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Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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Shari Stoddard's enthusiasm and vitality in discussing art work with preschool age children has lead to some remarkable results. This past year, as part of her doctoral studies, she had an exhibit of preschoolers' responses to art works, in both visual and verbal form, along with her own art works that were used to elicit comments from the children. This exhibit focused on teaching and learning employing Stoddard's art lessons as content organizers. The non-traditional subject matter in this exhibit was evidence of Stoddard's abilities to push boundaries and be creative in her work related to looking at, talking and writing about, and making art with young children.

At this exhibition, when a tape recorder was activated by pressing a button, children's voices, responding to a specific art work and a familiar fairy tale, resounded in the gallery. In addition to taped responses, there were written comments by the preschoolers about works of art. These written comments demonstrated a whole language approach to writing and were accompanied by translations by Stoddard. These responses gave the exhibit audience first hand experiences with actual preschoolers' responses to works of art. Examples in this exhibit are evidence that young children can indeed look at, talk and write about, and make art work at a level that some researchers and practitioners have asserted is not possible.

Stoddard is about to embark on a study that should open new territories for exploration in areas related to looking at and talking about art with young children. If anyone can succeed at this task, I believe she can and will and we, as art educators, will be enlightened by the results of her future work.