



Nancy Walkup and Eldon Katter, the current and former editors of SchoolArts.

Meaning

"The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers." Sounds like art teachers!

The first time I graduated from college, my degree was in graphic design. Though I worked in the field for a number of years (and still have the greatest respect for design), a career in design wasn't personally meaningful or satisfying enough for me. Looking for another path, I began teaching as a visiting artist and then, inspired by that experience, went back to school for a degree in art education.

Chances are that you are a twenty-four-hour art teacher like me. When I'm not teaching, I'm planning for teaching, thinking about teaching, or looking for inspiration for teaching. Now, I will readily admit to being obsessive and am not advising this extreme lifestyle; I just can't help myself. Yet it does have its rewards. Teaching art is meaningful.

Teaching elementary art has its challenges (such as summoning enough energy for kindergarten) but the rewards are tremendous. I am amazed how serious students look when they are completely focused on a project. I marvel that you can see in the face of a kindergartner the adult a child will become. I am grati-

fied when students tell me they still have every clay project they have made over the years. I enjoy seeing my students grow up from kindergarten to fifth grade, and I appreciate it when they come back from middle school to visit (a foot taller!) and tell me they are still taking art.

I was encouraged to reflect on my personal meaning of teaching art when reading Daniel Pink's book, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. Meaning is one of six senses or aptitudes that Pink proposes are needed for professional and personal success in our changing world. According to Pink "The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers." Sounds like art teachers!

The Search for Meaning

Pink suggests that meaning has become a central aspect of our work and our lives, and I think that is especially true for teachers. To be successful and effective as teachers, we need to find meaning and purpose in our teaching and with our students and colleagues.

Work is most satisfying when we believe that we are using our greatest strengths for a meaningful purpose.

Taking some time for reflection can clarify your thinking about the satisfactions of teaching. One of Pink's practical suggestions for exploring meaning is to make a list of things for which you are grateful. As an art teacher, what would be on your list? What first comes to mind? Why is teaching art meaningful for you? If you would like to share your thoughts, please send them to me at nwalkup@verizon.net.

Thank you for your dedication to art education! You are tops on my list!

Some of Pink's Suggestions for Exploring Meaning

- Practice thankfulness.
- Do no work one day of the week.
- Read *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl.
- Picture yourself at ninety and reflect on your life.

Nancy Walkup, Editor