

# Teaching Artists as Leaders: Creating Cross-Disciplinary STEAM Partnerships

ITAC THINK TANK: October 2021

*Hosted by Jeff Mather - United States*

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This is the transcript of one of ITAC Collaborative's monthly Think Tank sessions. Each session focuses on a new theme and is hosted by someone from a different country.

As this session was participatory and collaborative in nature, participants reflected on their own partnership experiences to create "action steps" and respond to their peers, with the overall goal to empower more Teaching Artists (TAs) around the world to take the lead in creating new, innovative partnerships which can enhance their work, and to advance the presence and effectiveness of STEAM programs.

Following the Think Tank, participants were invited to join together in a working group and consider the following:

Historically, Teaching Artists have been expected to wait for educators and administrators to initiate partnerships and residencies with their goals established. But, as professional creatives, we can "flip" this arrangement to create more powerful and innovative projects and programs—like a theater set designer designing a set before there is a script.

This working group will pilot, document, and report back the ways in which Teaching Artists can become leaders in establishing unusual or unconventional partnerships. The format of the culminating resource will depend on the group's preference, but it will be made freely available online via the ITAC website, with an eye towards encouraging more TAs to be bold in their approach to cross-disciplinary work.

Instances in which the text is in ellipses in parentheses (...) indicate when the sound was indecipherable for transcription.

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**Jeff Mather**

My name is Jeff Mather, I'm in Atlanta, Georgia. My pronouns are he/him, and Atlanta, Georgia is Muskogee land, unseeded Muskogee land is the indigenous folks that were present in this area and Cherokee as well. And increasingly, it's probably true where you are, I don't know. But increasingly, land acknowledgments are an important part of beginning a gathering, and acknowledging whose land was stolen, and where we sit or where we work. So we begin that way.

And today, you may know because you registered for it, our topic is, well, I had it translated as empowering teaching artists to become leaders in creating cross disciplinary steam partnerships. And I only use the word translation because curiously, in the circles that I move in, here in the United States, and in the south, south south eastern region, in particular, empowering is sometimes frowned upon as a term that some people feel like it's patronizing, to say, we're going to do something that will be empowering for you as if you have the power, and it's your place to give it to someone who you perceive as not having the power. This session today is all about power sharing. And increasingly, I think we strive to use non hierarchical language and non hierarchical structures. Sometimes one of the other ITAC spin off groups that I'm part of this setting up partnerships, in several African countries, we have landed on a term from a organization called alternate routes here in the southeast, that is learning exchange rather than workshop. And certainly, you know, rather than panel discussion or any of those things that imply higher hierarchy, we say learning exchange. So yes, there may be a leader that may be a convener, but we acknowledge that the people who are in the circle, probably any one of the people in the circle, could also function as convener. When you convene a circle for learning exchange, it doesn't mean you're declaring yourself an expert. It means that this is an area that you are interested in delving into and hearing more voices, who have other things to say about what it might mean, in this case, to work in partnership.

So I hope you signed up for the think tank today, because you're ready to get in a tank and think about what it means to work in partnership. You know, some of these words, we're going to we're going to scrutinize, because we can't assume that when we use a word like partnership, or collaboration, or community, or teaching artists for that matter, I know that Eric booth is always hits the pause button to acknowledge how many different ways people define that term teaching artists, even within ITAC international teaching artists collective or collaborative.

So I'm going to kind of roll along, especially at first, if you let me kind of get my introduction and a little bit of storytelling out of the way. The most important part of these think tanks is that we all you know, this voices get heard. And that's why we're going to do the breakouts. We have some prompts leading us into the breakout. But what I'm saying is, I probably won't be able to read the chat. I might occasionally glance over but later, these chats are saved. And I will definitely read slowly through the chats if I fail to respond to anyone's comment or question in the chat. Now, I will try and you know, follow up later. And some of the people who registered for this may have it as a bookmark, knowing that this time actually doesn't work for them. But this will all be streamed on the ITAC website and available that way and maybe they'll back around for that if they if they can. So please do you know edit anything that you're coming out of my mouth. I

know I said something in a zoom the other day with some teaching artists that was a misstep in terms of talking about artists or student groups with disabilities. And I said I was working with a group with disabilities a life skills class. And then there was this regular class and she put an Ooh, ouch in the in the chat, which was a good check on my language, like, you know, the to I just blindly went Oh, yeah, those kids and then the regular kids. And so you know, I think we can help each other to learn best how to, to be more inclusive in our language. So please, don't shy away from those sorts of comments. I don't consider it rude or mean spirit. I think that that's where we are in our field is to kind of cover To get up to speed with how language needs to accommodate change.

