

# The Teaching Artist Research Project

Study sites: Boston, Chicago, Providence, Seattle,  
SF Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, San  
Bernardino, Bakersfield, Salinas, Santa Cruz, and  
Humboldt County

NORC at the University of Chicago

Nick Rabkin

# What are teaching artists?

- “... have entwined identities as practicing artists and educators.” Lynn Waldorf
- “...educators in the truest sense. They ‘draw out’ rather than ‘put in’. They are guides, facilitators, bridges to creativity.”  
Tina LaPadula
- “...are the designated experts in the *verbs* of art. They guide, educate, and illuminate people’s capacities to create and expand personal meaning and expand the sense of of the world as it is or might be.” Eric Booth

# Why are teaching artists important?

- They've made historic but overlooked contributions to American culture.
- They're the source of vital innovation and new practice in the arts and in education today.
- They are an essential element of any strategy to expand arts education in the US.

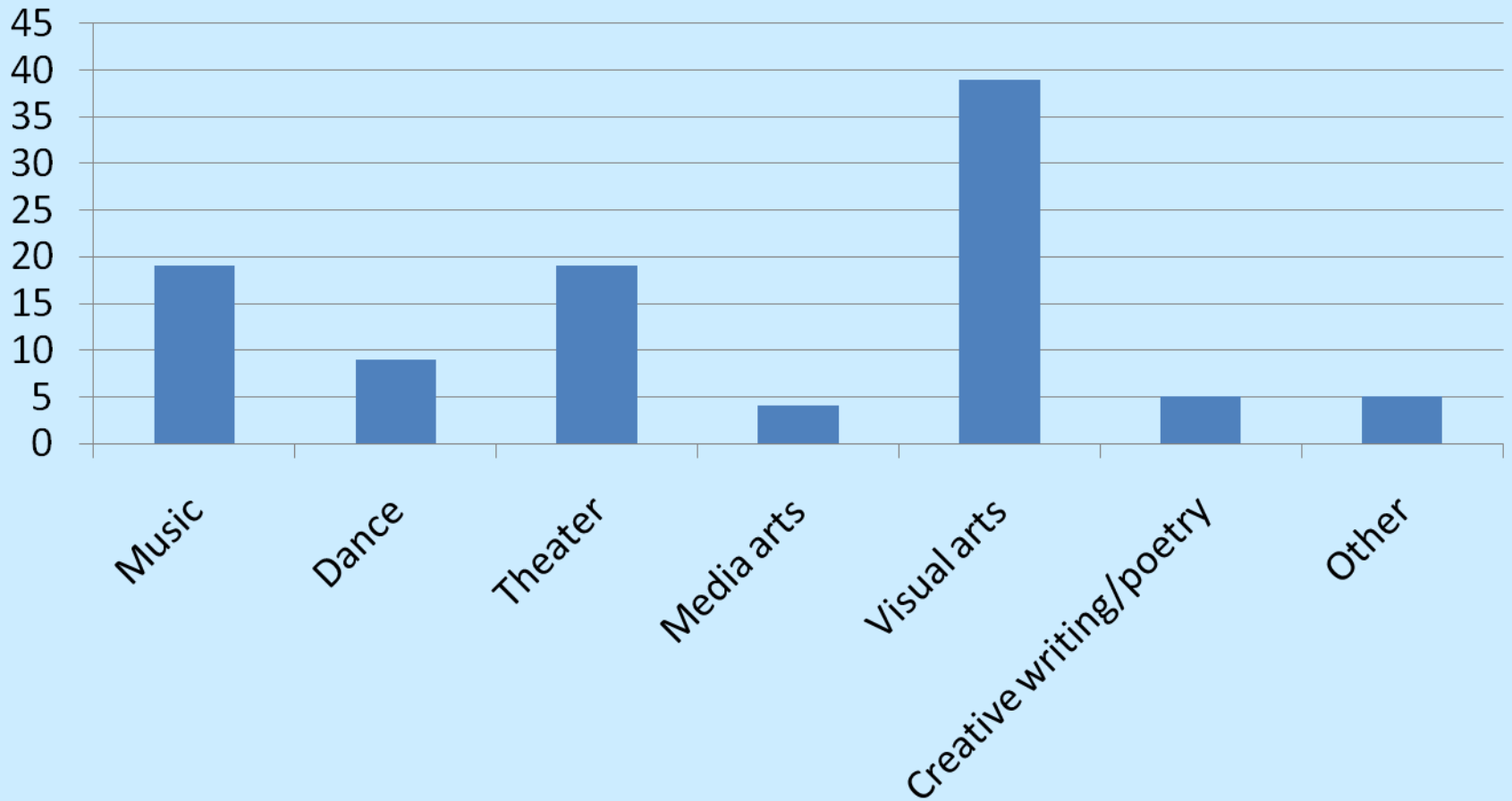
# We want to learn about

- Teaching as a component of artists' worklife.
  - Who they are, and what they do.
  - The conditions and terms of their work and employment ... establishing a baseline.
- Teaching artists as an element/resource in the arts and arts education infrastructure and ecosystem.
  - How to support and develop the potential of teaching artists as cultural and educational assets.

