Mentor's Introduction

James Gray
Over the past decade qualitative analysis of education phenomena has been described and explained in detail under the general heading, "Naturalistic Inquiry". Ms. Irwin's contribution is not neatly classifiable under any one subheading, but it does represent a form of "connoisseurship and criticism" advocated by Eisner. As such it has a methodological as well as content value especially for art educators.

The researcher's background as an art teacher and later as a consultant has provided her with a valuable form of connoisseurship: she knows what to look for and she knows when subtle differences can make big differences in the life world of being an art teacher. Her academic studies have provided the basis for executing acts of criticism: she knows what to say in respect to the events and persistent needs she has documented relative to the idealizations and prescriptions presented in the literature of art curriculum development and education change.

In essence, her line of study represents a contribution towards creating a firmer grounding for continued research in art education.