

TEACHING ARTIST TRAINING WITH “OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY”

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Creative and meaningful partnerships among community-based arts providers continue to strengthen and extend the impact of any one of the participating entities (Chew, 2009). This was a goal of the emerging partnership of three Los Angeles-based community arts organizations: Education Through Music-LA, Music Center Education Division, and the USC Thornton Outreach Programs. The three sought a collaborative and democratic partnership beginning with the ongoing and vital initiative of music teaching artist training. The aim of this action research project was to develop collaborative teaching artist training events using the approach Open Space Technology and to examine the outcomes and value for the teaching artists, each organization and the partnership.

Open Space Technology is a method for facilitating a meeting or conference in which an important and overarching topic of interest is addressed but with an agenda that is created entirely by the participants. Participants propose, host and manage their own agenda of working sessions that happen concurrently and address a central theme of importance (Owens, 2008). Through each of 3 training events, data were collected from meeting notes, observation, discussion, interviews, surveys. Analysis after each event yielded findings that informed the protocol of the next training event. Findings among all events included some surprising session topics by the teaching artists, the richness of multi-disciplinary conversation and the freshness, ease and enjoyment of the training sessions. Among other conclusions, of primary importance was that the training topics and conversation were a decoy for an essential benefit – an opportunity for connection and community-building among this group of committed, generous and frequently isolated group of individuals, the teaching artists. This presentation will include more detailed findings on the structure and the application of this unique approach for teaching artist training. Additionally, outcomes and value gleaned for the teaching artists, for the participating organization and the partnership will be discussed.

Owen, H. (2008). *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, 3rd Edition. Williston, VT: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Chew, R. (2009). *Community-Based Arts Organizations: A New Center of Gravity*. Washington, DC: American's for the Arts.