



# CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

## Program Notes

**Program Title:** Feast of Ideas: Educational Kits that Work and Don't Work  
**Location:** Oakland Zoo  
**Date:** December 13, 2000

**Presenters:** Sue Gartley and Sandra Wolf from Folk Art International

### Program Overview:

Sue Gartley and Sandra Wolf from Folk Art International presented a few of their kits and the following tips:

Always begin with the hands-on objects and the California State Frameworks. There are a variety of shapes that kits can take including:

- cases on wheels that open up to a “wow!” display of the objects. Their mask kit opens up to a mini-display and includes a photo for the teacher on how to put the items back, a mirror that folds up so the kids and can see themselves with the masks on, and a resource notebook for the instructor.
- Some of their kits are in baskets
- Some are solely notebooks with information, activities, children’s books, resources, and examples of students’ work.

Sandra Wolf presented a kit she is working on about architecture. She started with the ancient civilizations unit for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. More are planned. She talked about the Egyptian kit which had dowels and connectors in a specially made canvas bag for students to build their own pyramid. Not only history teachers have used this kit, but geometry teachers as well. It allows kids to actually see the pyramid shape in 3-D. The kit also includes slides, videos, and laminated photos which are all coded to each kit. Images of all items are in the notebook for easy reference for the teacher.

### Tips on assembling a kit:

- begin with an idea (cultural or thematic)
- brainstorm ideas around the theme
- hunt for objects
- research what others have done on the topic
- Items can include hands-on objects, literature, videos, slides, photos
- create a budget for materials, packaging, and staff time

- include resource lists of other organizations, web sites, artists who visit schools, etc...
- the kit needs to be visually exciting-colorful and organized
- can also include books related to theme such as proverbs, picture books, plays, and bilingual books
- update the kit periodically (add examples of student work, incorporate teacher feedback received throughout the year)
- try to gear the activities around having the students discover the concepts themselves
- try to include activities that use sound, movement, making things, performance, trying things on, etc...
- 3-ring binders are usually best because they can be updated easily
- keep the pages in plastic covers/laminate for easy cleaning
- Pilot test the kits with teachers. Take their feedback seriously and get as much as possible. Your kit will be the better for it. Have teachers try out the materials, then you can make refinements, then try the kit again! It is also helpful to include student responses for teacher preparation. This can help teachers to connect their students responses to future lessons. It is also helpful to have content specialists and well as people who know nothing about the subject review the materials.

The hands-on activity is the most important part! Sandra quoted from a study (no source cited) about student retention rates.

If they hear it only: retain 10%

If they see it: retain 20%

If they touch it: retain 80%

Another reference she made is about the 6 essentials for kids. They include (in no particular order)

- outdoor activity, enjoying nature
- time for unstructured play
- music, drama, painting...(arts)
- hands-on lessons, crafts
- conversation, poetry reading
- loving relationships with responsible adults

The Folk Art International kits used to include dense informational essays on the theme, but they found that this did not work. Now the new edited versions contain only the essence of the kit to provide easier access for teachers.

Keeping track of the kits can include:

- Inventory lists of items in each kit
- Have teacher and loaning institution sign a loan receipt
- No charge for the kit, but if something is broken or lost the school is responsible for replacing that item

### **Audience Q&A (responses by Sue Gartley)**

1) Do you ship the kits?

*No. The teachers come to our office to receive an orientation to the kit, sign forms, and then they can take it with them. Our check out time is 1- month. This allows the teacher to really prepare and incorporate the kit into their lessons.*

2) What ages do your kits reach?

*Pre-school to college. Many of our kits are adjustable for a variety of levels. Items can be added/changed for different ages.*

3) What is a time frame for developing the kits?

*Some kits are put together quickly. The objects are easily attainable, the information easy to find. Others take time to search for objects and research topic. They can take anywhere from 1 month to 1 year. We sometimes do "mini-kits" which are spin-offs from other larger kits.*

4) How many people on your staff?

*One person, me. Consultants are hired to work on specific kits.*

**Following this 1/2 hour presentation by Folk Art International, program attendees were invited to visit the other kits on display. Educational kits were brought from a variety of institutions including the following.**

*Please note: Every effort was made to visit each kit. My apologies if anyone was left out or if my descriptions are lacking. Please contact the individual museum for more detailed information on their kits. Thank you.*

### **Oakland Museum**

1)California Landscapes in Art

This portfolio kit includes laminated images and a teacher guide on California landscapes.

2)Bats

Contained in a custom built case, the kit includes real bat specimens, skeletons, photos, and 3-D picture viewers.

3)Gold Rush

The trunk includes gold rush literature, songs, and a gold pan.

### **Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco**

1) Papermaking kits

Lessons on making paper and creative uses of paper.

2) African Musical Instruments

Includes teacher guide and instruments for use in the classroom.

### **Autry Museum of Western Heritage**

1) Community Stories: The Life of Ellen Cook

One of a series of kits that explore people in history from diverse cultural backgrounds and their stories using objects and family photographs.

### **The Sacramento Zoological Society**

#### 1) Animal Tracks

Explores the adaptive features of animal feet.

#### 2) Exploring your Senses

Activity bins on smell, sound, etc...

### **Coyote Point Museum**

#### 1) Night Features

Highlights the features of nocturnal animals.

### **Beth Redmond-Jones and Associates**

#### 1) Animal Eyes

This kit travels with the exhibit to lead educators at museums through eye dissections and other gallery demonstrations.

### **Oakland Zoo**

#### 1) Illegal artifacts kit

This suitcase about illegal animal products contains items confiscated by US Customs officials.

#### 2) Rainforest, Skins, Reptiles kits

#### 3) Discovery Room kits for parents and kids to use at the zoo

### **Asian Art Museum**

#### 1) Brushpainting kit

For teachers to check-out to do brush painting activities in the classroom.

#### 2) Storytelling kit

Contains objects such as a bronze Buddha, posters, and Japanese geta, that the storytellers use to enhance their stories.

### **Museum of Art and History-Santa Cruz**

#### 1) Writing Trunk

In a beautiful antique-looking trunk containing calligraphy tools, quills, and ink for teachers to use in the classroom.