

Foundations

"Teachers of the arts should recognize that their role is to guide students so that their knowledge about the arts extends beyond their personal ability to make art."

—Laura Chapman

School seems to start earlier every year here in Texas. In my district, teachers have to start back August 9, with students coming a week later. No matter when your school year starts, it's the time of year when art teachers reflect on the foundations of our programs as we start the year anew.

One significant source of inspiration for such undertakings may be found in *Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools*, recently republished by the National Art Education Association.

In it, arts educator extraordinaire Laura Chapman asserts that art is a highly demanding field of endeavor which cannot be grasped without some fundamental or basic education—a thorough foundation in the arts. Though first published in 1982, I believe Chapman's assertions still hold true as they encompass contemporary concerns about creating and responding to art, cultural diversity, visual culture, and interdisciplinary connections with art.

Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools was selected "a Book of the Century in Education" by a national panel of thirty-five educators working in all fields and assembled by the director of the Museum of Education (Columbia, South Carolina). Sixty-seven books were selected for recognition as having "a significant influence, consequence, or resonance on American education during the twentieth century." Of these selections Laura's book is the only one that centers on issues in teaching the visual arts.

Consider this excerpt:

Beyond the making of art

- The arts curriculum should affirm the importance of creative, imaginative thinking in art and also the importance of critical, reflective thinking about art. Both modes of thinking are relevant to creating art and responding to art.
- Teachers of the arts should recognize that their role is to guide students so that their knowledge about the arts extends beyond their personal ability to make art.
- The arts curriculum should be framed to draw upon the skills, knowledge, and experience that young people acquire outside of school. It should expand upon that experience, illustrating its connection to human history and to facets of life beyond the immediate experience of children.
- The curriculum should provide for the study of art forms which intersect with our daily life—the popular arts, mass-produced and mass-distributed forms—and engage students with comparative studies of art forms associated with the fine-arts tradition in Western culture. Equally

important are studies of the arts of cultural groups outside of the Western European tradition.

- Correlated, integrated, interdisciplinary, or related arts programs should not be conceived as alternatives to instruction in each of the arts. The practice of using the arts to enhance learning in other subjects without any consideration of appropriate and efficient learning in the arts should be stopped.

Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools, National Art Education Association, 1982, 2005.

Nancy Walkup

Nancy Walkup, Editor



Top: Nancy and Laura Chapman (author of *Instant Art, Instant Culture*) in the form of an Artist Trading Card. **Right:** Nancy's first ATC is a remembrance of her recent trip to China and of a talented student she met there named Cuijianing.

For more information about Artist Trading Cards, see page 6.