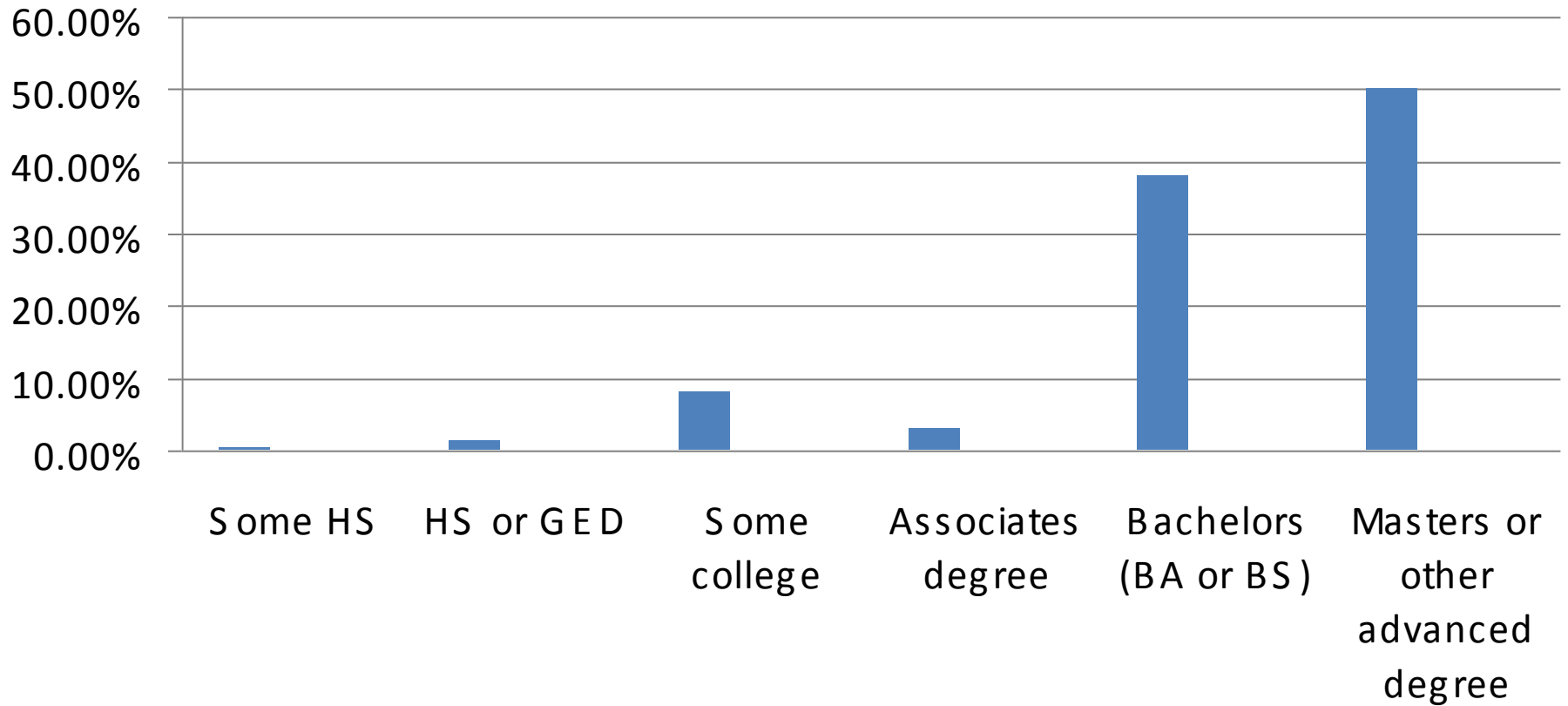
# Mixed Methods

- Literature review
- Surveys of teaching artists and program managers
- In-depth key informant interviews
  - We've surveyed about 2500 artists in 12 study sites. On-line and telephone surveys continue.
