

Editor's Letter

If my recollections are correct, I am pretty sure that the new student teacher I am getting this week will be my twenty-fifth. I know he will be my twentieth in my current district. Where did all that time go? Yet, when I think back, the transformations in art education over the twenty-eight years I have been teaching have been remarkable and profound.

The first three years I taught in Louisiana, our school was not air-conditioned. (Later I would have to turn the window air-conditioner off so my students could hear me!) My art supplies consisted mostly of recycled and donated materials. I tried, not very successfully, to use the filmstrips and a movie projector I discovered in the library (though the films and filmstrips were already faded and brittle by the time I got my hands on them).

There were very few print reproductions of artworks available at the time anywhere. The only prints I found in my classroom were black-and-white photographic art prints from Davis Publications (*SchoolArts'* publisher); the first ones I remember buying myself were the Getty Center's MAPS study print sets. I subscribed to *SchoolArts*, and I also joined the National Art Education Association.

Through these publications and my graduate program, I learned that discipline-based art education (DBAE) includes art history, art criticism, and aesthetics along with art production. I was happy to find out there was a name for my approach to teaching—it just seemed sensible to me.

Now we have at our disposal state and national standards for the visual arts and a plethora of contemporary theoretical approaches including, but not limited to, critical thinking, visual culture, interdisciplinary connections, cross-curricular, multiculturalism, design thinking, community-based, postmodernism, relational aesthetics, choice-based, and technology-based. Nowadays, we have a wealth of visual resources available to us, both in print and online.

Yet the most thoughtful transformation of all may be that of our teaching, if we are willing to take risks and experiment along with our students with the understanding that art-making is about meaning. That idea can change your life and the lives of your students.

Follow me on [Twitter](#)

Nancy Walker



Nancy at the Metro entrance on Place Colette in Paris. The entrance, designed by Jean-Michel Othoniel, is a transformation from the traditional Metro Art Nouveau style.

Considering Transformation as a Theme for Artmaking

An instructor's attitude toward artmaking is crucial to how his or her students learn to understand the artmaking process. When art teachers include such artmaking practices as purposeful play, manipulation of media, risk taking, and experimentation, they communicate that artmaking is about searching for and discovering meaning. Such strategies encourage deeper levels of thinking and allow students to hold meaning loosely, leave it open, discover it, reconsider it, reinvent it, and develop it. However, these practices do not occur spontaneously: they must be planned for as overtly as the more obvious aspects of artmaking instruction. As art teachers, we must instruct, encourage, and give students permission to play, experiment, take risks, change their mind, and raise questions.

—From *Teaching Meaning in Artmaking*
by Sydney R. Walker (Davis Publications, 2001)