

# Editor's Letter

My artroom, never a bare, orderly space, is currently covered in all kinds of Japanese-influenced student art: murals, collages, kites, prints, scrolls, paintings, fans, kimonos, and tea bowls. More than one hundred fish kites hang from a clothesline and overlapping murals are hung to dry on a floor-to-ceiling bulletin board.

We are busy preparing for a Japanese festival to be presented by our art and music classes to the entire school and to the PTA. Our school musical ensemble, the Ryan World Wranglers, is readying a student performance of music and movement that will incorporate some of the art as well. We are all definitely immersed in the art of Japan.

Helping my students discover and appreciate the diversity of multicultural art is, for me, one of the most meaningful and rewarding aspects of being an art teacher. Our obsessions may not be the same, but I think it is beneficial for art teachers to reflect on what drives and sustains them.

In *Education in a Multicultural World*, the noted educator Ernest Boyer proposed that there are eight universal cultural concepts shared across time by people throughout the world. We have used these commonalities as the themes for *SchoolArts* this year. The final and perhaps most important one in his list is that "all of us seek meaning and purpose."

In light of the alarming economic downturns our country is now experiencing, it is time for art teachers to stop being shy and modest and to share with students, parents, administrators, the public, and politicians their reasons for teaching art and why it is so valuable for our students. Now, perhaps, more than ever, art teachers need to take a proactive role in advocating for the arts.

Efforts can range from on-campus practices such as mounting educational art exhibits that include written objectives, motivations, and/or processes of artwork; developing school artroom websites and parent newsletters; sending press releases to newspapers and television stations about school art events; participation in state and national art education associations; exhibiting art in the community and beyond; and making your concerns known to local, state, and national politicians.

You can become familiar with our new administration's art policy at [www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/additional/Obama\\_FactSheet\\_Arts.pdf](http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/additional/Obama_FactSheet_Arts.pdf) and join the petition asking President Obama to create a Secretary of the Arts at [www.petitiononline.com/esnyc/petition.html](http://www.petitiononline.com/esnyc/petition.html). Go to the website of the National Art Education Association at [www.arteducators.org/olc/pub/NAEA/advocacy](http://www.arteducators.org/olc/pub/NAEA/advocacy) to contact your legislators to share your concerns and pledge your support for significant, sequential arts education for all students. What could be a more meaningful cause for art teachers?



*Nancy with a lion dancer at a celebration for the opening of the Beijing Summer Olympics at the Crow Collection of Asian Art in Dallas, Texas.*

*Nancy Walker*