: The TAP assessment process has helped me in my entire teaching and pedagogical style and perspective because it gives me a different foundation on how to think and observe and view and assess the children initially and their progress in the program, in whatever program I'm doing.

Julia: Because I started it (the assessment) so early in my teaching career, I feel that it has formed me as a teacher a great deal. And because it has focused on the children, my learning how to teach was about learning how to read children. I can't imagine how I would be teaching without this process having guided me and caused me to think carefully about what's important and having this notion of ongoing assessment.

The collaboration with classroom teachers in the assessment process was also cited by the artists as significant in the development of their ability to assess effectively.

Lisa: The thing teachers bring into the assessment process is they know the kids and they know their families. And that helps a lot. It helps explain certain behaviors. And it helps

put certain behaviors in a certain light. They help you see kids you just don't notice. You find out later that's the first time [a child] spoke in class. That's a huge thing to know; that means [that child's] on fire for the art form, and it has driven them to stand up in front of the class and say something.

### **Discussion**

The analysis revealed a number of complex issues concerning the role of professional artists in schools. Participants have chosen to follow independent paths, to explore and express their own visions of the world, and have made significant sacrifices to develop their talents and pursue an unpredictable career. Their teaching appeared to be motivated by a combination of a deep caring for children, interest in the work, and financial need. A sense of mission, of meaningful, often spiritual work imbued both teaching and art. Independence and choice-making were paramount in their personal and professional identities.

The participants, to a great extent, invented themselves as teachers. They learned the craft of teaching from a variety of sources including formal education courses, but designed their curricula and methods based primarily on their own experiences both in the classroom and the studio. They found ways to create deep connections in short periods of time and to shape their curriculum to fit the needs of various populations, settings, and program objectives. As outsiders in schools they brought a fresh eye to student assessment but faced the obstacles of unfamiliarity with the students and the need to constantly adjust to each classroom and teacher.

### **Independence and Choice**

Some arts educators have questioned the value of visiting teaching artists (Gee, 1999, among others) and have called for mandatory licensure and other prerequisites to teach in schools. This view raises significant questions. Who, for example, would determine the criteria

for such licensure and prerequisites? Would those criteria recognize and allow for both the special expertise and the personal qualities of those who have chosen this dual profession?

At a presentation to more than 150 teaching artists a number of years ago, the then head of arts education for the New York City Department of Education spoke enthusiastically about the new simplified requirements for obtaining a teaching license for employment in the public schools. At the end of the presentation, Oreck, the moderator, asked the audience for a show of hands of people interested in getting their NYC teaching license. Fewer than ten hands went up. That response demonstrated that, for many, the choice to be outside the school system, to maintain a personal artistic practice, and to have a different relationship with children and colleagues, is intentional and deeply rooted. Turning away from the security of full-time employment, teaching artists accept a more self-directed, free-lance life. The flexibility, curiosity, and collaborative approaches teaching artists cultivate tend to be resistant to the kind of structure and external control typically experienced by full-time faculty.

### **An Outsider Perspective**

Outsider status can be a beneficial position from which to reach and inspire children (Oreck, 2014), but it also poses a host of obstacles. The job of teaching artist is, for the most part, an isolated one. Arriving at the school, possibly welcomed by someone (but usually not), locating an assigned room (or any other room or hallway in the school that is free), teaching artists try to make magic in 45 to 60 minute bursts. While they may be praised, even revered, gliding through the school receiving excited greetings from every child they know, artists rarely have time for a conversation, planning time with teachers, debriefing, or feedback. Driving home or sitting on the subway at the end of the day, the teaching artist replays the day's experiences with 75+ students -- thinking about the next week at this school and writing those ideas down.

Some students stand out; some seem utterly mysterious. However, the teaching artist will likely see 75 more students tomorrow and when next week rolls around those insights and ideas may be forgotten.

When we consider both sides of the equation—how teaching artists can give the best they have to give to schools, and how schools can best utilize the full expertise of teaching artists—it is easy to see why teaching artists and schools would find a focused, reflective process like the Talent Assessment Process in Dance, Music and Theater so meaningful. However, the need remains for increased contact between teaching artists and school faculty members—not only in planning, debriefing, assessing, and talking about students, but also in recognizing and appreciating each other's perspectives.

### **Collaboration with Classroom Teachers**

Statistical analysis of the assessment showed a high level of agreement between teaching artists and classroom teachers<sup>4</sup> (Ohio Department of Education, 2004; Oreck, Baum and Owen, 2004). The analyses showed that the first time a classroom teacher worked with a teaching artist team in the assessment, inter-rater reliability statistics improved dramatically between sessions one and two and then tended to level off, improving slightly between sessions two and five. Classroom teachers said that the most important factors in their learning process involved becoming more familiar with the vocabulary and assessment criteria, and beginning to trust their own observations and intuition. Teachers' lack of self-efficacy as arts experts quickly gave way to confidence that their observations and impressions were valid and worthwhile. The teaching artists, who had the added responsibility of facilitating as well as scoring, found the teachers' comments extremely useful and frequently probed the teachers' knowledge about different students. The artists could apply those insights in subsequent classes, when assigning partners

and groups, adjusting instructions and language, and responding to individual students. The teaching artists and classroom teachers clearly learned from each other in the post-assessment discussions.