Okay, so I was saying empowering is not exactly how I put it. So I just simplified it. And in what we're about to flip through in my, in my images as teaching artists as leaders, when we go into breakout, it's okay to, like, redefine these terms in your own in your own culture in your own way. Collaboration and community these two, those two see words. They get bandied about a fair bit with, because they sound good, right? Hey, community, let's collaborate. And it sounds like a warm fuzzy. I've also heard friends say, who do a lot of community based work. So it could be a briar patch to not necessarily a warm fuzzy? Think I've got my screenshare capability? Here we go. Cool. Let's do it. And okay, thumbs up, if that looks good. Yay, yay. And hopefully it will not take a dive as it has done a couple times in the past couple weeks. But okay. Yeah, so I, I definitely removed the word empowering, to refer to return to that idea of more of a learning exchange, teaching artists as leaders, creating cross disciplinary steam partnerships.

So this story begins with this image, a bunch of steam educators sitting around a conference table. And one of the terms in the description for today's session coming out, we hope with action steps that we can take into a workgroup that will, you know, follow this. Today's session that we have today, as a standalone can be just you come today, and that's, that's good. And this is the think tank. But that the ITAC model for think tanks now is that whatever we begin to consider and work on today, that we then can gather by in some sort of regular time frame that we all agree on, there's some consensus to me every six weeks, or eight weeks, or whatever it may be, to continue this work. Okay. So action steps, we'll be talking about what would be adequate or effective action steps that we can at least claim and try to move towards. So that when we get back together, we can say, Yeah, I did that, that thing I said I was going to do I did it. And so one that will just keep bouncing back to begins with this very first image, action step possibility, not necessarily the first one for everybody. But the first one I'm going to talk about, call a meeting. And that's what I did here. This is a school in Atlanta, where I have been the artists and residents, I'm not on staff, I'm not a teacher. But I found different ways to partner with teachers in two different buildings, the whole school goes kindergarten through 12th grade, in two different buildings. And I don't have a room, I don't have a studio I float. And at various times, I will co write units in every grade level and every subject area at one time or another. Being a sculptor who does public art does large scale public art. I'm very attuned to spatial concerns, which means I get along great with architects. And many times when I'm visiting a community, sometimes I'm invited because a school building is quite new, and doesn't have much warmth yet. You know, it's new buildings they need to feel lived in. And it takes a while. And sometimes, you know, claiming space with artwork is one step. So I get the invitation, can

you come help us kind of claim this new building. And the architects, sometimes they're still hovering even though the buildings open and working. And that was the case here, that we're in a very unusual building for a public school building. And I noticed that the architects were still kind of hovering. So I said to them, well, listen, you know, if you're still gonna keep coming around like this, why don't you stay a little bit longer, and actually share your creative process your design process with the students. And then they showed me that they had made a little booklet, the architecture firm head of this building, and around the table, I can see at least one person at the end is actually flipping through this book that's about the building they're sitting in. And so I said, this book that nobody knew existed is a great teaching tool. This building could be a great teaching tool. So let's call a group of teachers have the three lead architects. There's an administrator, sitting there across the table with his arms crossed, and the most important thing I'm doing well, I should say that food is important. You don't see it necessarily on the table. But I used a slice of my sculpture, materials budget to buy pizza, salads, and iced tea and lemonade so that the folks who came around this table would linger and after school hour. And so you know, food is really important. When you call a meeting. A lot of people if you say the word meeting, they groan, like, Oh, hey, meetings, but, you know, you can sweeten that entree, you can, you know, you can at least provide some food. And that does create a different dynamic.

