



National Guild for Community Arts Education
Guild Essentials Series
“The State of Teaching Artistry: Realities and Possibilities”
Presenters: Eric Booth & Gowri Savoor

Key Outcomes

The first Guild Essentials Online Workshop successfully launched with **190 registrants** and strong attendance, addressing the current state of teaching artistry, practical strategies for sustainability, and emerging opportunities in the field. Poll results revealed that over half of participants are not currently active teaching artists, and three-quarters feel okay now but worried about the future of their careers. The session established a foundation for ongoing professional development programming, with the next workshop scheduled for June 10th on "*Navigating the Tension Between Money and Mission.*"

Critical Field Challenges Identified

Compensation crisis:

- Average teaching artist earnings in NYC remain **\$35,000-\$50,000** with zero wage growth since 2018, despite 28% inflation.
- Only **6% of NYC teaching artists** receive employer-provided health insurance.
- Teaching artists are underpaid across the field, earning well below median income even in high-wage cities.

Structural barriers:

- School-based work is decreasing while other sectors grow, yet schools remain the largest employment share historically.
- The field lacks national infrastructure despite 50 years of development efforts.
- Emil Kang's recent essay highlighted: "We build the house on their labor and then told them they were guests in it."

Practical Strategies Presented

Time and resource management:

- Audit time spent in non-revenue meetings and emails; consider scheduling email responses once or twice daily
- Send meeting agendas in advance to improve efficiency
- Account for rising material costs, space fees, mileage, and liability insurance when setting rates

Professional development focus areas:

- Growing sectors: creative aging, accessibility work, healthcare settings, and populations with disabilities
- Skill development through free platforms: Domestika, Udemy, Skillshare for artistic offerings
- Technical tools: Canva Affinity for design, DaVinci Resolve for video editing (free)

Marketing and positioning:

- Remarket yourself by focusing energy on what you most enjoy teaching and what you're known for
- Articulate offerings with clarity and passion in succinct, engaging ways
- Update websites to be cleaner, less cluttered, and accessible
- Refresh rates and ensure all marketing materials reflect current pricing

Emerging Opportunities

Arts and health sector:

- Fastest growing area in the field, described as unprecedented growth over 50 years
- Youth mental health crisis creating demand for teaching artists who can address loneliness, isolation, and disconnection
- Creative aging programs (led by Lifetime Arts for ~10 years) represent sustained growth area
- Organizations like National Organization for Arts in Health gathering research on arts and healing

Other growth areas:

- Climate and environmental work with available grant opportunities
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) and Creative Youth Development (CYD)
- Business sector creativity training (often without art-making)
- Activism and social change movements, including anti-authoritarianism work

Community-Generated Marketing Ideas

Participants shared successful approaches:

- Networking and relationship-building as foundational practice
- Writing articles for local sites with linked author bios
- Tabling at local events to increase visibility
- Rebranding as "arts education consultant" to command higher hourly rates (Lauren's example)
- Utilizing city and state arts council rosters
- Local and regional focus: "work begets work" and "visibility counts" as core principles

Seven Purposes Framework

Eric Booth outlined the reorganized field structure identifying seven hiring purposes for teaching artists:

1. **Arts learning** - foundational skills and literacy
2. **Arts skills development** - newest recognition that artist training improves with teaching artist preparation (Juilliard program evidence)
3. **Integrated learning** - arts combined with other subjects to increase engagement and achievement
4. **Community thread** - murals, choruses, community engagement work
5. **Activism** - political and social change movements
6. **Social/personal development** - SEL, youth mental health, soft skills (communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity)
7. **Organizational creativity** - business and institutional applications

Digital sector identified as underdeveloped opportunity where teaching artists haven't found sustainable income models for activating others' artistry online.

Featured Project Examples

Philippa Hughes - The Dinner Party (2022):

- Collaborated with University of Michigan Museum of Art as election hub
- Created "social sculpture" dinner events in safe, judgment-free spaces
- Objective: change tone of conversation, not minds, across political spectrum
- Carefully curated diverse participants surrounded by art in cultural institution



Michael Rode - State of Mind:

- Montana-based work addressing youth mental health
- Uses arts intervention to stimulate cross-political-spectrum dialogue
- Combines creative engagement with community dinner conversations

Advocacy Framework

Teaching artists must move beyond storytelling alone, which has proven ineffective over 50 years. Key principle from Tasha Menaker: **create the conditions wherein stories land** rather than "slamming in" with stories that trigger preconceptions.

