

A sixth grader at Lone Star School in Washington County begins making his corn shuck wreath, guided by resident artist Jean Krause of Otis. Photo by Tory Read.



Look for these icons for resources accessible on this website



**Audio**



**Video**



**Lesson Plan**

## Introductory Information

### Folk Arts in Your Classroom

Introduction by Maryo Ewell

The Colorado Council on the Arts (CCA) is a state agency. For two of our program objectives, we strive to:

- 1) Identify and preserve our state's traditional artists and art forms

And

- 2) Promote and support arts learning for youth, including formal training in the arts as well as arts infused into other disciplines or fields.

To meet objective 1, we partner with state folklorists who live in Alamosa, Grand Junction, and Greeley. Their job is to help communities become aware of the wealth of cultures that make up a given community, to help groups explore their own culture, and to help everyone better understand the cultures of others. To meet objective 2, CCA has developed several different programs. YouthReach, the Online Poetry Project, and the Learning Network are described elsewhere on our website. This updated version of Ties That Bind: Folk Arts in the Classroom, also addresses objective 2 and makes many resources for teachers readily available online for the first time.

# TIES THAT BIND

## Folk Arts in Your Classroom - Introductory Information

A few years ago, our state folklorists began to report that more and more requests for assistance were coming from classroom teachers. Teachers were seeking new ways to teach history and geography and thought that exploring the world through the eyes of people with different cultures, or learning about history by investigating family and community stories, would be important to help their students—all their students—learn better. Our folklorists listened, and responded, by creating Ties that Bind, a comprehensive “package” of information and materials especially for teachers. The entire “package” is available, most of it on this website. Resources that couldn’t be included here can be obtained by contacting CCA. (See Resources section.)

### Ties That Bind Includes the Following Materials

#### To the Educators (Section I)

In short essays, one directed to administrators and one to teachers, Dr. Paul Johnson, now of School District 11, previously of the Colorado Department of Education, provides a brief rationale that supports the incorporation of traditional arts into your classroom. The essay to teachers expands upon this and supports the value of the traditional arts in helping teachers meet history and geography standards.

#### Our State, Our Cultures (Section II)

Five folklorists who have worked in Colorado write about different parts of the state. Each links observations of her region’s history and cultural makeup to the geography and history standards in ways that may be useful to you. The message for students is clear: look around you; history and geography can come alive! Each of the five essays looks at that region’s history and people and provides links to further resources; each section also includes suggestions for classroom activities. Each

of the folklorists has a different voice, different style, and emphasizes different things, and each is a wonderful writer. While you’ll be tempted to spend the most time on the essay about your part of the state, we urge you to read them all. Each of the folklorists’ suggested activities is quite different from her colleagues’ and each essay relates in some way to the state as a whole.



#### Folk Arts Lesson Plans and Classroom Activities (Section III)

Denver’s creative Milliken Award-winning arts teacher and now administrator, Angelique Acevedo, wrote three wonderful **lesson plans** included in this third, web-based edition of this kit. One was written by Dr. Dia Cha, a Hmong refugee who lived in the Denver area, co-founded the Hmong Women’s Education Association, co-authored several books with educator and storyteller par excellence Dr. Norma Livo, and worked as an Asian community liaison to youth and their parents for Boulder Mental Health while she earned her Ph.D. in anthropology. The folklorists created other **lesson plans** as they worked with various teachers to integrate folk arts into their curricula. Most recently, Kim White, a folklorist who is also an educator, provided her expertise in current curriculum needs. Kim, Ronna Lee Sharpe, and Georgia Wier edited the text for its most recent publication on the Worldwide Web.

#### Resources (Section IV)



Over the years, a wide variety of audio, video and print resources have been created with funding from the CCA, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities. The following information is included to help teachers locate, access and order resources that will greatly enhance the use of Ties that Bind.

## Folk Arts in Your Classroom - Introductory Information



*"Do Not Pass Me By"* was originally produced as a two-cassette audio tape set by CCA folklorist David Brose. The recordings, which include 40 short vignettes about extraordinary Colorado artists, have aired on Morning Edition, won broadcasting awards, and were even broadcast internationally on the Voice of America. *"Do Not Pass Me By"* is now accessible on line at this website and in cassette form through CCA.