So having said that, the other thing, and that's me with the light blue shirt with my back to the camera. The most important thing I'm doing right here, in this picture is not talking. My mind is going like crazy, because I'm looking at the people around the table. And I'm thinking of all the possible connections, being a steam school. If you're not, I'll just quickly say that the letters stand for science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Well, in the US, there are a lot more STEM schools than there are steam schools. But if you look, it's a school that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and math. The arts educators go, Hey, wait a minute, you got an E there for engineering, you can't have engineering without design. So that opens the door to wedge in an A for the arts, because of design. But then to include all the art, this school has full time dance departments in both buildings, makerspaces technology labs for making art, music departments, all of that. And so, yes, this is a steam school, but the arts are core to how this particular community to find steam of their places I have visited, I have found it defined differently to I've been to schools and say, Yeah, we're steam, and then I walk around and discover they don't even have an art room, which is kind of confusing to me. How can you be steam, if you don't have an art room? Well, they'll maybe they have a dance, or music department. So it can be defined differently. But at any rate, having called this meeting, having gathered these people around this table, giving them some salads and pizzas and things to look at and architects to ask questions of, I'm biting my tongue right now not to over function on anybody, because boy have I got ideas for them. But how much more powerful for these folks to connect the dots themselves to figure out oh, when I talked to her, and she said this thing about the math in the building, and wow, how we could like, light up that part of the building. And, and so that was the starting point. And in particular, I want you to look at this photo and look across the table. And there's a woman who's wearing all white, she has white framed sunglasses pushed up onto the top of her head. And this is the head of the dance department, Tom bruh Harris. And I think as visiting artists, you know, you step into a new organization, a new building a new school, and you're kind of reading, you know, you're sniffing the air, trying to find out how

this place feels how this plays functions. And reading body language is probably something that most of you are adept at. So if you look at her body language, the way she's kind of like, definitely intently listening to the conversation around the table. What happened next was she actually went over and sat next to the lead architect. And I read their body language. And I tried to just give them space. I stayed clear, but I looked and I said, whatever's happening over there, that I can tell is really good, because they're really leaning in. And sure enough, later, she jumped up, excitement in her eyes ran over and said, Okay, instead of dancing in the dance studio, like we always do, we're on stage in the theater, like we always do. What if we activate this whole campus, everything but the building with performances, and that they're all steam related. And she's passionate about climate change. So every time we did this, and we ended up obviously doing it, we had different themes related to climate change plastics in the oceans, water sustainability, air shelter. So that's the story I'm going to tell you. I'm gonna unfortunately fly through it a little fast. Because I don't want to dominate this time we have together I want to get you guys interacting in the breakout spaces. So excuse me for going fast. You can watch this when it streams later on the ITAC website and hit the pause button on the stream if you really want to look at these things more carefully. But I just want to kind of give this example this one example of how calling a meeting and letting the RIP pulls it out from whatever happened. And I will also say that when I have shown this image before, at conferences or gatherings of teaching artists, it has been questioned people say, wait, wait, wait, you who called this meeting? You call this meeting? Yeah. But you're, you're just a visiting artist. Yeah. Well, visiting artists can't call meetings. And I Oh, well, nobody told me that, that I couldn't. So I. And here's what happened. I say and then, there we go. Okay. So there's Tara Harris, she didn't change her hair. She is the artistic director of an all women's Drum and Dance troupe called gaiwan Mata. And there's the poster for one of these events, she came up with the title spaces, the new place, and flow for the love of water. So this year, the theme was about water sustainability. But what I want you to notice at the bottom of that poster, is all the departments that contributed artwork. So if you look down there, some of them are obvious dance drama, chorus, band heart, but then we have engineering, photography, visual arts, environmental science, music, technology, business, technology, and orchestra. So all those departments all contributed it to this event. And people actually came up to tomra. And to me later and said, How did you do that? How did you get everybody to play so nicely together? And we said, it's a steam school. Isn't that the point? As a teaching artist, you may love main thing that you're known for invited to schools, because you're the person you're the artists with the reputation for getting a dance put on for getting a play put on for getting a mural on the wall, or whatever your art form your primary art form is. And if people tug on, you have heard, say, you know, with skepticism in their voice, ooh, Mission Drift, Mission Drift, that's not me. So this can feel this image of this knife, you can feel like, yeah, I am a jack of all trades. There's lots of skills in my skill in my toolbox. But I really like to stay in my comfort zone of my primary art form. And I think in our field, there's room for all of that. I think just there's definitely to talk about steam to talk about lots of interdisciplinary collaboration, that's going to be something that some folks take to, like, obviously, I do and have, but there's going to be others that go well, I don't know. And that's okay. Because I think that along with steam and inter interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary partnership, there's always room for the artists that come in and have that one main thing that they contribute, or that they lead in. So in order to get to that, that meeting around that conference table, you know, who is

this guy? Yeah, he's our visiting artists. But what does he actually what's the value added, you'll hear educators talk in those terms, what's the value added of having a teaching artist who doesn't just come run a program and leave, but it sort of is becomes part of the furniture, so to speak. And this is a project called the Tinker yard that is outside one of the buildings. This is a tinker lab or maker space concept taken outdoors so that it's unlimited by scale. And in fact, it by definition is never done. We just keep adding stations and it keeps growing. And now it sort of blurs with the garden program, the urban agriculture program to the extent that they renamed the garden program that Tinker garden so it's Tinker yard Tinker garden, and some things out here, serve both programs. There is a Plexiglas painting wall with a gutter underneath it. So the students can paint but then a squeegee comes out every couple of minutes and the paint goes down in the gutter into a slop bucket. And new paintings begin over and over and over again, there are sculptures of different kinds available that their friends can hold up on the back of the plexiglass. And then they outline the sculptures as the beginning of a composition. Or one of the kids who's just been in dance class comes and does a dance position on the plexiglass that gets outlined becomes then they step away. And that becomes the beginning of a composition. So this just keeps changing all the time.