Effective approach example: Frame school advocacy around student engagement driving academic achievement, then position creative expression as the engagement tool—rather than leading with arts education benefits.

Resources Shared

Organizations and training:

- International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) - membership with resource library
- Teaching Artists Project (formerly Community Word Project) - courses in social justice, SEL, school-based work
- Teaching Artist Pay Rate Calculator (Guild resources)
- TAMA (Teaching Artists of Mid-Atlantic) pay rate tool

Books and podcasts:

- *Making Change* by Eric Booth - teaching artists shaping a better world
- *Your Brain on Art* - neuroscience of arts engagement
- *Art Cure: The Science of How Art Saves Lives*
- Why Change? podcast (Creative Generation with Madeline McGurk)
- Teaching Artistry podcast (Courtney J. Boddy)

Accessibility tools:

- Contrast Checker for text/background accessibility
- WAVE WebAIM for website accessibility resources

Future Field Structure Insights

From virtual think tanks with teaching artists, three structural pillars emerged for optimal future field:

1. **Regionality over national infrastructure** - focus on physical relationships and regional gatherings where national efforts have failed
2. **Coalitions** - partnerships between teaching artists and sector-specific organizations (senior living, healthcare, education) rather than isolated practice
3. **Advocacy integration** - teaching artistry has always required partnering; coalitions essential for field growth

Soft skills emphasis: Communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (21st century skills) positioned as competitive advantages against AI and path to overcoming devaluation.

Technical Session Notes

Platform testing completed:

- Music sharing, screen sharing, breakout rooms, polls, and broadcasting to breakout rooms all functional
- Polls configured as single-choice questions with three rounds executed successfully
- Co-hosts cannot vote in polls (expected behavior)
- Manual breakout room assignment required for large group (50+ participants), causing 3-4 minute delay

Attendance dynamics:

- Participants began joining 2 hours early (10 AM for 12 PM CT start)
- 31 people in waiting room at start time
- Final attendance exceeded previous Guild sessions from past couple years

Action Items

- **National Guild:** Email PDF of slides with live links and additional resources to all participants
- **National Guild:** Upload recording to Guild website resource section
- **National Guild:** Prepare for June 10th session with Lecolion Washington and Megan Jasani (Community Music Center Boston) on "Navigating the Tension Between Money and Mission"

Links & Additional Resources:

In addition to the session notes, we have included a collection of resources, articles, organizations, and opportunities that were generously shared by participants and community members during our discussion. We wanted to make these available to everyone as part of the collective knowledge and generosity that emerged throughout the session.

- <https://artsforlearningnw.org/programs/arts-care-connection/?from=hub>
- <https://youthartsimpactnetwork.weebly.com/impact-resources-and-tools.html?from=hub>
- <https://www.artsedsearch.org/?from=hub>
- <https://www.vermontpublic.org/local-news/2026-05-11/nofa-vt-funds-community-dinners-through-new-micro-grant-program?from=hub>
- <https://artisfear.com/>
- <https://www.arts.wa.gov/tat-lab/?from=hub>
- https://ensemblenews.org/region/editorialthe-stories-were-speaking-into/?mc_cid=6bc1496a9d&mc_eid=df1e02894b&from=hub
- <https://sites.google.com/view/gwqa-resources/resource-overview?from=hub>
- <https://michaelrohd.com/?from=hub>
- <https://michaelrohd.substack.com/p/theatre-and-buildiung-trust?from=hub>
- <https://artsintegrationconference.com/?from=hub>
- <https://www.socialrx.com/?from=hub>
- <https://itac-collaborative.com/?from=hub>
- <https://learn.artsintegration.com/?from=hub>
- <https://nycaieroundtable.org/events/ta-financial-toolkit/?from=hub>
- <https://www.philippahughes.com/?from=hub>
- https://emilkang.substack.com/p/what-we-owe-teaching-artists-the?utm_source=%2Fsearch%2FEMIL%2520KANG&utm_medium=reader2&from=hub
- <https://theartofeducation.edu/2015/10/10/ted-talks-every-art-teacher-should-watch/?from=hub>