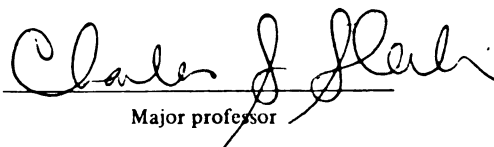20370863

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FIELDNOTES AND SNAPSHOTS AS REFLECTIVE DATA

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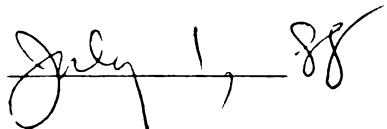
Dennis Lee Inhulsen

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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_____Masters_____ degree in ___Art_____

Major professor

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TOWARD UNDERSTANDING ONE'S OWN ART TEACHING:

FIELDNOTES AND SNAPSHOTS AS REFLECTIVE DATA

By

Dennis Lee Inhulsen

A THESIS

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

TOWARD UNDERSTANDING ONE'S OWN ART TEACHING:
FIELDNOTES AND SNAPSHOTS AS REFLECTIVE DATA

By

Dennis Lee Inhulsen

The purpose of this study was to research and implement two

data gathering methods. These were to be used as a basis for new

understandings into the researcher's own art teaching situation.

This is a descriptive account of the researcher's use of fieldnotes

and snapshots as the reflective data. The findings, while situational,

highlight new insights gained through gathering and analyzing this

data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to become a better, more
insightful art teacher. Through description and analysis of my
own teaching, I can begin to fulfill my purpose. Sharing my method
and findings with others and discovering new issues for inquiry
are the desired outcomes of this study.

The primary problem of this study is to research and implement
two data gathering methods to provide a basis for new understandings
into my own teaching. Specifically, this is a descriptive account
of an art teacher's use of fieldnotes and snapshots as reflective
data in his own teaching situation.

An "Action Research" Approach to this Study

The style of this research is best classified as "action research"
as found in the writings of Isaac (1984), and Nixon (1981).

Isaac defines the purpose of action research as follows, "To
develop new skills or new approaches and to solve problems with
direct application to the classroom or other applied setting."
(p. 42). Bogan & Bilken define action research as the "Systematic

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collection of information that is designed to bring about social change." (p. 215). They go on to clarify that "Action research is a type of applied research in which the researcher is actively involved in the cause for which the research is conducted." (p. 215).

Even more to the point, Nixon views action research as coming "from the inside." (p. 4). Nixon claims that action research can:

> be undertaken by any teacher in the classroom... It requires a willingness on the part of the teachers to learn about their own classrooms and to desire to develop themselves professionally. The case for action research may be stated briefly. By investigating and reflecting upon their own practice, teachers may increase their understanding of the classroom. These kinds of enquiry may increase knowledge and understanding of teachers in such a way that they are able to respond more sensitively to the needs of their pupils... In addition, action research may also bring about a modification or elaboration of theories of teaching and learning. (p. 6)

Isaac further characterizes action research as follows:

> 1. Training required: Only limited training in research methods is needed... Rigorous design and analysis are not usually necessary.
>
> 2. Goals: To obtain knowledge that can be applied directly to the local classroom situation...
>
> 3. Locating the research problem: Problems identified in the school situation that are causing the researcher trouble.
>
> 4. Hypothesis: A specific statement of the problem usually serves as the research hypotheses.
>
> 5. Review of literature: A review of secondary sources gives the teacher a general understanding of the area to be studied. Exhaustive review of primary sources is almost never done.
>
> 6. Sampling: Pupils available in the class of the teacher or teachers doing the research are used as subjects.
>
> 7. Experimental Design: Procedures are planned in general terms prior to start of the study. Changes are made during the study if they seem likely to improve the

teaching situation. Little attention is paid to control
of the experimental conditions or reduction of error.
Because participating teachers are ego-involved in the
research situation, bias is usually present.

8. Measurement: Less rigorous evaluation of measures
than in scientific research.

9. Analysis of data: Simple analysis of procedures
usually are sufficient. Practical significance is
emphasized.

10. Application of results: Findings are applied
immediately to the classes of participating teachers and
often lead to permanent improvement. Application of
results beyond the participating teachers is usually
slight. (pp. 55-58).

Assumptions Critical to this Study

The Situation of Art Teaching

The situation of art teaching is one of continuous involvement

and interaction with students in an art classroom. My primary task

as an art teacher is to foster a student's ability to make and learn

about art. It is the researcher's view that all children are capable

of producing personally satisfying art products and can grow to

view themselves as creative individuals.

While it is not the purpose of this study to own any one view

teaching, it is assumed that the teacher is a powerful force in

the education of children.

Teachers as Researchers

It is assumed that teachers can also do effective research.

There are many studies available to support this notion.

Degge (1982), supports the idea of classroom art teachers as

researchers by the following:

> Inquiry may be a quest for information, a search to
> extend knowledge, or a systematic investigation of a
> matter of interest. When undertaken by classroom art
> teachers, that quest is logically directed at developing,
> adding to, changing, and improving the teaching of art
> (p. 25).

Florio (1981), considers teachers "very special natives" in her work about the role of teachers as informants in educational ethnography. The benefits for the teachers involved in research are many. She concludes: "It is not difficult to imagine how confident use of research skills of questioning, observation, and inference can enhance a teacher's ability to assess student needs..." (p. 18).

> The teacher as classroom based researcher can learn to
> ask his or her own questions, to look at everyday
> experience as data in answering those questions, to seek
> disconfirming evidence, to consider discrepant cases, to
> entertain alternative interpretations (p. 157).

This is not to say there are no problems with teachers doing research in their own classroom. Pollard (1985) considers the main concern for teacher as researchers in "time". Problems with finding time to write, interview, collect artifacts, and use outside sources were all cited (p. 222).