The other thing about doing a more ambitious kind of project like this is the parents love to be asked to participate. Right now with COVID parents aren't even allowed on campus or in the building at all. So that's kind of a rough patch, as far as community participation. But here's a Saturday session with parents side by side helping to craft elements of the Tinker yard with their kids. Okay, so people know that they appreciate that the Tinker yard has been featured on Edutopia, that Utopia film Kreuk documentary. It's been featured in national magazine so it's got a certain amount of buzz, this Tinker yard project. And so I think Feeling like okay, people are, are understanding the different ways that I can play my role here that I then just kind of had the audacity, he might say, to call that meeting and see what could happen and to like, try not to over function on anybody bite my tongue, let them make their own discoveries. And then this project space is a new place became one of the main things that came from that, that that first meeting. So here we are. This building, as I says, a little unusual, it's got lots of these flying buttress columns, it's got balconies that the different levels, this is the balcony that faces West, you can see the sun is setting, you can see the top of one of the skyscrapers in the downtown downtown Atlanta. So you've got this fantastic view of the sunset. And the photo is part of the story, because we did among other things, Video Mapping, digital video projection on the building, and that doesn't look really vivid unless you let the sun go down. So we gathered the community and have a reception, you know, cookies, punch all that stuff up on the top floor of this building with an eco fair. So green companies, businesses, organizations, National Wildlife Federation, they have informational tables about their programs, so people can wander around that neighbors meet neighbors, this is wide open to the community. So it's not just for school families, and a lot of other people know about this now and show up. And then the dancers who are performing come up an outside staircase. And when the sun has just set, they lead the entire audience down the outside staircase. And we take people on purpose around the end of the building where nobody goes, anybody who comes into this building, they come in the other end, or they come through the middle of the building. But this this direction is you know, quite frankly, it's like the smelly loading dock area, you know, the dumpster end of the building, people

don't go this way. So we deliberately bring folks this way so that they will see familiar architecture with fresh eyes. See it like maybe they hadn't quite seen it before. We've got digital projections of graphics on the walls, there's musicians popping up in unexpected places. There's outdoor visual art exhibits things made with repurposed materials, recycled and repurposed materials. We are projecting things that the Math Department generated animations that the Math Department generated, we're projecting out of one building onto another building. These are not on projector carts, these students are hand holding the projectors so that they can move them around. And maybe I can even show you that a string quartet sitting on the stairs are fashion models sloshing around wearing clothing made from repurposed materials, art exhibit below. graphics on the stairs, you can see some words on the stairs over there. There's some graphics, those are facts about plastics in the oceans. So even as people are just entering the space, there's all these layers for them to kind of pass through. The photography department created a book one of these years of architectural photography, there were all studies of this particular building. And so once again, the Math Department took that coffee table art book that was made right there on site. And they chose favorite images and then pulled them up in the computer lab and manipulated them each manipulation they saved as a animation cell. So there's all this morphing animation of the architectural photography of the building being projected on the same building. The year that the theme was water sustainability, we had a professional lighting designer come in and light the dance studio to seem like it was underwater. And this performance is meant to be viewed from outside the building. Another year, the rain garden area we'd been told was going to be filled with water friendly plants. But as things sometimes get delayed. I looked out there two weeks before and I noticed there were no plants in the rain garden. I checked in they went Oh right. Yeah, no, that's probably going to be in a couple months. Whether in the meantime, the dancers had choreographed a dance they wanted to jump out from behind the plants. So on very short notice I had a 15 year old teach me how to use the CNC cutter which is a giant computer driven machine that can cut forms out of entire sheets of plywood. So I did a small pencil sketch program and he showed me how to translate how to load that pencil sketch into this machine. So cut eight pieces of plywood in this form. So we had like instant dance set also the year that the theme was water we made an imaginary River was defined with bamboo there were lily pads that are floating that are made out of plastic spoons that were retrieved out of the trash in the cafeteria with LEDs glowing on the inside. When the theme was air sustainability, we had an aerial dance troupe come in and teach the seniors how to do aerial dance with ribbons. A guy from Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas came in did rigging of the ribbons up through the rafters of the gym. One of my favorite science teachers she jumped in with this installation art this building is the classrooms are glass floor to ceiling going up all three floors. So she had her students create an installation of to be backlit of their carbon footprint. And it's hard to tell in this image, but they actually stepped in ink and actually created the line in the graph of the carbon footprint with their feet, printing the line of the carbon footprint. One funny side story about this, if you've been in any of these newer buildings, and you work late, sometimes the lights go off on you and you wave your arms so activate the motion sensor to let the you know to say and I'm still here and then lights come back on. Well, this is a nighttime event. And the students didn't anticipate that the lights that are supposed to backlight this installation would be going out. And so we had a team of students that were assigned to run up and down three flights of stairs and burst into these rooms and wave their