*"A Calling Card for Friendship"* was originally produced as a two-cassette audio tape set compiled by Harry Tuft featuring recordings from archival materials collected by CCA folklorist David Brose. *"A Calling Card for Friendship"* is now accessible on line at this website and in cassette form through CCA. An accompanying booklet that goes into greater depth on the artists, their history, and their art forms is also available through CCA.



*"Just Plain Art,"* produced by Daniel Salazar, is a video profiling several folk artists who were awarded Master/Apprenticeship Awards by CCA in 1992 and 1993. The seven segments are mentioned throughout. *"Just Plain Art"* is now accessible on line at this website and in VHS form through CCA.

Master/Apprentice: Colorado Folk Arts and Artists, 1986-1990 was derived from an exhibit toured by the Colorado Council on the Arts and looks at a few of Colorado's exemplary folk artists through essays and photographs. The catalog is available through CCA. See Resources Section, Colorado Council on the Arts, for ordering information.

The Resources section also includes the following types of information related to Colorado, its cultures and traditions, books, festivals, important places, museums, films, and others:

- Lists of Web sites for Folklore in Education.
- Lists of Related Resources By Chapter includes a variety of other references encountered during the research for this project.
- Lists of General Resources, **Lesson Plans** and Related Web Sites



Ukrainian Pysanka. Maria Figlus and Odarka Figlus. This is example from the exhibit "Master/Apprentice: Colorado Folk Arts and Artists, 1986-1990." The exhibit catalog contains in-depth essays about the art form of pysanka and the artists who create these beautiful pieces. Photo by Ronna Lee Sharpe

### Contact Information for CCA and Colorado's Regional Folklorists

CCA's state folklorists are available to help you. Each has a wealth of information about the cultural history of her region. Folklorists maintain rosters of artists from many cultural backgrounds and may be able to refer you to a person who would be ideal to visit your classroom. They can also help you design projects, activities, and other unique ways to meet the standards. In addition, each has areas of particular expertise. We hope you will contact the folklorist nearest you. Additional information is included in the Resources Section.

Ronna Lee Sharpe (Western Colorado: 970/242-0971 ext 221 rsharpe@westcomuseum.org) has first-hand knowledge of the cowboy life.

Georgia Wier (Northeastern Colorado 970/350-9249 georgia.wier@greeleygov.com) specializes in weaving and oral history.

Kathi Figger (719/587-0013 figgen\_velasquez@msn.com] has special interest in Latino art and culture.

Colorado Council on the Arts 303/866-3802  
www.coloarts.state.co.us

The point is that there are plenty of resource materials and plenty of ways that your imagination can link the folk arts with history and geography so that all of your students can excel. You may well find that these ideas engage students who may not have previously been engaged. We think that the arts, especially the folk arts, as Dr. Johnson says, integrate subject matter in such a way that several of the standards can be met simultaneously-relieving you of pressure and making learning more “whole” and applicable for your students.

### Thanks

Many deserve thanks for their contributions to Ties That Bind. First, we thank the many folk artists and musicians who have shared their talents and expertise with us for use in this multi-media resource package. Thanks also to Elaine Mariner, Executive Director of the Colorado Council on the Arts; current and former CCA staff members Maryo Ewell, Renée Bovée, Fran Holden, Jeanette Albert, and Daniel Salazar (who also served as videographer); Paddy Bowman, Coordinator of the National Task Force on Folk Arts in Education; Dr. Paul Johnson, Colorado Springs School District 11; Jacquie Kitzelman, Fine Arts Consultant, Colorado Department of Education; David Brose, former Colorado State Folklorist; Harry Tuft, folklorist;

Angelique Acevedo, Beverly O’Neil, Dia Cha, Kim Kennedy White, Educators/Curriculum Developers; and the many teachers whose comments have encouraged us and suggested ways to revise this web-based edition of Ties that Bind.

*We dedicate this newest version of Ties that Bind to Dr. Beatrice Roeder, the folklorist whose dedication to the folk artists in Colorado led to the realization of many of their dreams. Cowboy poet Vess Quinlan said about Bea, “She was so quiet and gentle it was amazing that she moved so many things around her.” Bea died suddenly in June of 2003, but her work lives on in the Ties That Bind resources and in the success stories told by many Colorado artists.*

We need to thank the three folklorists currently working in Colorado (Kathi Figger, Ronna Lee Sharpe, and Georgia Wier) and the skilled fieldworker who graced the Eastern Plains in 1996-97, Laura Marcus. Also we should thank three community partners whose strong support enables our folklorists to cover large regions. These community partners are the City of Greeley Museums, the Museum of Western Colorado, and the Western Colorado Interpretive Association.

