

NAEA Delegation: Destination Finland!

By NAEA Past President F. Robert Sabol



A delegation of NAEA members traveled to **Helsinki, Finland**, this past November as part of the **NAEA International Research in Art Education Program**. Members in the delegation represented each of the NAEA membership divisions and 13 states.

The delegation was led by **Robert Sabol**, Past President of NAEA. Other members of the delegation included **Linda Anderson, Tami Ballard, Susan Castleman, MaryJo Clark, Beth Delforge, Susan Ellingson, Deborah Kippley, Talitha Kiwiet, Claudia Palermo, Samantha Petry, Janice Rabideaux, Delane Vanada, Sandra Wood, Diana Woodruff, and Valerie Xanos**. The delegation visited seven schools while in Finland, including elementary, middle, and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities, community arts education facilities, and art museums and galleries in and near Helsinki.



The delegation began its visit at **The Finnish Board of Education**, where they were greeted by members of the Finnish government, including **Leo Pahkin**, Finnish Counselor of Education, and **Mikko Hartikainen**, Counselor for Arts Education. The delegation heard in-depth explanations of the history of Finnish education and the emergence of the current Finnish national model for education. Finland's education system is consistently ranked at or near the top of highest-performing nations around the world on various measures of academic performance. Public education in Finland from preschool through higher education is free. Education in the Arts is highly valued in Finland and plays a major role in the education of all students. Finland has national curriculum standards (www.oph.fi) and national visual arts standards (www.oph.fi/download/47673_core_curricula_basic_education_4.pdf). Finland's national core curriculum is being revised and the new core curriculum will be introduced in August 2016.

All Finnish students are required to take arts courses at all levels of instruction, and all teachers in Finland must hold master's degrees in order to teach. Assessment of learning is conducted in Finland, but little emphasis is placed on test results and test preparation. The Finnish education system is student-centered and students have significant input about the focus and goals of their education.

The NAEA International Research in Art Education Program began 4 years ago to enable art educators from the United States to travel abroad to meet other art educators and to learn from each other about art education programming in their respective countries. Previous delegations have visited **Cuba, India, and Myanmar**. Delegation members are required to gather information about art education and the culture of host countries. Upon returning to their schools and communities, they are asked to share what they learned by creating instructional units or lesson plans, exhibitions, conference presentations, publications, or any other means of sharing what they learned about the art, culture, or practices of art educators in countries they visit. Members of the delegation will present a session about how they have shared their educational experiences from the trip to Finland during the NAEA National Convention in New Orleans this March. If you are interested in learning more about this program or about participating in future trips, please plan to attend the session. ■



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