

**My Week at the John C. Campbell
Folk School
Taking the best advantages of NAEA Membership
The Ruth Halvorsen Grant**

Often Art teachers must search for worthwhile professional development opportunities to maintain certification, collect new ideas and lesson plans, develop curriculum and or recharge their creative and professional batteries. Many times this is done through conferences, workshops, and attending classes at a college or university. These solutions are costly in time and money. One way of getting over the financial burden is to be creative and utilize a benefit of membership in the NAEA and your state Art education Association. The way I was able to not only recharge my batteries, practice a craft form and build a new curricular offering for my students was to write and receive The Ruth Halvorsen Professional Development Grant from the National Art Education Association.

This past summer I used the grant that partially funded my stay at the John C. Campbell Folk school. I enrolled in a class called Backpacks, Totes and Market Baskets.

When I arrived in Brasstown, N.C., the overall beauty of this mountain haven was mesmerizing. The magic of the place began immediately. The local is rural, rustic and welcoming. The classes and their topics were many and the community built on artisans practicing their craft and sharing their talents. My instructor a true teacher and craftsman guided our class through the basics of weaving baskets. We used splint reed to weave, natural walnut dye and some colorful dyes to add to our baskets visual appeal. The organic forms of the Cherokee gathering basket and the traditional backpack brought many a viewer to our display table during the closing afternoon's school wide exhibit. My goal at the first class meeting was to weave a basket, and be able to teach this skill to my students when I arrived back to school in the fall. Well, I was able to weave four baskets, one a quiver for my Native American Flute, a traditional backpack, a napkin basket, a Tote basket with a shoulder strap and the skills to keep up the practice at home. The week was wonderful and an added treat was it was also the professional dance musicians' week at the folk school. This meant music everyday and night, contra dancing every night and a concert at the Festival Barn on Thursday. Serenaded each day as we enter the cafeteria by "mighty Fine" fiddling and "music making" one day we even danced in added to the 'Folk' environment of the school. The classes are based on the philosophy of self-improvement and non-competitiveness. We all helped each other learn and improve. That week in July at the Folk School I recall as being the best I have spent in over two decades of teaching. It would not have been possible if I did not take advantage of a grant made eligible only to members of NAEA.

Today I am a basket maker, I teach my students the basic basket form, and will be teaching teachers in a workshop soon. I am grateful to the NAEA and our grants program for this chance to renew my batteries and love for teaching and learning. My week at the Folk School is one I will not forget, the classes, the people, and the fun. I plan to go again soon. I will write another grant soon, and I will share the experience of folk art and craft to anyone willing to listen, learn and create. A short article about the John C. Campbell Folk School does not do the school justice, nor does the mention of the NAEA grant program. Both are truly something we should all experience. Being a member pays off in many ways. I am happy I am able to claim I am part of both communities NAEA and the John C. Campbell Folk School.