With increasing frequency schools ask artists to work with classroom teachers in professional and curriculum development, to define specific learning objectives for students, to connect to state and national standards, and to assess student achievement in the arts and other subjects. Given the artists' generally limited contact with the teachers, however, the result is usually something less than true collaboration or arts integration. When arts integration projects followed the assessment, however, these collaborations were unusually successful. For teaching artists, greater knowledge about the students and class helped them identify the most promising arts experiences to help students learn. Familiarity with the teacher helped teaching artists define roles and support the teacher's learning process. For the classroom teachers, recognizing the impact of the arts on their students in the observational assessment process increased their motivation to employ arts strategies in their teaching. In a study of classroom teachers, Oreck (2004b; 2006) found that the single biggest motivator for teachers to incorporate arts in the classroom was the perception that some students in their class learned best that way.

### **Implications for Common Core and Testing Movements**

The current focus in education on common core standards<sup>5</sup> and testing in the U.S. presents a new set of challenges for teaching artists and arts specialists (along with all other teachers). Attempts to standardize arts teaching and learning can lead to "atomization" (Brown & Knight, 1994), breaking down arts skills, processes, and creation into small parts and simplified procedures, as well as testing de-contextualized knowledge and skills. The resistance many artists express toward assessment may reflect their disapproval of the content and purposes of the



assessment more than the idea of assessing students in the arts. As a case in point, the teaching artists in this study expressed their belief in the validity and fairness of the criteria and process of the assessment and felt it was a positive experience for students, teachers, and themselves. Further applications of D/M/T TAP for purposes other than arts talent identification have shown similar results in terms of artists' attitudes toward the process (Nicoll, 2012). For example, ArtsConnection used the criteria, scoring, and observation protocol (with a single teaching artist) in the Developing English Language Literacy Through the Arts (DELLTA) project with second language learners to help teachers and artists understand student learning in verbal and non-verbal domains (ArtsConnection, 2013; Dana Foundation, 2005).

The following elements seemed to enhance artists' ownership of and investment in the process. First, teaching artists led arts experiences that they had designed as opposed to pre-made assessments or standardized activities. They developed their own five-session unit in a collaborative process with another artist, most often with a different style or approach. Second, after each lesson, the artists carefully reflected on and discussed the lesson in light of their observations of students. This kind of collaborative planning and shared reflective process on one's own teaching is all too rare in the life of a teaching artist. Third, the process also validated the teaching artist's voice and point of view. They felt respected and were engaged in the central work of school. Being heard by classroom teachers and other school specialists was empowering and satisfying.

### **Final Thoughts**

At the heart of meaningful assessment is careful observation. This study provides evidence that teaching artists may be particularly well suited to the task in a number of ways. Those who expertly facilitate and regularly participate in arts processes have specific ways of

seeing and appreciating artistry in others. Their work can make observable sides of people that are difficult to see in other ways. Attuned to physical cues, creative responses, and group dynamics, such artists often personally identify with students who may be seen as different or as outsiders and bring a passion to their work that reveals deep caring about children and learning. As Betty put it, “I feel like that child is still in me, so vibrant in me.”

These six teaching artists have sustained long careers in two of the most demanding urban settings in the U.S. They have had to constantly adapt their teaching to an extraordinary range of students, teachers, schools, and educational program goals. To succeed in this way of teaching they must be unusually flexible and resilient and have a clear sense of who they are, what they value, and what they have to offer in each setting. They are not teaching artists by default; they have made active choices about who, what, and where they teach and make art.

This study reveals that artists of this caliber recognize the value of systematic assessment that is grounded in close observation. They embrace opportunities for professional development that directly promote rigorous, arts-based assessment. Unfortunately such opportunities have diminished for arts-in-education organizations and the teaching artists they employ. The constant pressure to adapt to changing standards, and to equate assessment with testing (in line with the standardized testing explosion) increases in direct proportion to growing competition for funding in both the education and non-profit worlds. The Javits program that funded the development of D/M/T TAP and its replications is gone, as are many funding sources that supported arts education program development, implementation, and research in the 90s and early 2000s, including the GE Fund, Annenberg Foundation, Phillip Morris, and many others. As a result, teaching artists’ ability to do what they do best for arts education and to deepen their practice through valuable professional development programs is severely limited.

The artists' voices heard here paint pictures of lives full of many moving parts held together by an artistic practice that includes the art of teaching. Seeing, evaluating, responding, adapting, collaborating are basic elements of this practice. While the experiences of these six master teachers cannot be considered representative of all teaching artists, we trust that the themes and histories will be familiar to most. We hope this investigation offers useful guidance for supporting and developing teaching artists' skills, and for finding ways to bring artists' eyes and voices into conversations about students and assessment.

### Notes

1. For the remainder of this chapter we will refer to Talent Assessment Process in Dance, Music and Theater as the "assessment."
2. Dance included specialists in Modern, West African, Ballet, Creative Movement, Flamenco, and Jazz. Music included vocal, percussion, classical, Caribbean/West African, Orff, Kodaly and Theater included Improvisation, Storytelling, Classical and other text-based theater.
3. Human Subjects Review Board and parents' permission was obtained to videotape.
4. In the Ohio project average alpha reliability was .86 dance, .73 theater, .88 music
5. As of fall 2013, 45 U.S. states have adopted a uniformed set of standards in Mathematics, English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) Analysis and critique of the standards and the process of implementing them can be found at <http://dianeravitch.net/category/common-core/>, among many other sources.

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