

# Teaching Artist Training Lab

The **Washington State Teaching Artist Training (TAT) Lab** is an eight-month professional development program with a focus on supporting arts education as part of basic education in K-12 schools. Participants benefit from ongoing learning over eight months, individualized coaching from master teaching artists, connections to state and national organizations, and peer learning and reflection. Each TAT Lab cohort includes up to 32 teaching artists who work in all artistic disciplines and all regions of Washington State. Participants attend three in-person weekend intensive trainings, supplemented by monthly conference calls with a small group or “subcohort” of participants. Current organizational partners for TAT Lab include: Washington State Arts Commission, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Arts Corps.

## MEMconsultants designed an evaluation

plan that would answer staff questions about the process and impact of participating in TAT Lab. The following data collection activities were included in the plan:

- Program Observations
- Review and Update of Existing Surveys
- Past and Current Cohort Case Study Interviews

## Based on lessons learned from the evaluation,

TAT Lab staff worked to clarify and update their learning objectives. Participant feedback revealed opportunities to improve their presentation of the relationship between social justice and the arts, therefore staff continue to experiment with different formats for addressing social justice learning objectives. Finally, one-on-one coaching sessions were added to the program structure to increase support for participants between in-person gatherings.

Since 2012, **MEM**consultants and TAT Lab have continued to work together to evaluate the program and to identify opportunities for improvement. TAT Lab staff have posed additional evaluation questions to explore how prior experience as a classroom teacher or teaching artist and changes to application guidelines impact participant process and outcomes.

**The Need:** In 2011, the Seattle Repertory Theatre partnered with the Washington State Arts Commission to develop and launch the current TAT Lab model, described above. In 2012, program organizers approached **MEM**consultants to evaluate initiative successes and challenges to inform program refinements and communicate impact to external audiences. TAT Lab partners and staff recognized that evaluating the program would help to clarify program goals and strengthen the program as it grew.

*Working with **MEM**consultants has allowed us to learn valuable information about the TAT Lab experience that informs our decisions as we plan each program year. Though we had previously used surveys to learn more about what participants get out of the program, the knowledge and expertise that **MEM**consultants bring has allowed us to dig deeper to answer our specific questions about the program.*

*~Lisa Jaret,  
Arts in Education Manager  
Washington State Arts  
Commission*

