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Y'all, welcome to Working With Teaching Artists. My name is Amanda Koonlaba. I'm the owner of Party In The Art Room. I'm a teaching artist and consultant and I'm a content specialist and arts integration certification coach here at Education Closet.

Let me tell you just a little bit about my background as it is relevant to this specific session. I taught general education for six years and then I taught visual art for seven years and for the duration of all of that, I worked in arts integrated schools. For the last seven years, I was the arts integration specialist who coordinated everything arts integration related, including our partnerships with teaching artists. Then last year I actually became a teaching artist myself through the Mississippi Arts Commission and I'm listed as a teaching artist on the Mississippi teaching artist roster.

In this session we will cover three topics. What is a teaching artist, what to do before, during and after a teaching artist visit, and how to find teaching artists.

Some of you may have heard the terminology artist in residents. So for this session you need to know that teaching artists and artist in residents can be used interchangeably.

Susan Raleigh, whom you may have heard of, wink wink, writes that artists and residents are practicing artisans who come into a school for a period of time to work on a specific project or unit. Now I would add to that the teaching artists can also be a title that an artist has achieved. Many, many rosters where you can find teaching artists are vetted, rosters where the teaching artists have had to go through a panel approval process. This is such a short session and there's so much to talk about when we talk about teaching artists, but I want to take a minute just to bring up some of the benefits of bringing a teaching artist into a school.

Teaching artists provide practical knowledge. They provide experience and an opportunity for collaboration. Another thing that they can provide is real world applicability. They can take concepts and make them real life for kids. They also are able to connect concepts across curriculum in a real world setting. And finally they have this depth of knowledge about the art form that teachers aren't always able to have because teachers are busy with their own specific content.

So maybe a science teacher doesn't have the depth of knowledge that, say, a musician who's also a teaching artists could have. So you get that extra deep layer from the

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teacher's incredible knowledge about the subject matter and the artist's incredible knowledge about the subject matter.

Teaching artists residencies and teaching artists visits can take on so many different forms. It can be anything from a half of a day workshop with a couple of classrooms to a two or three week or however long whole big school-wide learning experience. So I'm so excited to be that.

I was able to interview another teaching artist for this segment of the sessions. I asked her specifically what are some variations in residencies you've experienced. And we're going to get to meet Mary Francis Maxi, who's a dance teaching artist in her dance studio right in the middle of class. So get ready to see her in her element and hear what she has to say about the variety of teaching artists experiences.

Mary Francis:

Hey. I'm Mary Francis Maxi. I'm a teaching artist for the Mississippi Arts Commission and the Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education. I'm also an instructor here at North Mississippi Dance Center.

Mary Francis:

Well, I'm on the artist's roster as a dance teacher, but I'm also a musician, so I've kind of been able to do some production side of things at several schools. My first residency was at ECC in Tupelo in 2017 I believe. And I basically just came in and did dance classes every Friday for a couple of months and then my next residency was at Pontotoc Elementary and I did kindergarten, we did the Powwow for their kindergarten they do every November and I took up book, the Legend of Indian Ling Fresh and we did a little bit of a production with that, with dance movement and they did their regular powwows singing songs. And then for their first grade we worked on sentence structure and second grade we worked on science habitat elements.

Mary Francis:

So that residency actually lasted more than three months at a time. So it can vary from school to school where it could be just a full week of me being somewhere out of town, which I have done in Meridian before. Or it can just be a drawn out period, like a month or two, where I'm in a location where I can get to them every day. So I've done that at several schools in the Tupelo area. Carver Elementary being one as well.



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Mary Francis:

I'd say a disadvantage for being far away from the schools that I have set something on, I want to check in with them more and be there for them more, but I'm too far away. But when I'm there for a whole week setting something, we just have to nail it down and work really hard and get it up and go going.

So now that you know a little bit about what teaching artists are, what the benefits are, and how residencies can look different based on the needs of the school and the students. I'm going to move into section two and talk to you a little bit about how successful partnerships can happen.

There are things that need to happen before, during, and after a visit with the teaching artists. And as I speak on this matter, I want you to remember that I'm speaking from the perspective of a teacher who worked with teaching artists and also as a teaching artist who's worked with teachers in schools. I cannot stress enough how important it is to plan effectively and plan, plan, plan. You want to plan everything to a tee as best you can. You know, all of our plans don't always go the way we want them to, but it's very important to have a plan.

When you get a plan for your teaching artist, the teaching artists will know what they're going to do when they get there. You will be able to get the support of your colleagues, you'll be able to prep your students, and everything will fall into place. And that will help you and your school make this the best possible opportunity for your students to learn.