The Value of a Situational Study

It is assumed that this study has value for the teacher as researcher and interested others. Given the individual and situational nature of this inquiry, it is assumed that others might gain new insights into their own condition by comparison.

This study cannot be exactly replicated by others. Others may attempt to use it's format, but the findings will be different. Shared methods with different findings are an important assumption

to be understood.

Erikson (1986), supports situational research as follows:
First, to understand the "invisibility of everyday life"; second,
to gain "specific understanding through documentation of concrete
details of practice"; third, to know what "local meanings" people
give situations; fourth, to recognize the "need for comparative
understandings of different social settings"; and lastly, to recognize
the "need for comparative understanding beyond the immediate
circumstances of the local setting" (pp. 121-122).

Learning From One's Own Data

The data, collected, are derived from my own fieldnotes and
snapshots. The data are subjective and reflective and it is assumed
that new insights and understandings can be gained from them. These
understandings are the products of this inquiry.

Yinger and Clark (1981), in their studies of teacher's use
of journals, find that through writing about their day, teachers
begin to pay attention to what they do and how they do it. Writing
also helps teachers objectify "what they know, what they feel,
what they do (and how they do it), and why they do it." (p. 10).

Snapshots serve as data for memory recall and reflection
about a past time, much as do fieldnotes. By snapping a picture,
I am freezing an experienced activity for later reference.

The assumption here is that through collecting my notes and
pictures new thoughts might emerge about the qualities of my own
teaching. This assumption is further clarified by Folsom (1976):

> By keeping careful accounts of what has been transpiring,
> the teachers can see the kinds of behaviors they are

exhibiting. It can be assumed correctly that through
careful analysis and a witting program of change, a
teacher can foster those kinds of behaviors that will
enhance the learning climate in this classroom. (p. 10)

Definition of Terms

Fieldnotes

At the end of each teaching day I sat down to write notes about

my day. These notes, or "fieldnotes" as I call them, make up the

written data of this study. They were informal in structure, sometimes

long and detailed, and at other times all but non-existant. Sometimes

the notes were descriptive in nature and sometimes they were reflective

of personal thoughts and attitudes; usually they were both. The

use of the word "fieldnotes" was borrowed from Bogdan and Biklen

(1982 p. 72). It should be noted that similar terms such as the

journal, diary, daily log, and daybook, could be considered the

same as fieldnotes.

Snapshots

The use of the word "snapshots" refers to pictures that I took

during the course of the data gathering period. The "snapshots"

as they are called by King (1986) were used as visual data for the

purpose of memory recollection and reflection. By using the word

"snapshot", I am implying an informal, amateur approach, to picture

taking. When something or someone struck me as picture-worthy,

whatever it was, I snapped a picture. Aside from adjusting the

camera for proper exposure and focusing, no elaborate attempt was

made at composing a "good" picture.

Reflective Data

There are two forms of data used in this study: fieldnotes and snapshots. Data, according to Bogdan & Bilken refers to "rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis for analysis. Data are both evidence and clues." Data provide "the particulars you need to think soundly and deeply about aspects of life you will explore" (1982 p. 73).

Reflection is the "looking back" process of introspection about my teaching life. Reflection can happen both during the data-making and at any later time. Reflection in this study takes place during two specific times. First, during the note-making and picture taking, and secondly, when the whole experience is analyzed.

Combining the terms "reflection" and "data" can be understood simply as: Information used as a basis for further thought.

Reflective Analysis

Due to the nature of this study, all analysis is reflective. All analysis, either during the data gathering period or after, is ego-centered and individual in interpretation. Analysis is the process of coming to conclusions about the study as a result of reviewing the data. The data are presented along with reflective comments. These comments serve to satisfy the purpose and problem of this study.

Limitations of the Study

Length of Study

A major problem with this study is that it is too short in duration. The role of time is not fully understood or appreciated. It is not known, for example, if my notes might become richer with the passage of time.

Ideally, this study would be drawn out for several years. I visualize stacks of notebooks and thousands of photographs reflective of teaching days. Indeed, it is a primary purpose of this study to begin lifelong documentation. In this sense, this study should be viewed as a pilot for further study.

The findings might also change with the passage of time. Will a project or particular student be so important years from now? I'm not sure. While learning to write and snap a photograph is important to me now, I'm not sure of it's priority in the future. I can only hope that continued objectification of my work will lead me to greater understandings.

Limitations of the Researcher

The ability to truly do research lies with the experience and training of the researcher. The biggest limitation of this study has to do with my own inexperience as an inquirer. While having taught art for eight years, scholarly inquiry is new territory.

The overall quality of the data is bound by my own expressive ability as a writer and photographer. Not having any experience as a writer or researcher limits my own ability to produce rich data.

Limitations of Procedure

Limitations of Fieldnotes

Allport summarizes many criticisms of the use of personal documents as data. He cites such charges as it's subjectivity, validity, obtaining a representative sample, the mood of the writer, oversimplification, deliberate deception, and self justification. Some, according to Allport, have merit. Others are contingent upon how the materials are being used. The charge that the use of personal documents are "unscientific" is "question-begging and provincial." (p. 141).

Other more practical limitations, such as lack of time, focus, and the inexperience of the writer should also be noted. Limitations found by Yinger & Clark (1981) had to do with teachers' concerns for privacy, difficulty of writing about their ideas, or their overall uncomfortable feelings with writing were also cited. Yinger & Clark conclude that the journal is an imperfect instrument for learning about human thought. But, they say, the same can be said for any other research device. The danger of error is "small, while the promise of learning looms large."

