

Editor's Letter

My first teaching job was at Stoner Hill Elementary Laboratory School in Shreveport, Louisiana. Stoner Hill was a combination neighborhood/magnet school in an economically depressed area of town. It took me years to realize, on reflection, just how unusual it was. We had two art teachers, two science teachers, a music teacher, and a Spanish teacher (such staffing I have never encountered again).

For the first three years I taught there, we had no air-conditioning. In Louisiana. In unbelievable humidity. When we finally did get window air-conditioners, mine was so loud that I had to turn it off every time I introduced a lesson.

This was so long ago that the only media we had were filmstrip projectors and an actual movie projector. The first art reproductions I remember being commercially available were the multicultural print sets published by the Getty, though I did find sets of black-and-white art reproductions from Davis Publications.

Our classrooms did not have televisions, telephones, or computers (which, at that time, took up whole rooms). My art supplies consisted mostly of crayons, construction paper, glue, scissors, and tempera paint, and scavenged resources such as baby food jars, milk jugs, paper egg cartons, wallpaper books, cardboard, and the like. I used cigar boxes from mom and pop grocery stores to organize art supplies on my tables.

I survived the five years I was there due to the incredibly generous help of my fellow art teacher Sophie Duke (she kindly taught the kindergartners and shared all her lessons with me), *SchoolArts* magazine (to which I immediately subscribed), and the National Art Education Association (joining made me feel part of a larger professional community).

My biggest challenges, though, were the same things art teachers face today: maintaining discipline (it took me a long time to develop the “look”); having enough significant lessons to teach (I saw my classes three times a week!); making administrators and others aware of the value of art education; and reaching students from different backgrounds and experiences who ranged from kids with too many “toys” and not enough attention, to kids who came to school hungry and with holes in their shoes.

As the new school year begins for all of us, it is *SchoolArts'* intention to help you get off to a good start. Along with our regular departments and studio lessons, we are offering two new features this year that I wish had been available when I began teaching: *Managing the Artroom* and *Beginning Teacher Survival Guide*.

Whether you have a computer or a chalkboard, a digital projector or a television, a visual presenter or a slide projector, the lack of or a wealth of art supplies, our focus is, as always, on the concerns of art teachers at every level. Welcome back!



Nancy and Melba Sullivan, her first principal, at a Stoner Hill Elementary, patriotic, school-wide celebration.

Nancy Walker