arms. All night long. That was their job to keep everything lit. Yes, artists I've always loved when the guest artists gets to have guest artists. This is sometimes not something people think that they can do because it does take money. I never asked artists to come in pro bono I always have to find additional funding or grants or take something I thought I was going to spend on materials and instead spend it on having a visiting artist. This is Lynn Marshall Linda Meyer, who is working with students on a giant cyanotype which is a canvas that is embedded with photosensitive chemicals This is the students actually making the art on a nice sunny day I'm sure there were people looking at the windows of the building at this and going what in the world are these girls doing? So she directed them to hold a dance position or a position for five minutes and then change positions to hold a second position for five minutes and then a third position for five minutes and what that does is you get different depths of exposure from the sun and then you take that cloth and you have to stop it from developing by dipping it in this big tub of water with a bottle of hydrogen peroxide mixed in and where we do the reception at the beginning of the performance evenings these are the...

**Madeleine McGirk**

Jeff Are you still with us you froze it and I think we were all hanging on every word Okay, I think he's been logged out. I'm gonna switch us back to gallery view so I can see all of you. He's gonna pop back in I think at any minute. But luckily he shared with me some of the prompts for the breakout rooms. So I think what is most likely to be useful to Jeff and his plan for today is for me to give those prompts put you into your rooms and then when we come back together maybe he can pick back up exactly where he left off. So oh, I spoke too soon. He's just come into the waiting room. Let's see how this goes. Okay here we are Jeff Are you with us?

**Jeff Mather**

So sorry.

**Madeleine McGirk**

I was just getting ready to put everyone into their breakout rooms as a fun be but I will I'll hand back over to you to resume.

**Jeff Mather**

We're almost two but I just let me just finish those crazy images that I was just about done with. And okay. Just about done with a story. Okay, can you see it? All right, back to where we were I sorry about the the jump out. Okay, so at the end of the evening, there's this amphitheater in this hillside with just these notches cut for an amphitheater in this hillside. And so there is a final dance performance. And we have a single camera trained on individual dancers with a projector. So the images of the dancers are like, tall on the side of the building. But then when the music stops for the final performance, there is no final bow, in fact, the beginning of the evening, it's what we call a soft start, we just let families trickle in. And then we don't really start, like I said, until the sunset goes down. So that allows the families in this community who tend to come late to a lot of things. And that's just how it is. And so there's a soft start, but at the end, there's no final bow either. What happens is a circle of drummers pick up the rhythm of the last piece of music, and the dancers go up onto the hillside and take individual community members



by the hand and lead them back down to the bottom of the hill. And so this just turns into a community dance jam that goes on into the evening until everybody's too tired to keep dancing. Okay, so if you want to make note of this one I just ripped through really fast, there's some better documentation of this and other steam based projects. If you'd like to just know you know, if you if you are a Facebook user, I do put a lot of images and clips from documentaries on this site. And that is the end of my share. Okay, thanks for your patience. Well, I got through that and got kicked out for a minute too. Okay, Madeline, um, if you would please set up us to go to breakouts with that first poll or survey, as you call it.

### **Madeleine McGirk**

Okay, so we will do the poll, I'll collect the responses, and then I'll send you all off into the break.