Limitations of Snapshots

As with any data gathering technique, there are problems with using the camera in the classroom. Like writing a journal, it is the feeling of the researcher that the benefits outweigh the limitations.

Walker and Wiedel list several issues of concern with the use of photography in the classroom. Problems of "objectivity", of

of "access and confidentially", and of "political concerns" were all cited (1985 p. 91). These problems are similar to those of traditional research techniques.

While it has been found that the use of the camera can speed up rapport in a situation, the reverse is also true (Collier 1967). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest that researchers not use the camera initially in a project: "building trust could happen easier without a camera" (p. 108).

Technical problems could be cited as another problem for the researcher. Experience with the use of the camera and the use of newer "point and shoot" cameras quickly solve this problem.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fieldnotes as Data

Gordon Allport's (1942) book, The Use of Personal Documents

in Psychological Science lays the foundation for studies such as

this one. By Allport's definition, the "fieldnotes" to which I

am referring, fall under the label personal document. The personal

document, says Allport, is:

> any self-revealing record that intentionally or
> unintentionally yields information regarding the
> structure, dynamics, and functioning of the author's
> mental life. It may record the participant's view of
> experiences in which he has been involved... As a
> personal document is usually, though not always, produced
> spontaneously, recorded by the subject himself, and
> intended only for confidential use. It's themes naturally
> revolve around the life of the writer, it's manner of
> approach is naturally subjective. (p. xiii)

Allport identifies the purposes, forms and values of personal

documents. The form of personal document that relates most to mine

is that of the diary. The diary, in it's ideal form, "is unexcelled

as a continuous record of the subjective side of mental development."

(p. 95).

Tristine Rainer (1978) in her book, The New Diary, begins chapter

1 with a list of various people from various occupations and how they

jot down their ideas. She illustrates how they all, in some way,

write a journal that is reflective in form, resulting in a more complete understanding of themselves. Rainer claims that by: "reflecting upon what has come from within they discover unrecognized parts of their personalities and interests which they were unaware." (p. 17).

A comparison can be made with my note writing to those of the great anthropologist Margaret Mead. Margaret Mead was a tireless writer of notes about her observations in other cultures (1977). Mead immersed herself into the culture of others and wrote daily about her impressions. Her "letters from the field" were written for others to read and to gain insight from. She distinguished her letters from a diary as that of shared versus private information.

Artists are also known to write journals for reflection. A book by sculptor Ann Truitt entitled, Daybook, (1982) describes her struggle with life and art making. Truitt writes in her introduction how she got started:

> anguish overwhelmed me until, early one morning, and
> quite without emphasis, it occurred to me that I could
> simply record my life for one year and see what happened.
> (p. 4)

Two studies relating journal writing to education further support teachers writing about their work (Yinger & Clark 1981, 1985). The authors used teachers in the field to study their thinking and planning. While citing Allport heavily as justification for journal writing, an important verbal reflective component was added to their method. After teachers were inserviced on writing a "teacher journal", they were given time to try it out, and verbally reflect with other teachers about both method and findings. Having dialogue with other teachers helped the subjects come to conclusions

about the whole experience.

Other examples of teachers writing a journal or diary come from Armstrong (1981). Both authors sketch their own use of the diary in a self-inquiry with their students.

Armstrong writes about a student, Louise, and the painting of a landscape. While using excerpts from his diary and illustrative photographs, Armstrong tracked the growth of Louise's painting throughout the school year. Noting her use of color, subject, and her comments all gave him a more clear picture of her intellectual growth.

Enright's work allowed him to make the following conclusions about diary writing:

> I wrote the diaries while working full time in the
> classroom. I would argue that it is not necessary for a
> teacher to withdraw from teaching before carrying out
> useful research. Keeping the diaries forced me to look
> more closely at myself, the children, and our
> interaction. Further, the research enhanced my
> understanding of problem solving, handling discussions,
> and teacher participation (p. 51).

Snapshots as Data

The photography used in this study is best clarified by Berger (1980 pp. 50-52). Berger classifies photography as either "private" or "public". "The private photograph - the portrait of a mother, a picture of a daughter, a group photograph of one's own team - is appreciated and read in context which is continuous with that from which the camera removed it. The photograph is a momento from a life being lived." The public photograph, by contrast, "usually represents an event, a seized set of appearances, which has nothing

to do with us, it's readers, or with the original meaning of the event. It offers information, but information severed from all lived experiences." My snapshots are of the private sort as described by Berger. To me, these pictures are very personal and are the material of introspection.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1963) has also defended the use of photography in research. She considers photography a "form of note-taking in the field." She writes:

> Traditionally the anthropologist has been the single investigator equipped with notebook and pencil, and the bulk of his observations have depended upon his ability to write down what he saw. He could only put down a fragment of what occurred, he often lacked vocabulary for much that he saw, and his observations were inevitably screened through his own single perceptual system. The camera supplements and expands his note-taking in many ways. (p. 175)

John Collier, Jr. (1967) further discusses the use of the photograph in anthropological research. The camera, according to Collier, "is not a cure-all for our visual limitations, but as an extention of our perception" (p. 1). Other attributes of the camera as a research tool are: it is a sensitive tool for observation, it works without fatigue, it ensures complete notation, it's photographs are records of material reality, and these photographs can be analyzed by others (p. 5).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) separate photographs in qualitative research in two categories: "Those that others have taken and those that the researcher had a hand in producing."

The use of photography in the classroom can also be an instrument for rapport building (Collier 1967, Walker & Wiedel 1985, Bogdan & Biklen 1982). The camera was found to legitimize the purpose

of the researcher. Students are often camera-friendly and because

of it's wide-spread use in our society, they are often willing to

be part of the observation.

