

**F. Robert Sabol**

**T**he contemporary field of art education has become increasingly focused on research in order to support evidence-based decision making. Art educators at all instructional levels and educational settings, school administrators, school boards, legislators, and other stakeholders have come to rely on various kinds of studies and data to guide the creation of policy and many program-related decisions. The public has demanded evidence of learning as a means of holding our field accountable, and art educators have embraced research as a means of evaluating their programs, their teaching, and their students' achievement levels.

The field of art education has a rich history of research, with a full range of topics and questions related to it. The body of research in the field has included various methodologies, and has been done in a wide array of settings in which art education occurs. Research has focused on best practices, historical, descriptive, theoretical, conceptual, and other issues of importance to the field. Increasingly, art educators have investigated questions of local, national, and international importance.

Understanding the importance of research in our field, NAEA in its new strategic plan, *NAEA Next! 2011-2014*, included a specific goal focused on research and the development of knowledge for the field. It reads, "NAEA conducts research and generates knowledge that enriches and expands visual arts education, and widely shares that research and knowledge." Supporting this goal are several objectives and strategies intended to demonstrate NAEA's commitment to accomplishing this goal. They include the following: (1) "Re-establish an NAEA Research Commission to regularly advise the board on guiding the direction and managing NAEA's research agenda; (2) Create and support partnerships between researchers and practitioners to improve practice, as well as deepen and expand knowledge; (3) Share research and knowledge with multiple audiences within and beyond the NAEA membership; (4) Secure funding for conducting research and generating knowledge."

At its fall 2010 meeting, the NAEA Board of Directors took action authorizing creation of a Task Force for the purpose of generating a proposal to be submitted to the Board for its consideration in reconstituting the NAEA Research Commission. This action aligns with the first objective of the Research and Knowledge goal of the strategic plan and with the outcome detailing the re-establishment of the Research Commission.

Following the Board's decision, a Task Force was appointed for this purpose. NAEA President **Robert Sabol** was appointed chair of the Task Force and NAEA President-Elect **Dennis Inhulsen** was appointed associate chair. Other members of the Task Force included: NAEA Past President **Barry Shauck**, **Doug Blandy**, **Juan Carlos Castro**, **Kerry Freedman**, **Diane Sculley**, **Mary Ann Stankiewicz**, **John White**, and **Enid Zimmerman**. **B. J. Adler** was appointed as the recorder for the Task Force. The Task Force held its inaugural meeting at the NAEA Convention in Seattle last March. Since that time the Task Force worked to create a proposal for reconstituting the NAEA Research Commission. The proposal included suggestions for governance, association support, communications, and other protocols necessary to sustain the work of the new NAEA Research Commission. Members of the Task Force utilized conference calls and other digital communications to complete its work and attended one meeting this past summer in Reston, VA. Work of the Task Force was

supported by a grant from the **National Art Education Foundation**. The Task Force submitted its report and recommendations to the NAEA Board of Directors for consideration at the Board's November meeting. The report and recommendations were approved by the Board. The chair, associate chair, and commissioners of the newly created NAEA Research Commission will be installed during the NAEA National Convention in New York City this March. Routine communications with the NAEA Board and members of NAEA about the work of the commission will follow.

As an additional example of NAEA's commitment to achieving the Strategic Plan's goal for Research and Knowledge, NAEA sponsored a group of 28 researchers who traveled to Havana, Cuba, this past October. NAEA members representing 23 states, all NAEA Regions, and all membership divisions were selected to participate in the research delegation. Members of the group included: NAEA President **Robert Sabol** and NAEA Past President **Barry Shauck** as co-delegation leaders, with **Hazel Beaumont**, **Joni Cashman**, **Joyce Centofanti**, **Laura Cuevas**, **Beth Dobberstein**, **Stacey Edwards**, **Wendy Free**, **Carol Hannon-Orr**, **Trina Harlow**, **Barbara Hughes**, **Sharon Johnson**, **Cheri Keefer**, **Debbie Kippley**, **Jo-Anne Kirkman**, **Andrea Logeren**, **Garnetta "Chi Chi" Lovett**, **Pricilla Lund**, **Cheryl Maney**, **Heidi Mullins**, **Lorraine Poling**, **Laura Rahaim**, **Aaron Schnittman**, **Debbie Supplitt**, **Brad Venable**, and **Victoria Weaver**.

During their one-week stay in Havana, members of the delegation visited elementary and secondary schools, institutions of higher education, schools for special needs learners, artist's studios, and art museums where visual arts instruction is provided. Students, faculty, administrators, and members of the Cuban government met with the delegation to discuss educational policy, curriculum, assessment, funding, and instructional resources and practices. During the NAEA National Convention, members of the delegation will participate in a session where they will discuss the benefits of this professional development opportunity, the outcomes of their research, and how the information they acquired on the research trip was utilized in their art classrooms and programs. Additional information about the trip may be found on the NAEA website under Research and Knowledge. ■



NAEA researchers who traveled to Havana in October. Photo by Laura Cuevas.

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