Welcome to the Spring 2005 issue of the Folklore and Education Section newsletter.

You may navigate through this issue by clicking on the section headings to the left.

News about last year's section meeting, including the announcement of the 2004 winner of the Dorothy Howard Prize in Folklore and Education, can be found in the "AFS News" section. (For information about nominations for this year's Dorothy Howard Prize, click here.) The "AFS News" section also features information about the 2004 Saturday workshop for teachers, along with tentative information about this year's Saturday workshop.

The "Field Notes" section includes Paddy Bowman's column about the National Network for Folk Arts in Education, as well as an article by Maida Owens on the ways that the Louisiana Folklife Program has sought to reach teachers.

Thanks to the many folks who contributed materials for this year's newsletter. We invite your participation, as well--feel free to direct any comments, suggestions, and materials for future issues either to the editor, Rosemary Hathaway, or the co-editor, Gregory Hansen.

Jan Rosenberg tackles the question of the role of theory in folklore and education in this issue's "Reflections on Folklife and Education," below.

Reflections on Folklife and Education: Theories of Folklife in Education

There is a group of us who are working on theories for folklife in education. We will hopefully present our thoughts in a forum at AFS in Atlanta. Here is a glance at what we've been thinking.

Actually, we have four theories percolating. Gregory Hansen approaches folklife in education theory from a social base perspective, from the social nature of folklore and of education. I explore folklife in education theory from the perspective of John Dewey whose pragmatic progressive views of education were bound up in how children experience the world around them. Sean Galvin thinks of folklife in education in terms of how one acquires language, and Bonnie Sunstein discusses folklife in education from the point of view of writing. Our goal at AFS will be to describe what we have been thinking and how it is theory making in a field where there is no theory for folklife in education espoused by folklorists.

Why is there no stated theory of folklife in education from folklorists? We have a wide variety of excellent kinds of folklife in education programs, from presenting artists in the
classroom to students conducting ethnographies in their communities. Educators have been doing folklife in education in one form or another since the early 1800s. Is it that folklife in education is something that we do, that we think about in logistical terms only? Or do we tend to become bound up in the system of education to the point that we don’t know where folklore leaves off and education begins?

I think we all have theories of folklife in education. Our theories are working theories, designed to be enacted as well as explored. Our theories are as many as the kinds of programs we do because they fuel the programs we do - - they are our justification for programming.

I think there is a role for theory in how folklife in education works. Our group thinks in different ways and we will be presenting those thoughts to you. What we hope will happen is that there will be discussion on how folklife in education works and that we develop a common language for talking about it.

--Jan Rosenberg, past Section Convener