In an article entitled "Using Photographs in a Discipline of

Words", Walker and Wiedel (1985) plea for researchers to rethink

the role of film as a data source. Use of literary imagery "restricts

it's audience and it's impact by it's wordiness, by it's reliance

on narrow technical languages and consequentially by it's distance

from the worlds in which most people live, work, and act."

(p. 194). The authors describe their use of the researcher's

photographs in a secondary school study of students' use of time.

Their photographs were shown to both the teacher and students for

interpretation and analysis.

.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURE

The procedure for this study took place over two separate
periods of time. The first or "trial period" consisted of four
weeks of writing and taking snapshots of my classroom experiences.
The second or "final period" consisted of four weeks of writing
and picture taking with a more concentrated effort. The findings
are drawn from this period. This chapter summarizes both periods
and provides a description of my teaching situation.

Beginnings

Early inspirations for this project can be traced to the writings
of Christine Thompson (1987) and David Pariser (1981). Thompson
suggests the use of the journal as a means for student teachers
in art to critically reflect on their experience. Pariser's work,
by contrast, illustrates an experienced teacher's use of his log
to compare his art teaching style to others.

Thompson feels that art can be "taught authentically only by
those whose personal being and understanding of the project of art
are fully realized." This can be accomplished by "encouraging
student teachers to reflect upon the meaning of their personal
and professional involvements." The journal, she suggests, "is

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the essential element of this reflective approach to teacher learning."
(p. 14). She concludes that the journal is a "path traced over
time; it allows students to chart the course of their journey."
The journal also allows for "the possibility of reviewing the journey
- literally, of seeing it again, from a more panoramic perspective."
(p. 33).

David Pariser's work, entitled "Linier Lessons in a Centrifugal
Environment: An Ethnographic Sketch of an Art Teaching Experience",
describes his experience as an elementary art teacher based on a
log he kept for two years. While looking back at his entries,
Pariser described how he functioned in the classroom, how he set
up his classroom environment and how he presented his lessons.
He also discussed the contrast between instructional processes and
the environment. Finally, he compared his style of teaching to
the notion of the "school arts style."

Pariser's work is a "case in point" which further supports
the purpose and problem of this study. he demonstrates how the
log can be effectively used to look back and to discover new meanings.

The work of these two art educators provided a basis for me
to begin my own journal. Early questions I posed for myself were:
Would a journal provide information for me to learn more about what
and how I teach? Would writing a journal provide anything I didn't
already know? Would my own lack of experience as a writer hinder
my quest? And, would it be a practical device for teachers such
as myself? This study is largely a report responding to those questions.

My Art Teaching Situation

The City

The city where I live and work is located in mid-Michigan. Having a population of about 6,000 people, it is considered small by many standards. It is a "bedroom community" as most of it's residents commute to and from work. There is very little industry, thus, most of it's businesses are service oriented. It has a quaint downtown district where antiques, crafts, and other consumer goods are sold. The city is located close to expressways and other larger cities resulting in much mobility for it's residents. While the city itself is small, it's school population is large enough to support three elementary schools, one middle school, and a high school. There is some growth in the area as people working in cities are choosing the area to build their homes. Art, music, and physical education are all offered for it's elementary students for one hour per week. There is genuine support for "specials", as they are called, which has resulted in one art teacher assigned to each elementary school. I am one of those teachers.

The School

My school, which is the largest and newest of three elementary schools, houses about 700 students. It is well maintained, clean, and modern. It has 22 regular classrooms, grades K through 6, 3 special education rooms, 1 music classroom, 1 art classroom, a gym, 2 cafeterias, offices, lounges, and a central media center and library. The school is located on 10 acres set well off a busy road with

a large playground and yard. There is very little natural lighting as each classroom only has two windows. Each classroom is hexagon shaped and adjoined to an adjacent classroom by a small "project room", used mostly for tutoring and testing. Most students are bussed from rural areas with very few walkers. The halls are lined with hanging strips which I use to continuously display art works.

The Day

The day begins for students at 8:40 am and runs until 3:20 pm. During the day, students are taught all academic subjects, have one special, recess, lunch, and special sessions with others, such as speech teachers, counselors, psychologists, special education teachers, and tutoring aides. The students are very busy, and much coming and going is necessary.

The Classroom

My room, which is identical to all of the others, is situated in the upper elementary wing and is adjoined by the music room. There is a motorized heavy curtain dividing our two rooms. The art room is equipped with furniture, such as large tables, chairs, a teacher's desk, and the like. Other equipment is limited to a drying rack, paper cutter, and waste barrels for clay. The room has the appearance of an art setting, with paintings, drawings, and sculptures everywhere. Boxes, newspapers, magazines, and other useable items are tucked wherever there is room. Brightly colored cans full of drawing materials, such as oil pastels, colored pencils, and chalks are neatly lined up on shelves. Art books, magazines,

and posters lie on the teacher's desk. There are two low sinks
with plenty of paper towels and soap for students. Except for making
very large paintings, there is ample room for the students and their
art. The kiln is located in the furnace room.

The Students

I work with students in grades 1 through 6, plus, I act as
a consultant to our kindergarten teachers. Students have art with
me one hour per week. I consider this to be a good amount of time
compared to many situations. The students come from mostly white
working class homes. There is a one percent minority level consisting
of blacks, hispanics, and asians. There are very few behavior
problems in our school. From my perspective, there is a feeling
of good will toward the students. The staff is quite student conscious
and it shows by enthusiastic student behavior. The students are,
for the most part, very excited about doing art and are almost always
openly proud of their products.

