

# Editor's Letter

**"All people tell stories to explain their world."**

—*Rethinking Curriculum in Art*, Marilyn Stewart and Sydney Walker (Davis Publications, 2005)

Assignment: You have twenty minutes to prepare. Once the first speaker begins his or her presentation, no further development on your presentation is permitted.

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) president is scheduled to be the opening speaker at the state association meeting in one hour. He is scheduled to present an inspiring address for approximately five minutes. He has suddenly taken ill and asked you to take his

*What story do you think this totem could tell?*  
Photograph by Bill Yarborough.



place. Using the quote, compose a five-minute speech that will inspire the attendees and represent the NAEA in a positive light. Begin preparing when you are instructed to begin.

So began the introduction to my first NAEA board meeting as Elementary Director Elect. I quickly discovered that this exercise would be all about telling stories.

As we gamely took our turns with the encouragement of presentation coach Gary Plaag (who was a master at giving kind suggestions to help us all become better presenters), I realized that everything he recommended to make our speaking more engaging could also apply to writing. In fact, his advice was very similar to the advice I give prospective writers:

- First think about what idea, artist, trend, or issue influenced you. What main ideas do you want to communicate?
- Dive directly into your content with an interesting, engaging opening. (No need to introduce yourself or explain what you are about to "say.")
- Tell your "story" in a conversational style with energy and passion.
- Get to the point of your story and keep it to a reasonable length. (We each had five minutes to tell our stories). For writing, usually fewer than 800 words are needed.

Why should you tell engaging stories to your peers, either orally, or through articles for *SchoolArts*? Through appealing stories, you can secure and maintain your audience's attention, share your own meaningful experiences, prompt new ideas in others, promote your art program, school, and district, and make your students and their parents very proud.

If you are speaking or writing from the heart, it will be evident in your stories. And remember, we all like a good story. What story do you have to tell?

*Nancy Walker*

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