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Mentor's Introduction

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Michael Eckersley was a doctoral student in Art Education at Ball State University for two years and is presently Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Maryland. He received a B.A. degree from Weber State College, Ogden, Utah, completing a major in Art, minor in Language, with General Honors, and Departmental Honors. In 1980, Michael received the M.F.A. degree from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, where his major study was Painting with a Multi-Media minor.

After completing the M.F.A., Michael moved back to Utah to paint. He postponed any attempts to secure a teaching post because of the job market as it was and remains today. Instead, he wanted to break away from academia for a time and worked at something completely different. Michael accepted a job as a display trimmer and within six months became Visual Merchandising Manager in a new fashion retail department store.

However, Michael's long range goal was to become a university art educator. Although his experience in education was limited, Michael sensed a need for creative efforts in the field of Art Education. His overriding goal was to assist university students who find themselves in the wonderful yet difficult dilemma of self expression through the visual arts. Therefore his research at Ball State University was in the area of heuristics (problem-solving techniques.)

Michael's investigations examined the potential relationship between design-specific heuristic training and the design problem-solving behavior of foundation-level design students. His intent was to determine if heuristic training would have an effect on designs produced by these students. He believed that certain strategic knowledge (e.g., thinking strategies, rules-of-thumb, shortcuts, etc.) could be helpful to young designers. His final study consisted of using three heuristics drawn from the problem-solving literature and reformulated as a design-specific heuristics treatment.

Viewed simplistically, Dora's philosophy of education can best be described as humanitarian. She sees education as being student centered and the potential for a successful learning experience is directly related to the degree of relevancy which the student perceives. Teaching is best accomplished by individuals who care about other individuals. While knowledge of a particular subject matter is undeniably important for the teacher, awareness and an intuitive approach to the educational process are also vital.

Dora came to the doctoral program at Ball State University from Christiansburg, Virginia. She has completed three years of residency and is presently a part-time art instructor in the Art Department. Dora received the B.A. degree, cum laude, from Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, with a double major in Art and English. She completed the M.S. in Art Education from Radford University, Radford, Virginia. Prior to coming to Ball State, Dora was an

Instructor of Art at Radford University and completed some course work in the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.

Dora's investigations center on the utilization of a structural criticism model as a strategy for increasing the visual perceptual skills of differentiation in students. The degree of student involvement in the criticism format and the focus of attention during critique sessions are the important variables in her investigations. If the central goals of art education are to develop the student's ability to experience the visual world aesthetically and to develop his/her ability to form visual images with materials, then investigations like Dora's can prove helpful in the development of art curriculum.