The Role of the Art Teacher

My primary responsibility as an elementary art teacher is to
set up conditions for quality art experiences to take place. By
conditions, I am referring to the planning, motivating, and implementing
art experiences for my students. These experiences consist of painting,
drawing, sculpture, pottery, and printmaking. Occasionally, I show
slides of art works but there is no other purpose than exposure.
I recognize that more happens in the art classroom than just art
making. Such things as student dialogue, student to student interaction,

home concerns, other school concerns, all play a role in the outcome
of the experience. I view the art classroom as a special place
for students. A place unlike anything else at school. A place
where it is okay to draw, paint, and work in clay. A place that
is not threatening. A place to be an artist.

The Trial Period

Knowing that teachers could effectively use a journal as an
aid to professional development, I set out to write a journal for
myself. I had no notion of possible outcomes or findings. What
follows are descriptions of early attempts at gathering data.

My first attempt at writing a journal was characterized by
writing down, in detail, as much as I could (see appendix A). I
used a school computer and word processing software, thinking it
would speed up the process of writing. The goal to write about
the whole day was soon found to be unrealistic and time consuming.
The use of the computer was equally cumbersome in that I was restricted
to writing at school. Meetings, after-school classes, and personal
committments made the computer a restrictive devise and, thus, led
me to my second attempt.

My second attempt at writing was characterized by using a form
I made for everyday of the week (see appendix B). It was my goal
to write something about every hour of my day. This, too, resulted
in unrealistic goals. Sometimes, especially on very busy days,
I couldn't remember any of the specifics of my day. When recall
became a reoccuring problem, I began what I call a "cue word" technique.

Meaning, as something struck me as interesting, I would write down

a word in my journal that would "cue" my memory for later reflection.

Still not being satisfied with the amount, type, and quality of

my fieldnotes, I searched for additional kinds of reflective data.

The use of photographs entered this study as a result of that search.

The interest in the use of photographs led me to review literature

supporting photographs as data. My third attempt at gathering

data included the use of the camera for creating data (see appendix

c). The use of the camera proved to be a quick and easy method

for memory recall and reflection. Having just finished a yearbook

project with my students, they were already used to me using a

camera in the room and no problems were encountered.

The Final Period

Having experienced journal writing and picture taking, I began

a four week data gathering period (see appendices D and E). As

a result of the trial period experience, the following characteristics

about the final period can be listed:

1.) No effort was made to record all of my day.

2.) A "cue word" technique was used for memory recall.

3.) No changes were made in my planning because of my

data gathering.

4.) The use of snapshots were viewed equally

important as my fieldnotes.

5.) I wrote and took pictures everyday.

6.) No attempt was made at drawing conclusions or interpreting events prior to analysis.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The findings of this study reflect analysis of patterns collected
from reviewing my journal and photographs.

Presentation of Written Data

The patterns found in my fieldnotes are presented in sections
with excerpts, and reflective comments about their impact on my
teaching.

Concerns for Individual Students

One pattern found in my journal was my concern with individual
students. The following excerpts from my fieldnotes demonstrate
this pattern:

> Scooter - a jock of sorts for a fourth grader always has
> a problem with art. 'Can I do something else Mr. I? Or
> something like that.

> David is really an 'I don't care' person. Three boys
> were followers of David, all of them are not "into" art.

> Gordon - This is a big kid who has dropped from being in
> Junior High to elementary school. We went on a "look"
> walk and looked at the school - then went inside to draw
> what they had remembered - He said "I don't remember
> anything." I said "You don't remember the school?"
> "No" he said "I hate school." I said "draw the school
> you hate, but draw!" - He wrote in large cursive letters

"I HATE SCHOOL!" At least he did something. Later he came
to me and showed a photo of Reagen done in latex and clay.
He said I can do that and I encouraged him to talk with
me about it the next Wed. We have a deal, good behavior
for clay materials. I may have found an outlet for
him... We'll see.

David every week seems very unmotivated towards getting
things done. As much ability as he has, it's very
difficult to motivate him... Instead of using his pastel
to draw the dandelion, he used a real one.

Mark - Some classes have one of those kids who just don't
show up. But he has astounded me with his drawings! He
focuses so much on his work that I feel that I missed
him, I missed his interest. I wonder how many others I
have missed.

BACK TO DAVID - David thinks he is bad. He thinks that
toughness is really BAD. So I called him BAD today. I
kept asking him if he is really BAD. I wanted to put him
in his place so to speak.

Gordon - It's been quite awhile since I wrote about
Gordon. He is really doing better. He is my assistant
for the plaster project. He worked hard today.

I am most concerned about the many students I do not know well.

Because of the large numbers of students I work with each week it

is very difficult to have an impact on all of them. But no matter

how many students I have, I still want to provide good art experiences

for them. Working toward developing new methods for knowing my

students is a cause worth pursuing. While noting individual students,

I also learned that there are many students whom do not get my full

attention.

The tracking of individual students growth and change is a

good reason for writing a journal. For example, Gordon started

out with problems, he is now doing very well in our school and great

in the art classroom. Realizing that some students need time to

adjust to a new home and to school changes is important. The journal

helped me understand this.

I also found that a student's ability or interest in art holds a low priority in my dealings with them. Making the subject of art more important than my relationship with them is not my style. An interest in art will come with an accepting art teacher. Gordon worked more as my assistant than he did making art; initially. Later he went on to building great clay figures and making tree drawings. This is not to say teachers who do not write about individual students cannot understand them; documenting experiences could help though.

Concerns With Planning

Concerns for planning also appeared throughout my notes. The following excerpts illustrate this:

> I thought this part of the project would only last them a short while, but it took them much longer.

> It seems the more "things" there are to do in a class, the worse the turnout is. Meaning, to stop a class from the motion to "learn something new" or to change the assignment is a real task.