  - We've begun key informant interviews.

# Art form distribution



# Educational attainment



# Highest degree in...

An art form 67%

Education or teaching 13%

Another field 20%



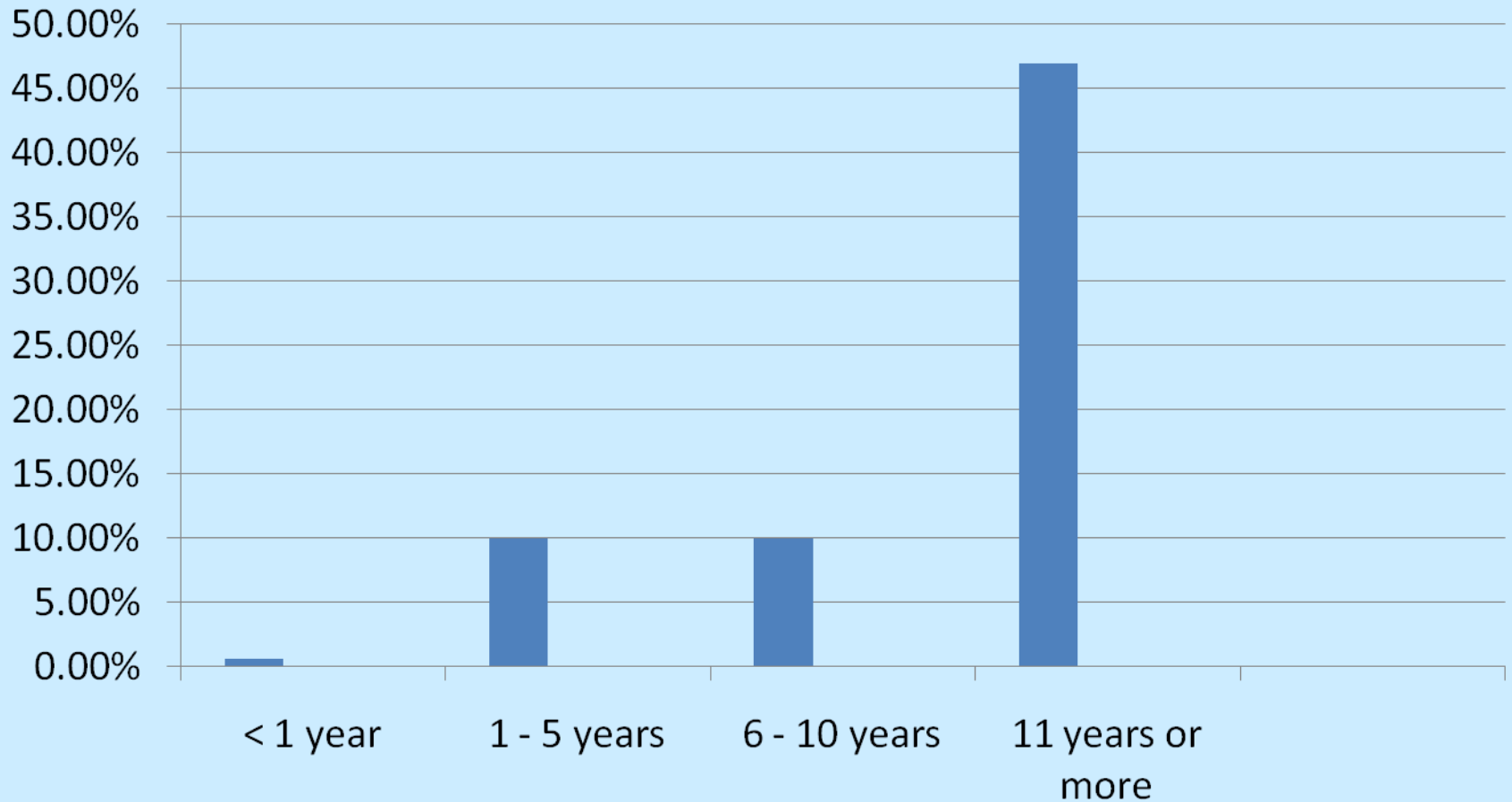
# Who do they work for?