And that's really what it's all about. We want to make sure, it's our job to ensure that our students are learning and enriching and engaging in the most exciting way possible. And this is how we can do it. And planning is the key. Before you even contact a teaching artist to get them to come to your school, there's a few things that you need to get organized about. And the first thing I recommend figuring out is your budget. You need to know where your budget's coming from, if it's coming from a grant program, PTO funds, federal funding.

Because when you do paperwork and you write proposals or you write requisitions and you have to do communications with your school's finance departments, they're going

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to want to know where to take that money from. And each different kind of funding has a different kind of budget. So you want to be able to make sure that you understand what you're talking about when you talk to them about that.

But also you want to know how much money you have in your budget. And I will say before you contact a teaching artists be prepared that you need to pay a teaching artist a professional fee. Because they are professional artists who work at this for a living. It's what they do and they're highly trained. You're not just pulling somebody off of the street when you get a teaching artist to come in, and we will talk about that a little bit more in just a minute. But you're getting someone that has been highly trained to work with students.

If you get someone's name off of a teaching artist roster, those people have been vetted. They've been through an interview process, they've been through training, they're professionals. So be prepared to pay them as professionals. The next step would be to create a contract or at the very basic level, a memorandum of understanding, and that should outline the expectations of both the school and the artists.

Sometimes teaching artists will write their own contracts, which is really great for a busy teacher. But you need to make sure that you understand everything that's in that contract. If the teaching artist says that they will only work with four class periods a day, they should not show up and all of a sudden be presented with six classrooms that day. They want to know what they're getting into the same way that you do as the teacher. You want to know what to expect from them and they want to know what to expect for you.

So don't you want to know that they're going work with 30 students on hip hop and math? I just happened to know someone that can do that workshop. Yeah, you want to know that's what they're about to do. So they want the same from you. They want to know if they're going to be teaching in a gym, they want to know if they're going to be in a classroom full of desk. They want to know if they're visual artists, do they have access to water? That kind of stuff needs to be laid out so that there aren't any surprises and the better you can plan that part, the more smoothly the whole day or the whole residency will go.

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Another thing that I recommend sorting out with the teaching artists before they come to the school is a lesson plan. You want to make sure that there's some standards aligned with what the teaching artist is doing. It's great if a teaching artists comes and they're going to sing and dance with your students, but you want to check on those standards and make sure that the teaching artist understands the standards that they're going to be teaching, which they will as long as you communicate with them.

And you want to make sure that they're teaching what you need for your kids. So again, that's just a communication thing. But I would talk to the teaching artist about either developing a lesson plan together or using a lesson plan that the teaching artist has written already, or have them write one for your school based on what you're going to have them working on. And don't forget to ask them to focus on some vocabulary.

Vocabulary is a great thing that is something that any teaching artist can work on no matter what subject they're coming in and no matter what art form. And I think it's especially important for kids who hear the arts vocabulary from a practicing artist, from a professional artist. It really helps it stick so you can ask the teaching artist to use that professional arts vocabulary.

The final thing that should happen or one ... Okay. My last recommendation for this session about things that should happen before the teaching artist arrives, and this needs to actually, it goes back to having that contract or that memorandum drawn up. You need to prep the classroom where the teaching artists will be. If they need tables, make sure the tables are in there. If they said the only thing they need from you is glue, make sure glue is in the room.

Don't set the students up for failure by not having the room properly set up. The teaching artist needs to be able to walk in and do their thing and whatever you said that you would do for that teaching artist, do that before they get there.

Now once the teaching artist arrives at your school, it's your job to ensure that the teaching artists is properly supported by school staff during the day. If a teaching artist is working with students, you want to have extra school staff on deck ready to help. And let me tell you why this is so important. It's the school's job to ensure a safe and orderly learning environment. A teaching artist is not going to know the rules and procedures of a classroom or the school and a teaching artist is not to know your

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students. They're going to be great with those kids, but they're not going to know your kids like you know them.

They don't know who has a five oh four plan, who has an IEP, they don't know who needs extra restroom breaks. Any of that personal day to day stuff that the teachers know about the students, the teaching artists are not going to know. So you want to make sure you have someone in the room that knows that kind of stuff so that they can help the teaching artists.

You would never, and I hate to even bring up a situation like this, which you would never want to put a teaching artist in a position to where they told the child that they couldn't go to the restroom and that particular child is one that has a medical condition and then there's an accident. You would never want. You wouldn't want to put the teaching artist in that position and you would want to put that child in that position. You wouldn't want to put your school in that kind of position either. We just wouldn't want that to happen.