> Did the "finger painting" again with the 6th graders and had a problem keeping them at it. 6 boys decided not to use their fingers and instead decided to use their whole hands. I discussed how many current artists used their hands when painting, but to them it was just a joke.

> Started the day with a real flop. I had some yellows and reds laying around with which I encouraged a class to paint "HOT" paintings. They didn't care at all for doing paintings that were hot.

> Outside again - outside means only doing so-so art. Thinking that most kids would really get into being outdoors and all, but after about 30 minutes, they were ready to play. I think they equate outside with recess and not art. It was hard to fight. "Mr. I, can I go out to swing?"

> Worked with second graders and while I had something else
> planned for both my classes due to an assembly, I decided
> to make large animal group paintings. What a huge success!

It is these kinds of excerpts that lead me to think about the role of planning and the outcomes. I strive to plan out everything thinking that the more planned I am, the less of a chance for a bad experience they'll have. I learned that I have to be flexible and allow room for the kids to make changes in the experience. For example, I felt that the kids would really get involved in drawing enlarged versions of weeds, huge weeds, with any color application they needed. The project worked fairly well for awhile, but soon it was time to "be" outside and play. To make art outside as if it were an outdoor classroom didn't work. It would have been far better to go outside for awhile, 30 minutes or so, and then go inside into the classroom to finish. The lesson here is that planning only works for part of the experience, the elements of student interest and change must be encouraged.

Concerns About Classroom Behavior

Another pattern found in my fieldnotes had to do with my concern for classroom behavior. Examples of those kinds of excerpts are as follows:

> LOUD is the word for this class every week. Too loud to
> believe, always. Every week these kids come in here so
> chaotic, so wild that it's hard to do anything. It's a real
> bad feeling when I lose all control or feel like I do...
> More next week.

> I work with this class only once a week and every week
> there are problems. They come tearing the place apart.
> Fighting about where to sit, who said what and the like.
> It's a real battle, just to calm them down enough to
> get anything done. I find myself not wanting to have any

contact with them or deal with them as little as
possible. I don't even want to deal with the problem. I
continuously want to blame the teacher for their bad
behavior. It's a kind of amateur feeling that it is her
approach to dealing with the kids in that she gives them
no freedom and when they come to art they let loose.

I wish I never yelled, never not made contact, never not
anything. This is a wish list - a hope for something
great - to be a great teacher. Somewhere I hope to vent
my frustrations. So I do. I yell. But, I always feel bad.

Having the journal allowed me to write down, in an emotionally

filled way, my worst days. Rereading my notes allowed me to relieve

specific tactics I tried with various groups. For example, my journal

tells me that yelling does not work. Yelling only adds to my own

frustration. Though I don't yell a lot, it is still too much.

Knowing that I raise my voice will, hopefully, help me develop new

ways of dealing with large groups.

Concerns About Motivating Students

Other excerpts were found having to do with how I motivated

students for an art experience. Examples are as follows:

To motivate, I keep thinking that I need to get them over
their worst feelings of not being able to do it. I use
collage techniques because anyone can cut out pictures.
This seems to be a real motivator for those not into art.

I told each of them to do three separate drawings,
paintings. 1.) To mow a lawn and feel real hot. 2.)
To have to pick stones out of dirt in a field. 3.) To
take a yard. I hoped all would have something to relate
to in their own art. Well, the paintings turned out to be
not so good - Art was not their thing.

Acting like birds. Class walked in and I told them they
were all nothing but a bunch of birds - DIRTY BIRDS! I
said - BIRDS - no good birds! This was my motivation...
my goal. We went outside and acted like birds. Acted
like we were flying, short, tall, fat, singing, unusual
weird birds, etc.

I get this notion the only thing students need to do is
paint. No real motivation is needed. To "get" them to
paint or draw is really not hard. So, today I decided to
allow them to draw and paint.

I said "let's not make whimpy weeds". I really said it
loud so the kids really knew I wanted bold weeds.

We all sat around eating for awhile. Then we drew their
favorite meal on the paper plate. Of course that was my
motivation. We had a lot of fun. They really got into it.

I found that I never planned my motivation. I never went through

the motions before the students were with me. Though I viewed motivating

as critical to the outcome of experience, it was not a prepared

activity.

Those excerpts helped me develop a new understanding of what

motivation really is. Clearly, the best motivation came out of

the students own need to create. Motivation is not, should not,

only be an activity that I set up for the student.

Further work on how I motivate my students is needed. Through

writing about motivation or possibly focusing only on motivation

I might be able to find out more accurately what works and what

does not. In addition, through self-evaluating my motivational

techniques, I might be able to begin to understand why I require

my students to do certain activites, while not touching others.

Personal Concerns About My Own Teaching Attitudes

Occasionally, I would write about my own frustrations in coping

with being a teacher.

The whole day has been tempered by the loss of one of our
first graders. A "runaway" car rolled back on top of
him. He died quickly. And it cast a dark shadow over my
day. He was a really great kid and it does not make any
sense at all to me. This was a student whom I only say
once a week, but I liked him so. So, art is for the

living. I think it is hard for me because he was so much
like my daughter and it reminds me how fragile life is.
He was very articulate, quiet and shy. BUT A GOOD ONE.

PERSONAL There are some days when things are really
crazy. so much... Working with the kids of center
pieces. Working on framing. Interruptions for various
materials. Teachers not caring. Teachers always
borrowing.

I feel I should be all prepared for them. All ready to
"knock them dead" and ready to hook them into art. But
I'm not that type. I'm not the type to jump for joy, to
always be "Johnny Carson, I can't do it; I don't have the
energy.