We owe a special thank you to Cristina Arnal, Arnal Design, for her vision, creativity and excellent work in helping us present “Ties that Bind” in this exciting new format. And also to Matthew Saunders for making it possible for you to access audio, video and printed material directly on this website.

Last but not least – in fact, without them this couldn’t have happened at all – is the National Endowment for the Arts for funding, advice, and support for the initial version as well as for this new edition designed for the web.

### To the Administrator: Why Should Folk Arts Be in the Classroom?

By Paul Johnson, Ph.D.

#### Schools on the Cutting Edge

Schools and school systems have been increasingly challenged to meet higher expectations and produce better results. In turn, administrators have been placed in a position of higher accountability for student literacy and student achievement with the passage of the Standards Act, HB 1313, in 1993. All boards of education in districts across Colorado have adopted content standards for schools. In addition to a demand for better results, schools must now address specific standards and benchmarks in each of the content area disciplines. With the standards in place, this amounts to eleven different content areas. This era of expanding expectations may at times feel overwhelming for school administrators and teachers. What is needed is a way to make sense of all these expectations for higher achievement. Just working hard is no longer the answer—working smarter is the solution.

#### Higher Standards, Better Results

Leading administrators have come to the conclusion that the standards movement is here to stay. They have also begun to discuss how to implement these standards effectively at the school and classroom level. Due to the large amount of information contained in the content standards, many school leaders now understand that these standards cannot be taught or learned in isolation as separate disciplines. There must be thoughtful strategy developed to integrate all the content that supports higher student achievement and show results on the annual statewide performance assessments. One of the most effective strategies for delivering higher student achievement and expanding literacy across the curriculum is the process of interdisciplinary or

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multidisciplinary teaching. There is no mystery to this strategy. It involves identifying common themes and objectives, choosing a highly motivating way to deliver the concept and then connecting the content to learning experiences that students already have. Higher standardized test scores and higher student achievement are the results.



Master artists on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation in southwestern Colorado, work with local youth to help them preserve and carry on traditional art and craft forms. Photo by Ronna Lee Sharpe

### Motivating Students to Reach Higher Standards

Recent research shows that one of the most motivating of the content areas is the arts and that art and music in the curriculum, important in themselves, play other significant roles in schools. They are correlated with higher student graduation rates, especially among students with learning disabilities, Hispanic, and African-American students. Perhaps even more remarkable is research from the College Entrance Examination Board (1996) that shows that students' SAT scores in both verbal and mathematic sub-tests are higher among students who have taken art and music. The SAT scores get progressively higher the longer students have studied the arts in conjunction with other content areas.

The folk arts fuse music, art, geography and history into a more powerful literacy. They have a special role to play in teaching the standards and raising student achievement. Folk arts are unique in the geographical regions of Colorado. They appear as creative cultural expressions in each school community. They include storytelling, folk music, quilting, and folk dance, but they cannot be separated from history and geography. Administrators who include the folk arts in the curriculum will enable students to achieve to a higher level in these two standards areas and in the overriding goal of higher literacy. I encourage you to support teachers as they pilot the use of folk arts as a tool to integrate the curriculum—an innovative approach to instruction in an interdisciplinary manner. After reviewing the following materials, I trust you will find that Ties that Bind contains valuable resources to help teachers do exactly that.

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Students at Lone Star School in Otis, Colorado, enjoy music of a local group, the Wiladel Rattlers, before they interview those musicians. Photo by Tory Read.

### To the Teacher: A Common Sense Guide to Integrating History, Geography and Folk Arts

By Paul Johnson, Ph.D.

For over a decade, classroom teachers have been constantly challenged to raise student achievement. The public accountability for student success in education is higher now than at any time in the last twenty years. The mission for teachers is clear, but the tools to assure high student achievement in the classroom have been few. Teachers will find in the following the different sections of Ties that Bind a “tool kit” of ideas, strategies and helpful hints to help students increase their success in history and geography. It is our belief that the integration of folk arts into classroom curriculum will help teachers meet this goal of higher learning and literacy.

