

Editor's Letter

For me, one of the most appealing aspects of teaching elementary students is that they are always open to exploration, whether it is of art, ideas, or media. Their enthusiasm is a constant reminder that we, as art teachers, need to be equally open to exploration beyond our own personal comfort zones and preferences.

We should teach more than just our favorite artists, periods, and styles of art and media. We ought to be willing to investigate unfamiliar art and cultures, different purposes of art, and untried media. We should admit that we do not have all the answers and be willing to learn along with our students. We also need to explore ways to demonstrate the power of art to students, parents, administrators, and the community.

Recently, Denise Clyne-Ruch (another art teacher in my district) and I gave a presentation, *Picturing Art Education*, to our elementary principals about the content and meaning of what we teach, and how we, as art teachers, make meaningful interdisciplinary connections through art and technology every day.

For our presentation, we began with two Animoto videos of my students' work, *The Art of Math* (animoto.com/play/f2Fd9fz-S1U5158Q5alMkcw) and *Art and Science* (animoto.com/play/hAuLI020QuQbZgB6V8qd3w). Then we shared a PowerPoint (www.slideshare.net/nwalkup/comprehensive-or-dbae-art-education) that gave an overview of the national and state standards for art education, connected with lessons based on human relationships with horses. (I'm in Texas, remember!)

We followed this with an overview of Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind*, and a look at the revised version of *Bloom's Taxonomy*, in which the highest order is now "creating."

Our initial purpose was to explore the possibility of developing a professional learning community for the elementary art teachers in our district, as we need the principals' support in providing substitutes so we can meet regularly as a group. Yet our presentation has sparked much more than that—positive feedback, new awareness and interest from the principals, and a request to give our presentation again to a different group of administrators.



Nancy with Ghulam Sarwar, a truck artist from Pakistan, at the 2009 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. Photo by Bill Yarborough.

In hindsight, a presentation such as this seems like such a simple but effective idea, but I don't think it had ever happened before in our district. You might explore the possibility of collaborating with other art teachers in your district to address your administrators as a group with a similar presentation. I'm a great believer in asking for things. The response to your request may be "no," but it is amazing how many times the answer is "yes." So start exploring!

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