

Editor's Letter

What first comes to mind when you think of the word "place"? Place is a term that can have many different meanings. It can be a verb (put, present, arrange, appoint) or a noun (physical environment, locality, position, area), but its connotation for me is location. Though I grew up in the piney woods of Louisiana, I don't miss them at all. Instead, I am drawn to the wide-open turquoise skies and Georgia O'Keeffe colors of New Mexico. It is the one place I return to each year (and a place I want to share with others through our *SchoolArts* seminars every summer).

The articles in *SchoolArts* this month are intended to take you to real or imagined places, in the air and under water, but I suspect the most important place for art teachers is the artroom. There is no other classroom like it.

When I taught middle school, a counselor once told me that he always consulted students' art and music teachers to learn more about them, as he believed these teachers related to students in different and revealing ways that classroom teachers did not. We've all had students who did well in our classes but were not so successful in others.

For some secondary students, fine arts classes may be the only place they feel comfortable, or maybe the only reason they come to school. Since most secondary classes meet every day, arts teachers can relate more individually to students and learn more about them as they interact on a daily basis. In elementary school, we may see our students only once a week, but we have the opportunity to watch them grow and change over time.

Caught up in the bind of our inflexible daily schedules and the challenges of teaching large classes, we need to step back and reflect upon the possibility that our artrooms may be the only safe place a student has—a place where someone will listen, a place to be free to express themselves, a place that expects and accepts many possible solutions to a problem, a place that is supportive and nonjudgmental. This must be the place!

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Nancy Walkup

Nancy in Georgia O'Keeffe's backyard.

