

A collaborative mural painted by the artist Wyland and students at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps in San Diego.



“Universe is synergetic. Life is synergetic.” —Buckminster Fuller

Buckminster Fuller, visionary and inventor of the geodesic dome and the Dymaxion house and car, coined the term “synergy”—a combination of the words “synthesis” and “energy.” To Fuller, synergy meant two or more things working together to achieve results greater than they could achieve by themselves. Fuller found synergy to be a basic principle of all interactive systems and developed a subject he called Synergetics—a geometry of thinking.

As the editor of *SchoolArts*, I receive manuscripts almost daily, yet I am continually impressed by the variety of synergetic collaborations and the absolute dedication of art teachers. Our articles this month will hopefully inspire you in your own collaborative efforts:

“Opening Doors to Cultural Diversity” details a collaboration between two high school art teachers and their students in which students used actual doors as the foundations for artworks that addressed student-determined social issues. The resulting exhibition generated such a powerful response that

it was taken on the road to a number of sites, including the Michigan Art Education Association Convention. The dedication of the two art teachers is evident in their efforts to collect full-sized interior wooden doors for each student and to transport the doors equipped with rigid metal stands.

“The Art of Running” tells the story of the integration of the art program into an annual school fun run, a clever approach to making student art visible to the entire school and community. Students designed shoes based on styles of art and the resulting images were printed on the official race t-shirt.

Another synergistic experience I highly recommend is membership in local, state, and national professional art education associations. It is possible to feel isolated if you teach alone, especially if your district does not offer any inservices specific to art. Meeting other art teachers and sharing ideas are invaluable experiences that occur at art education conferences. I believe you will never feel alone again after you attend one.

I still remember the excitement I felt on arriving at my first national conference many years ago (we were so anxious to get there we forgot to fill up the car and ran out of gas). Conferences offer the opportunity to learn from nationally recognized artists and art educators, visit world-class art museums, choose from many workshops, see new art materials and resources firsthand, network, and make new friends.

This month we are fortunate to feature articles about the major speakers at the March 2007 National Art Education Association Convention in New York City: Audrey Flack, the Guerilla Girls, and Daniel Pink. If you are reading this at the conference, welcome! If you are reading this at home, I hope it will give you an armchair view.

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