### **Jeff Mather**

Again, from the breakouts, let's let's just add a layer of what might serve as motivation. And that is the fact that at least in this country, and in this part of this country, steam is happening. It's it's a phenomenon that is in our State Department of Education here in Georgia actually certifies schools to be steam schools, and they have an annual forum, which means a giant conference with steam presenters. So when a school and I heard blasted, they're like 50, schools in queue waiting to be certified here in Georgia as a steam school. And there are other state states that are moving in this direction, that they are required to have a teaching artist, and the quote is in the mix, as they, you know, create their Steam plans. Now, in the mix is a very vague phrase. And it could mean a lot of different things, consultants, you know, but, you know, a lot of artists, if you really ask them to talk in depth about their work, you go, Oh, that you're real, you're so steamy. You're so there's so many science aspects of what you do. There's so many math aspects of what you do. And of course, the artists go, of course, like we just didn't call it STEAM until, you know, however, many years ago that that term came along. But you know, while there still is some resistance in some pockets, I do work out in Utah, twice a year for an Arts Access, fair, and not advocate for steam to the extent of going to Salt Lake City, the capital, to basically serve as a lobbyist that she takes administrators or legislators, I meant to say out to lunch to say, you know, we'd love to see more funding go to steam. And she actually had a legislator tell her, Oh, well, actually, we consider steam to be a dumbing down of STEM, and we're preventing funding from going to steam. Which, you know, I was aghast. And I said, Give me the name of that legislator. I think I need to take him out to lunch to push back on that notion. But anyway, you know, I forecast and you can call me wrong, you know, down the road a couple years, that there'll be more teaching artists being asked if they are steam ready. Steam ready is going to be a different thing for different artists in different different places. So I kind of appreciate the fact that there is no one true church of steam trying to define differently and you can step up and be a definer of what is the most effective steam that you've seen or that you believe can happen. So we focused in the breakout just now. About on how educators are wishing to co teach more with educators that can be obstacles, we're going to do another breakout about the same length of time. And this one had starts with a different poll, a different survey that may address issues that come up when you wish to work with other teaching artists. Now, I will say, in the breakout, I was just in that listening to people talk, who are musicians and dancers and then the performing arts and performing arts do tend to dominate the teaching artists field. You model collaboration

frequently as musician together as dancers dancing together as theater people doing plays together, step into the visual arts. And there's a real strong ownership issue about my painting my drawing, and there are exceptions, obviously, like doing a mural with a bunch of people or within community. So there are exceptions. But you know, part of the difficulty are how tricky coaching can be, is less tricky if you're modeling it, if you're doing it and the students and the other educators can see you operating in collaboration with other artists, other teaching artists. So the next poll, Natalie, you can go ahead and put up lead us into the next breakout. The remainder of our time, the focus is on launching the work group that we very idealistically frame or hope will follow today's Think Tank. And so to just jump right into that formation, you know that we use these terms like action steps implies, you know, moving forward, what are we going to do, future wise. And so the last participatory thing that is a, you know, internet tool we're going to use is jam boards, you've may have seen them before, it's like putting sticky notes. And we're going to just take maybe 10 minutes to do the jam boards, maybe less, we'll see how they how quickly they fill up. But here's the challenge for the jam boards. I want you to put on your jam board sticker, some bullet points, not sentences, not description so much but bullet points of, you know, after kind of the conversations we've been having, or maybe even some of the images I threw at you my story. What would be your fantasy, co teaching art form of another teaching artist or to or might you want to invite to come in, you know, don't worry, we're going to like suspend disbelief that there can be funding, sometimes people get stuck there, say, I don't know, that's gonna be too expensive. And I will pay for that. But if you don't declare it, if you don't put it out there that this is what you wish could happen. It's not going to happen. So we're not going to fuss about or worry today about the funding, maybe that'd be a future thing. The workgroup can share some bits of knowledge about wisdom, but how to go about that. But when you do the jam board, I want you to like just fantasize, if you have a theme. Great. If you have partner artists in mind, you don't have to list them as by individual names. Or you might, maybe there's an artist you know about who you would just love to grab them by the elbow and pull them into a partnership. And sure, that's fine. You can name. And what was the other thing, theme partners? Okay, we just but just keep it quick and simple. And what we're going to do is we're going to do the jam board, and we're going to come back, and then the rest of the session will be a lot less of me. Like I said, the best thing I did in that first slide was to limit my talking. And now because it's my Think Tank, I'm doing way too much talking. So the last, the last part of the time will be unpacking anything you heard that really resonated with you in either of the breakout conversations, or anything that jumped out at you reading through the jam boards. And then we're like, those of you who are good synthesizers of information can chime in, love to hear your voices. And hopefully that will lead us in the direction of what we'll do when we reform as many of you as you who can reform and a workgroup on this topic coming up in a few weeks. Okay, speak up about anything that jumped out at you and these conversations are on the jam. Now's the time.

