What Is a Teaching Artist?

CHRIS: You really gonna make us act onstage?
MS. SUN: Yup.
CHRIS: I’m scared.
MS. SUN: Yeah, well guess what? Before I walked in here, even with all my acting and teaching experience, I was scared and nervous too, but you get over it once you get a feel for the audience and you see all of your parents and your friends and your teachers smiling at you.

 Nilaja Sun, No Child...

Nilaja Sun’s No Child… is based on her own experiences as a Teaching Artist in the New York public schools. The definition of a Teaching Artist is, in many ways, circular: a professional artist who teaches in the schools or community. The job itself, which Nilaja has now been doing in various schools since 1998, is far more complex. A Teaching Artist—particularly one who works in schools that may not have curriculum-based arts education programing—can help inspire young people to look at the world, and themselves, in new ways.

Below are some thoughts about what it means to be a Teaching Artist, drawn from the website of the Association of Teaching Artists, www.teachingartists.com

Throughout the run of No Child…, as part of our Before Play series, we’ll be hosting pre-show talks by Two River Teaching Artists. Please join us in the lobby 45 minutes before your scheduled performance to hear about their work in our local schools.

“A Teaching Artist is a professional visual, performing, or literary artist who works in schools and in the community. The Teaching Artist may perform for the students and teachers, may work in long-term or short-term residencies in classrooms or in a community setting, or may lead in program development through involvement in curricular planning and residencies with school partners. The Teaching Artist is an educator who integrates the creative process into the classroom and the community.”

The Association of Teaching Artists

“A teaching artist is a professional artist who can inspire in others the joys, rewards, and quality of life that making art brings, can produce the highest quality of art, as well as clearly articulate and teach the process of art-making.”

Sandy Taylor, Art Education Director, Monmouth County Arts Council

“Artists are exemplary problem-solvers and life-long learners, constantly striving to improve, deepen and refine their artistic expression. They work specifically with the skills of creativity: discovery, wonder, and recombining the stuff of the world into new knowledge… Successful teaching artists help provide a tangible link between the creative process and all kinds of learning, and they make manifest in classroom and community settings the human drive to survive by making meaning out of the world.”

The Arizona Commission on the Arts