#### A Context for the Standards: Using Geography, History and Folk Arts to Raise the Levels of Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

First, a short explanation of standards. Standards are clear, easily understood statements about what students need to know and be able to do in order to document their learning. Colorado has had standards since the legislature passed HB 1313 in 1993. In January of 1997, every school district in the state adopted model content standards or developed their own standards. There are eleven mandated content standard areas that have been developed by teachers like you to assure high levels of achievement in the classroom. The challenge for educators is to creatively and effectively teach this huge amount of information and still assure that all students learn to high standards of excellence. Teachers across the state have been talking about standards of excellence for about a decade. The

conclusion that many of you have reached is that content standards cannot be taught separately or in isolation. They must be integrated in order for the students in classrooms to make sense of the content in a literate way. Some teachers call this strategy “interdisciplinary” teaching while others call it “multidisciplinary” teaching. It doesn’t matter what educators call the process; the goal is greater understanding for students and better results for teachers and schools.

Because folk arts are a vital part of every community's history, they weave a compelling sense of place, time, and heritage for students.

—Paul Johnson, Ph.D

Second, teachers need strategies to make the standards useful in classrooms. You need new ways to teach literacy across content areas. You need new

ways to motivate students to reach the high expectations the public has placed upon them. One of the universal motivators, and one of the prime tools for connecting content area disciplines, is the arts. And the arts area that appears best suited for integrating curriculum and improving literacy is the folk arts. Many teachers have found them to be the most immediate way to put students in touch with the standards. Because folk arts are a vital part of every community’s history, they weave a compelling sense of place, time, and heritage for students. The Colorado Council on the Arts has undertaken a process of integrating the content standards with the arts. Special emphasis has been placed on the folk arts because they touch the history and culture of every community in our diverse state. The folk arts are a universal language that communicates Colorado’s rich heritage to students.

### Why Folk Arts Are Especially Important

Several situations are common to all teachers in classrooms where the folk arts can be valuable in raising student achievement.

- Children of different cultural backgrounds are probably in your classroom. Because of differing cultural norms, children are raised to learn in different ways. The folk arts provide a better understanding of cultural backgrounds and knowing the way different cultures transmit knowledge enables you to reach the diverse learners in the classroom. This also helps them achieve high standards.
- The folk arts reflect every culture and every community in this diverse state. Western Colorado, for example, is especially known for the arts of its mining and ranching traditions. The San Luis Valley is rich in folklórico dance and Rio Grande style weaving. Native American arts and crafts are especially associated with the Four Corners area. The Front Range of Colorado has a rich blend of European, Hispanic and African-American traditions. We notice how wide ranges of cultural traditions have been adapted to the agricultural life of the Eastern Plains. Children learn best when they start with the familiar. What could be a more effective way to teach history and geography than by asking a student to start with inquiry into his or her own family? What can be more powerful than a personal investigation of the traditions of his or her community?



Master Blacksmith/Ornamental Iron Worker, Francis Whitaker, at his Carbondale forge. Mr. Whitaker passed down his traditional knowledge to hundreds of enthusiastic students over the years. He was recognized for the excellence of his work and his dedication to the craft with the Colorado Council on the Arts Governor's Award and Master/Apprentice grants. He also received the nation's highest honor for folk artists, the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award. Photo by Ronna Lee Sharpe

- The folk arts bring history to life. Subject matter that is alive is more easily grasped and more fun to learn. For example, a folk dance may tell a story of conflict between different groups. The study of the roots of a folk song may broaden understanding of a historical time or place.
- The folk arts bring geography to life. As cultures have moved into regions of our state, they coexist with other cultures. These relationships change both the earlier settlers and the newcomers in each region. Folk arts illuminate the relationship between people and place as nothing else does.

Teachers will find in the following the different sections of Ties that Bind a "tool kit" of ideas, strategies and helpful hints to help students increase their success in history and geography. It is our belief that the integration of folk arts into classroom curriculum will help teachers meet this goal of higher learning and literacy.

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### How Folklorists Can Help You Integrate the Standards

Folklorists who have lived and worked in the regions around Grand Junction, Colorado Springs, Alamosa, Lamar, and Greeley have written eloquently about their regions of the state and have connected observations about the cultures of each region to the standards in history, geography, reading and writing, visual arts, music, and math. It will be up to you, the teacher, to interpret these connections, to brainstorm even more ways to use the suggested activities and resources in creative ways to integrate content, and to expand the list of activities according to the needs of students in your classroom. I am confident you will see results and expanded literacy—and have a fascinating journey on the road to higher student achievement.

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