- School 12.5%
- Public agency 3.1%
- Non-profit arts organization 53.0%
  - Biggest employers are community schools of the arts and theaters
- Other non-profit 7.0%
- College or conservatory 17%
- For profit business 7%

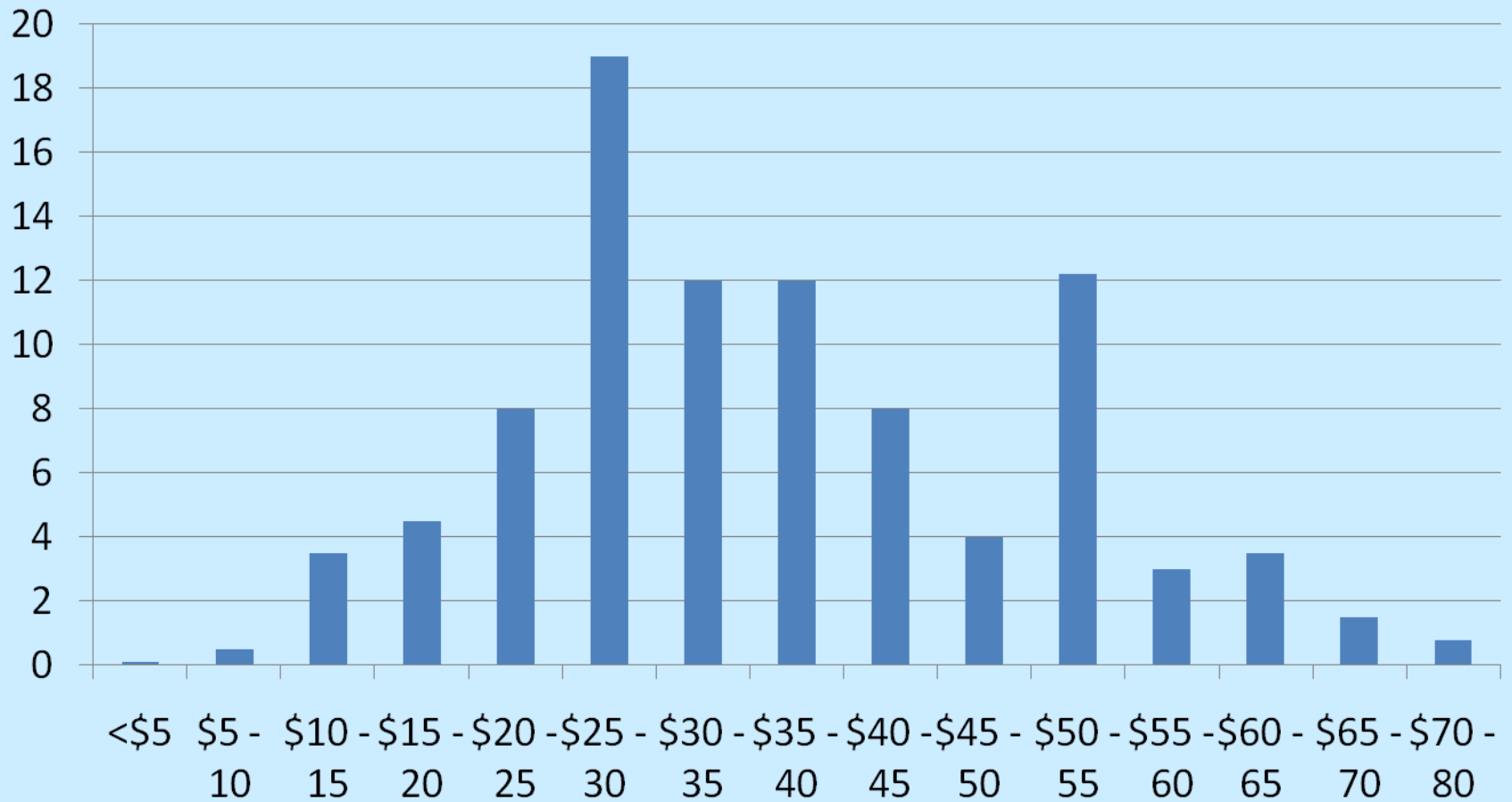
# There is more work for teaching artists in schools than any other venue.