### **Woman 1**

You know, I think an overarching theme is that we need the time and the space in addition to the money but the just the time and the space to work with the teachers and the other artists to understand each other. And there's never enough it seems like when we're at the school, but maybe something virtual like this. A place where you can have kind of a professional

development with artists and teachers who want to partner together, come up with ideas together and then like create their projects outside of the school time. And then maybe that might help to like bring some synergy of funding at the same time.

### **Madeleine McGirk**

Thanks. I would also say that in addition to time, there's the notion that I think is important, which is long term partnerships. So that that time is not just about developing ideas that time is also about developing trust, reciprocity, sustainability. And I think oftentimes, when we think about projects, we think about them in short term thinking. And that may be the only way initially, but I think that there's an important conversation there, around thinking about how projects grow into other projects, how relationships, breed trust, and relationships that can extend in multiple factors. So I think that's a really important issue. Excellent. When I see Debbie, raise your hand, do you want to unmute and go for it?

### **Woman 2**

Yeah, I just wanted to build off of what Lynne was just saying, because they and I see a couple of comments in here that sort of speaks to it as well. But that that system level thinking, right, that's beyond price. Se with funding cycles, and that's a particularly us oriented thing. But also, there's a comment here about looking examples from other countries, like the way Scotland has embedded access to the arts is central to education curriculum, right, and that there's a comment about reciprocity in relation in partnerships. And I think that that's one of the keys, at least in my experience, but I think that's one of the keys to systemic durability and sustainability, is that whatever it is, that's happening, whatever the interdisciplinary connections that are happening, are reciprocal or mutually beneficial, they're mutually responsive. And that has a lot to do with as artists as teaching artists, understanding what are the needs of the school systems on the education system, and then opening conversations with the educators so that they can see the value of what it is that's being brought to the table, so that they become reciprocal, mutually reinforcing and mutually beneficial relationships. So that's dialogue that's listening. That's all of those things that Jeff was pointing to so beautifully and what he shared. But I think bringing it up to the level of systems so that we can go back to the level of practice, that there's sort of a back and forth dialogue there. Let me add a comment on that, Debbie, there it is, there is a risk, there is a danger to it being personality driven. And if those key players move on that something doesn't remain, okay, carry on that that's something to be careful of.

### **Madeleine McGirk**

Believe I see your hand up too.

### **Woman 3**

I, one of the things that was interesting came out of a lockdown, particularly for a group of artists in Scotland, which is where I'm based, was we felt the value of our work was not being fully recognized by some of the institutions we worked with. And I managed to get a small grant from, it's called engage, which is kind of got artists working gallery education, where I helped to artists, teaching artists to look at pedagogy, which is only a slightly dirty word is a helpful word, and to look at how their work and past work connected into pedagogy, so that you could kind of

almost demonstrate that their work in the language, which is used in kind of school education are very much so so being able to link it to theories, but on a very kind of basic level, they were paid well for doing areas of research to kind of start that investigation. And I'm doing again, this year with two other artists based in Edinburgh. And again, it was about providing that start point and we did sessions where the guys who've done the research over a short period of time as a kind of instigator shared how they started, I think what was kind of amazing was then the links that people could see, and to their own practice and then and it stemmed out of maybe some stemmed out of two of my female friends being almost kind of squished a bit by somebody coming in from an institution using pedagogical language, which then make them feel a bit rubbish. And actually, all it was seeing was kind of, they just need to be able to have that kind of pushback. And I think what's interesting is that is the language that is maybe kind of seen as quality. Our work reaches a huge amount of radical pedagogy. But we don't tend to link into that. Because we don't have time we're doing. We spend our life doing and we never get paid to do an evaluation, which is about evaluating what we've done, how we can link it with other teachers, pedagogy, other things are very rarely, or you get linked to do a bit of evaluation, but it's linked to the institution, not to your own personal development, I would say most of time, please show and I'm got it wrong. And there's an amazing example somebody else. So I'd be really interested, I'm hoping to put together this as a model. And I would hope that it would be something that other people would do. So I that's, I don't know if that made much sense. This evening, I haven't had it yet. Thank you, Louise.