Sometimes as "things to do build up so does my tendency
to tune out. To set the projects up so that the kids can
"do them on their own" and I can go about my business.
These kinds of lessons are not very good and almost
always lead to problems. I feel kind of guilty about
this. Kind of like I'm not doing my job.

These kinds of excerpts demonstrate how the use of the journal

can be used for therapeutic purposes. Simply, to write down feelings

I had was self-revealing and reflective. A separate part of a journal

could be created for these kinds of feelings about teaching or this

could be the bulk of one's writing.

Presentation of Visual Data

The many variables in my classroom are further illustrated

by the pictures I took during the data gathering period.

The purpose of this section is to describe important patterns

found in my snapshots. The data is presented by providing

a title, photographs, and reflective comments about their impact

on my teaching.

<u>Time to Draw</u>   (See figures 1-4)

The kind of pictures I most often took were of students drawing, usually on the floor. These pictures hold significance for me in that they show a successful art activity. They are especially noteworthy because these were not planned experiences. When students finished their regular projects, they were free to go to a roll of newsprint paper I received from a local newspaper company and cut any size paper they wanted. Not having enough room to draw on the tables, they would then go anywhere in the room they wished to draw. No mention of type and style of drawing they could make was given. This was called "free drawing" and usually was a much better project than what I had planned for the students. I felt very good about my students taking paper and drawing at their own will. This confirms for me the idea that given an opportunity, students will draw naturally. There was something very wonderful about seeing students all over the place drawing. They also drew very often with a friend showing some kind of war scene or design or whatever. The content of the art was not very important to me, the fact that they drew was all that really mattered. To me this sort of activity fulfills, in part, what my basic beliefs about what art teaching should be: To set up conditions for creative experiences using visual materials. My students felt good enough to draw freely without major concerns about my approval or notions of "good" drawings. The students were so busy with their drawings that they very rarely knew I took their picture. Looking back, I know now that I must always have rolls of paper for them to use at their will.
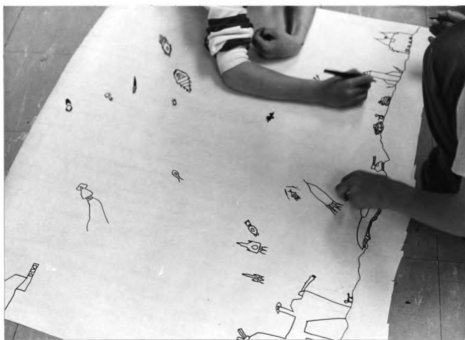
Figure 1. Students drawing.
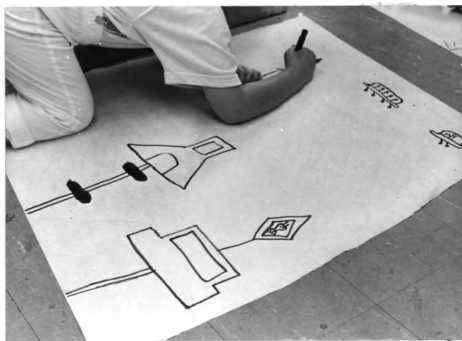
Figure 2. A student drawing.

Figure 3. A student drawing.

Figure 4. A student drawing.

Non Art Making Art Experiences (See figures 5-6)

Students often think, for good reason, that going to art class means making art. Occasionally, I have them do other kinds of non art making activities. For example, figure 5, illustrates a group of 5th grade boys sorting through old National Geographic magazines for pictures of art or pictures of people making art. I began the activity by asking the students to do me a favor. I gave them the choice between drawing portraits or cutting pictures for me. Nobody wanted to draw. I showed them some examples of each type and off they went. They were very busy going through the pages one by one looking for art. It was very fun to answer their questions as to what was art and what was not. Many students would ask me, for example, if a scientist was an artist and we would proceed to have a discussion as to what was an artist. In the end, I left it up to the student if the person was an artist or not. I learned much from this non art making activity and will have to include more of them in my teaching.

Figure 6 illustrates the recycling barrel I keep in the art room for scrap clay. This corner of the room receives much attention during the mixing phase prior to summer break. Each year in the spring I add water to clay scraps we have been saving all year. As the clay gets broken down into slip, the more fascinated kids become. There is a natural curiosity to know what it is. Even though they have worked in clay all year, they are not exactly sure where it came from other than the box. Every child, sooner or later, gets a chance to mix it. And in the fall, some lucky students get to dig it out. The clay barrel acts as a stimulus for students to learn about a basic art making material.

Figure 5. Students cutting out art pictures.

Figure 6. Students recycling clay.

Building (See figure 7)

This is an important picture in that it shows me how important it is for students to build. Provide some scrap materials, paint, and glue, and the kids become great builders. Even more importantly, this picture illustrates a decision on the part of the students to build. They asked, "Mr. I., can we use some of that stuff you have in the project room?" At first I said "no" and we would talk about it the following week. It came to be weeks later when the students reminded me that we didn't build rockets and "stuff". I finally said OK and we did. It turns out that we were building for the next three weeks, and how busy they were. I should listen to them more often.

Experience Versus Product (See figures 8-9)

These photographs bring to mind the issue of what should be the focus of an art program: The experiences the students have or the product. Usually I focus on the experiences, thus allowing all the students to benefit from the activity. Usually I don't care very much as to whether or not the products even get home, but for this project it was my goal for them to have a permanent large standing figure sculpture that required many weeks of work and heavy permanent materials. It was my thinking that these students needed to get into something really big and involved. The technical problems were so huge that the end product in most cases never was completed. There is an irony here in that it was my goal for each of my 93 sixth graders to have a permanent sculpture. It did not work, for many reasons, mostly my own lack of trying it out. After

Figure 7. A student building a rocket.