- About 35% of the work teaching artists do is in k – 12 schools.
- 40% of arts instruction in Boston public schools is provided by teaching artists.
- Historic tension with arts specialists about work in schools
- But there is enormous diversity in other sites – from prisons to hospitals, parks to senior centers.

# Half have over a decade of experience



# Median pay rate is \$35/hour



69% are women  
Median age is 44

Teaching artist is often a first  
job in the field, but it not  
just an entry position!

# Their biggest problems

- Lack of benefits, especially health
  - 20% have none, just 4% are covered through their work as TAs
- Earn too little
  - Mean income from teaching is about \$17,850
  - Mean total personal income is about \$36,200
- Little job security
- No career ladder and few opportunities for advancement
- Too little time for own art

# Why do they teach?

- Want to work in their field
- Love teaching
- Pass on a gift
- Contribute to community and social change
- Teaching contributes to growth as an artist

Most training for the work is informal.  
Some colleges and conservatories are now starting to offer classes and programs.

Most important professional development:

- On the job experience.
- Education in their art form
- Coaching/mentoring by veterans
- 50% report they were unprepared when they started

Far less important:

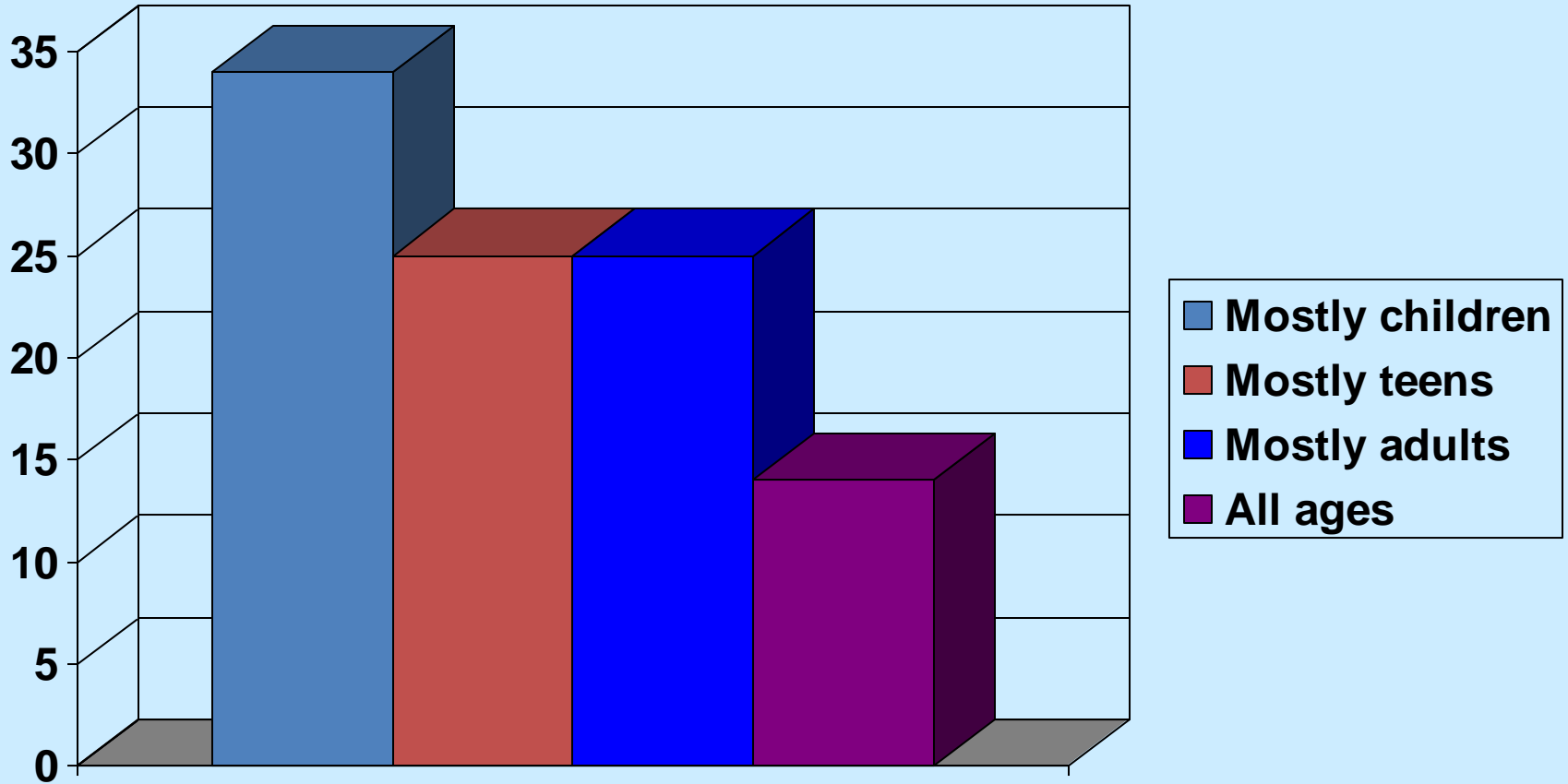
- Workshops and professional development



# What do they teach?

- Enthusiasm for working in an art form
- Deeper appreciation for the art form
- Collaboration with other students
- Fundamentals & basic skills in art form
- Make original work

# Who do they teach?



# What do they *do* in schools?

- Teach how to work in an art form
- Develop original curriculum
- Integrate arts instruction with other subjects
- Engage hard-to-reach students
- Make content meaningful to students
- Run a well-managed experience
- Help students create original work – find own voice

# Two big policy questions

- The principle purpose of most arts organizations is to the present the ‘nouns’ of art. The ‘verbs’ are a subordinate concern. Those that do focus on the ‘verbs’ – in schools and communities – have a second class status. Is that balance best for the arts in the U.S.?
- Can the roles of teaching artists be distinguished and reconciled with the roles of arts specialists in schools?



Photo by Joel Wanek, Project AIM, Columbia College Chicago