



The graphic (shown above) offers a simplified way to think about how you can begin to take action as a teaching artist.

I once sat in a room of arts education leaders and watched a transformation happen within a colleague. As she introduced herself to the group, she offered her name, hometown, place of work, and began to describe her work. Mid-sentence, she stopped, closed her eyes, and rewound. “I need to backup,” she said. “I should have introduced myself as a teaching artist – that is my job.”

This moment has always stuck with me, because the simple act of self-identification, was an act of courage, an act of resilience – and an act of advocacy.

As you begin your own advocacy journey, you must start with advocacy for self. How you identify becomes your power. Begin to build it into your vernacular: “Hello, my name is...and I am a teaching artist.”

Once this becomes comfortable, you can begin to think about advocacy for field – the field of teaching artistry. As a member of the field (advocacy for self), you can expand your power by advocating for the collective needs of teaching artists throughout your community, state, nation, or world.

Don’t forget, you are the expert. Many people can talk about the needs of teaching artists, but you have lived it, you know what you need, and you know what the learners you work with need. Be sure to share your expert knowledge as part of your advocacy – that is your power.

Finally, you can begin to think of the sector: whether arts and culture, educator, or arts education. As a member of these sectors, you have the expertise and knowledge to share about the role of teaching artists within those broader sector-wide conversations.

There may not always be a seat for teaching artists at the table, but we are creative – bring a seat, or build a seat, or sit on the table! We mustn’t forget that we are vital components of the sectoral ecosystems and our perspectives should be part of the dialogue.