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mentor's introduction

Paul E. Bolin

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The research that Billie Sessions has undertaken is essential for the field of art education. Her work helps move art education in a much needed direction, through the questioning of current practices within high school ceramics education. More than it being a critique of present ideas and practices in ceramics education, the work conducted by Ms. Sessions proposes "new" theoretical and practical directions for this often neglected curricular area within high school visual arts education. Her work stems from a variety of questions about the current state of high school ceramics education, and she inquires about the long-standing lack of meaningful instruction in this curricular area. Through this research Ms. Sessions investigates current ideas and practices in high school ceramics education, and proposes a more content-based and multi-dimensional approach to ceramics education.

Her research into ceramics education reflects much of what occurs in other art content areas within a DBAE format, and is focused on making works of art central to high school ceramic art instruction. The field is in need of such research. Over the past decade, while there has been a great deal of emphasis placed on the inclusion of a DBAE framework in public schools, much of this effort has been directed toward two-dimensional art instruction, particularly at the elementary school level. Ms. Sessions proposes an expansion of DBAE to include the curricular area of high school ceramics, a topic which is often overlooked.

Prior to graduate school, Billie Sessions taught secondary school art for thirteen years; during much of that time Ms. Sessions taught ceramics at the high school level. Her work as a graduate student, ceramics teacher, and ceramic art maker coalesce, and position Billie Sessions as an ideal person to conduct this much needed research within the field of art education.

Ms. Sessions has for many years made a strong commitment to the field of art education. I expect this to continue in the future. She has been the NAEA vice-president for the Pacific Region. For the past twelve years Ms. Sessions has been involved in state and national programs of the NAEA. She has twice been the recipient of international study awards--one, a summer National Endowment for the Humanities award, in Paris; the other a Fulbright Scholarship in The Netherlands. She was also the recipient of a 1996 Doctoral Fellowship in Art Education, awarded by the Getty Education Institute for the Arts. Without question Billie Sessions has the skill and experience to assist in shaping the future of art education, and her dissertation research into ceramics education is a significant contribution to our field.