#### **Woman 4**

If I may say something. In the past, my experiences have been, if you don't link it in the in the United States, if you don't link it, or practice standards based teaching, then you are kind of automatically devalued by teachers that think you are just simply an artist, and you don't really understand pedagogy. And my experience to kind of counterpoint that is that, you know, the artists, through their doing through their knowledge, actually embody the pedagogical standards, in ways I think that really illustrate our value in a much greater sense. And so whenever I've written grants or created projects, that don't fit into somebody else's template about what the what the project is, or what the project's value is that I can always step it back to, you know, this particular 2.1 point a standard. And that's kind of the way I operate it, sometimes it's called backwards planning or something to that effect. But you know, I have, I have all the pedagogical experience through the teaching, blah, blah, blah, but I also have a lot of in the moment in the making reality and understanding of what it means to deliver, you know, the, the piece, and the big part. So

#### **Woman 3**

I completely agree with that. I was just that actually, sometimes, unless you exemplify in connection to those other things, you get ignored, we have the knowledge, we have the amazing things. I mean, I always say, give me five years ago, I would have said no, no way in hell will you get me near a bit of pedagogy, but actually, I'm looking at it as demystifying and kind of de what's the word decon. And making it a fancy pants thing. It's not it's actually just tells us about what we do all the time. But it allows us to link into historical context of really sound educational stuff. And I think I really, we also, we have standards in the Scottish curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence as well. So yeah, and it's worthwhile having that background knowledge of how you can evidence to teachers or spaces, that your project links, and actually sometimes even showing them how it unfolds into these different standards makes them suddenly realize going, Oh, brilliant. So I think both things are working well, but take time, and sometimes what we don't get, we're always doing so we don't get to do that thing. I'm sorry, I'll shut up.

### **Woman 5**

And I agree, I just want to add that. I remember 20 years ago when artists were starting to be required in Los Angeles to make sure they make those connections to standard based education. And I can tell you, knowing other poets, some poets just said to me, I'm not doing that I don't have time. And what I found, which is something I didn't feel like doing back then either, but the minute I started to just look at it. Just be kind of willing to understand what it all meant. As you both have stated, it's what we do already. We just didn't know the links. We didn't even realize that that that what Well, I didn't realize I'll speak for myself that what I was doing was already what was requested in the pedagogy, and I was fascinated by it and for lack of a better word right now empowered to to make sure that I was going to, I guess you could say stay in the game because I had something to offer that at least I could explain those connections. And it really gave me a place to kind of jump off from that I still can use in grant writing, or in communicating with teachers. They do see us as like the artist, and what they what I get to see myself is integral to that process of learning for all students. And that feels really good

### **Jeff Mather**

I, I'm going to hit the pause button, I don't want this conversation to stop. But we do have to respect that we defined the time as being 90 minutes. And we're coming up on that in about a couple of minutes. And I also want to allow Madeline to give us some closing comments about how we can then from here, become part of the work group for this if, if you wish and how you can find that information if you somehow have to sign off today, and you don't have it. But that is the intention of the think tank, I'll say again, is that the conversations that we've been gotten here, can continue should continue may continue in a in a work group, which will probably be smaller. And that's fine, too. But we would love for you to you know, state your intentions. And Madeline Can you close this out?

### **Madeleine McGirk**

Sure. Thank you so much, Jeff. Thank you for everyone for your presentation. I know we went super quickly into the breakout rooms, but it was really great. And those slides will go up on the attack website, if anyone wants to go through them in more detail after the session will be well that's true. Yes. And as Jeff said, this is just the the seed to the very, very beginning of these discussions. And I know the breakout rooms were really quick and fast. And we all wanted more time. So if that feels like you, and if you're kind of hooked and want to keep going, we have designed an offshoot grip that we're calling a working grip. But really, it's a grip to continue the discussions meet beyond this session, and CO create some kind of response or idea or something that feels like it needs to, to react to what we've talked to today. The link is in the

chat, I'm just going to paste it right here again, the timezone the, all of the dates of the meetings will be decided by who signs up. So that's not set in stone yet, if you're interested, pop your name in the forum, and Jack will follow up with you. This is one of our innovative projects, we have six scheduled for this year, we've had three and we have a couple more to come. And they're on a variety of topics. We do these sessions every month. And they're snowballing each month, which just makes me so happy. But please do keep engaging with us. Because having the international chats like this regularly, the chance to see who else is doing this kind of work in the USA, or here in Edinburgh, right is just lovely. And I think really valuable for our sector. I think there's power in this kind of unity. And so I would really encourage you all to be active and helping shape this. So with that being said, thank you all for joining, I'm going to not end the call straight away in case anyone wants to save the chat. You can do so in the bottom right.

**Jeff Mather**

Can I wait for a few minutes as well if anybody wants to linger and you know, address me before we go.

**Madeleine McGirk**

Right. So I'll say very, very final. Thank you. I will stop the recording but I won't close the window in case anyone needs to hang back. So thank you very much and thank you, Jeff, for leading it all