So that's just one example. But you always want to have extra hands on deck. And if a teaching artist is working with students and there are teachers in the room observing the teaching artist, as professional development, then I would go ahead and put extra staff in there because the teachers who are observing, that's their job, is to observe. So you need extra people in there who can kind of help monitor and help monitor the children.

Another thing that is really great to do when you have a teaching artist working with your students at school during the actual teaching artists residency is to invite your principles in, invite other people who work at the school. You can even invite parents in. But it's really important that your principal sees that the teaching artists is teaching and how they're teaching those students.

Now, my final tidbit of advice for when a teaching artist is actually in the school during the teaching artist's residency is to try to make the teaching artists comfortable as you can. I know we teachers, we have so much on our plates. But try to imagine that this person is walking into a strange classroom with people they've never met before and they're teaching.

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It's cold teaching. You've never met these people before. So try to have empathy about that and make them comfortable. Offer them water if you can. I have, in the past, I've offered to buy snacks. We offered to make sure that the teaching artist had lunch if there was something particular that they wanted for lunch. They might ... Make sure they have a rest period in between some of their classes. Even if it's just long enough for them to go to the restroom or check their phone.

Now after the teaching artists has done their thing, you have so many awesome opportunities to extend the learning. And hopefully if you have that lesson plan from the teaching artists, that lesson plan can have ideas for follow up. You don't ever want to teaching artists to come in and it'd be a one shot, one and done thing. You always want to go back to that with your students and talk about what they learned and how they learned it.

Model it again, go through the whole process again, follow up with some writing activities. Have the students record themselves in a video talking about what they learned so that they could share it with their parents. Do something to follow up with the students about what they learned while the teaching artists was there and then share that with the world, share it with the teaching artists, share it with other teachers.

And you want to make sure that the teaching artist gets paid. So you want to follow up with that after the teaching artist residency. However that's structured in your school, remember I told you to make sure you knew what budgets and things were coming from. It might not be your sole responsibility to take care of all that. I had a big part of that in my responsibility when I was a teacher, but you may not have a huge amount of responsibility over getting the teaching artists paid.

But I have also seen teaching artists where the check for some reason just didn't get through finance and it was two months later and the teaching artists still hadn't been paid. So as the teacher who worked with the teaching artist, you want to be able to follow the proper channels and you want to be able to call whoever needs to be called and ask them questions. So that's why I said know your budgets and make sure that they are getting what you agreed to give them for their service.

Okay, so we have talked about what teaching artists are. We talked about why it's great to bring them into school. We talked about the differences and what teaching artists

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residencies can look like and we have talked about how to have a successful teaching artists partnership.

Now it's time to talk a little bit about how to find teaching artists and this is another resource that I'm going to give you. I'm going to give you a list of places where you can find teaching artist rosters and I told you earlier that I was going to talk about the different kinds of artists and how some artists are professional highly trained artists and that teaching artists can be a title that you can earn.

And I want to bring this up. Super important. If you're working with grant funding, and probably with some federal funding, you're not going to be able to pull just anybody off the street to come in and do teaching artists work with your students. You're going to want to find someone on a roster who has been vetted and has had training and knows what they're doing.

So, there's some gray area here and I will tell you that I think it's great to bring someone's grandmother, aunt, who quilts, and let them show off that art form and their hobby and what they do. But I also think it's super important, when you're talking about teaching artists, someone that you're going to pay money to, that you make sure you find someone on a roster that has been vetted. And that's for several reasons.

One of the main reasons is because you want to make sure that whoever you bring in can actually teach to a high level and can work with all your learners. They're not just showing off their art or their hobby. These people are teaching students and you also want to make sure that your students are going to be safe and in a safe and orderly learning environment. If a teaching artist has been vetted and it's on a roster, you can get just about guarantee that that's what you're going to get.

So I want to say it one more time. I think it's wonderful to bring people from the community just have a love of art, who have hobbies and art forms that they practice. We used to have an arts festival at my school and we would let everybody's grandmother, everybody's aunt, every teenager that had an art form, we had kids bring their saxophone and sit around and play.

And we would have teenagers bring their art supplies and sit out and paint. We had somebody's grandmother one time who was a yodeler just come and sit up at the arts

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PRESENTER:

AMANDA KOONLABA

festival and people could walk around and they could observe and talk to these people, these everyday people about their art forms. But when we had teaching artists come in during the school day to instruct students, we made sure that we got those people off of a vetted artists' roster.

For a quick recap, I know you guys just got here from an amazing keynote speaker and you saw some amazing things happening at a school in Florida. I've provided a list of teaching artist rosters and the resources for you, and one of those rosters is the Kennedy Center Teaching Artist Roster sub. Make sure you check that out. That will really help you find the highest quality artists possible. All right guys, it's been great. Keep in touch.