Figure 8. Students outside making sculptures.

Figure 9. Students inside making sculptures.

running out of time and materials I told the kids that they would
have to finish it at home and gave them instructions. For me, the
project was a flop. For the students, I think they had a real good
experience. This project represents to me that not all of my projects
are going to turn out according to my plans, but it may not be a
waste. Only a few of the students didn't take theirs home, they
loved it.

Quiet Time   (See figure 10)

Sometimes when things get too out of hand, I'll have my younger
students put their heads down. "All right! Heads down, I don't
want to see any eyes, bury your faces!" Seeing a picture of a table
full of kids with their heads down tells me that something I'm doing
is wrong. Most students are used to doing this in their regular
classroom and I have yet to become clever enough for new methods.

Social Interactions   (See figure 11)

I can't forget that more goes on in the classroom than to make
and learn about art. Secrets must be told first. I snapped this
picture of three girls telling secrets right in front of my desk.
They caught me by hearing the click of the camera. I said, "back
to work girls", they smiled and off they went. For some reason
it does not bother me that social interactions go on in the classroom.
After all, art needs to be some place different. As long as I am
able to talk with the kids as a group, it's OK. School is a
social place; art is a social activity in schools.

Figure 10. Students with heads down.

Figure 11. Three girls telling secrets.

<u>Group Projects</u>   (See figures 12-13)

    Group projects sometimes work out and sometimes they don't. Some ages, like upper elementary students, have very few problems working together; while others, like lower elementary students, have many problems. The two boys working on the scenery for a play are getting along very well, which is why I took their picture. Knowing the two students, it's hard for me to believe that they are getting along so well. Normally in a group project, they have many problems. I've never seen the boy on the right work so hard as he did on that day. It must be the size of the project or the pressure to get it done, but he worked really hard, cleaned up and everything! The fish painting also was a success. There was actually no planning. They just came in and I said, "you guys are going to do a fish, you guys are going to do a bird, and you guys are going to do a lizard." And they did it! Sometimes group projects don't work out at all. When that happens, we stop the project and move on. I'm still not sure why kids naturally fight when they work together. Maybe working in groups isn't so great. Or is it?

Figure 12. Students making a scene for a play.

Figure 13. Students making a fish painting.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The central activity of this study has been to write fieldnotes
and take snapshots about my teaching day. Through documentation,
I have been able to gain new understandings into my own teaching.
The purpose has been to become a better, more insightful, art teacher.
Through implementation of two methods of data gathering, I have
provided a case study of a teacher's attempt to use self-provided
feedback and self-evaluation. It is my position, as a result of
this study, that documenting one's own teaching experience "can"
provide a basis for growth as a teacher.

The findings of this study represent new understandings into
my own teaching. Though varied, the findings are all important
as they pertain to my own teaching situation. Any single aspect
of the findings could be carried further in two possible ways.
First, to make direct changes in my own teaching, and second,
to continue further inquiry as a teacher-researcher.

Conclusions can be drawn from two separate components of this
study. One, the effective use of my data as a basis for greater
understanding and two, the importance of the findings discovered.

The most difficult aspect of this study has to do with
incorporating data collecting along with my teaching. Fitting in

in time to write about my day along with a busy teaching schedule

has been a challenge. Initially, I felt this would not be a problem;

I discovered differently. Through attempting to collect the data,

I found that my day was far too complex to document completely.

Any small happening could easily occupy my time completely. Often

my writing lacked focus as a result of this complexity and the

resulting data was a mixture of ideas. Upon reflection, I feel

that I could have produced richer, more detailed, information had

I chosen to focus on a single aspect of my teaching. For example,

if I wanted to learn more about my motivational techniques, I could

have written, with great detail, only about it.

It was also found that writing is an acquired skill. Not having

any significant skill or experience in writing resulted in data

of a lesser quality. Writing was found to be inhibiting and difficult.

While my thinking and ideas flowed freely, when I sat down to write,

much was lost. Through training and practice, I might have been

able to gain greater confidence. A possible alternative might have

been the use of a tape recorder to dictate my ideas more quickly.

Taking pictures during the day was much easier for me than

writing. The greatest benefit of picture taking was it's

capability to create a visual record. My snapshots aided in memory

recall and usually focused on activities that I felt good about.

I found that the students were especially responsive to my

picture taking, often wondering why I was doing that. This activity

included them in my data collection and created a positive rapport.

I was honest with them and told them that I was trying to learn

about my teaching. A step further might be to include them in the

analysis of the photographs along with interviewing them.

The quickness of taking a snapshot also deserves noting. While the writing proved to be cumbersome and time consuming for me to do, I was able to take the picture immediately during the art experience with no stopping the action. Technically, I might use a "point and shoot" camera which requires even less time to use.

The use of my notes and snapshots both served different and useful purposes. The notes tended to be introspective and usually reflective of individual students; the snapshots usually had to do with the project at hand. Coupled together, they proved to be useful for me to learn new aspects of my teaching.

This study is as much about it's method as it is about it's findings. The findings of this study are reflective of the complexity of my teaching day. It was important to find that the most reoccurring finding was my concern for specific students. For me, this signifies that the student still comes before the subject or content of the class. Very little of my data was reflective of the experience itself.

It is recognized, through data analysis, that the bulk of my written data had to do with "my" effectiveness as a teacher. It is felt that continued documentation might result in a prioritizing of the reasons for doing what I do. This has to do with the very root meaning for including art experiences in schools. This would be very worthwhile for me to pursue. If continued documentation were coupled with scholarly research about these root meanings, I expect my personal philosophies would become clear.

I consider this study to be the beginnings of future documentation. It is my goal to continue this process over years in an effort of continued self-improvement. Though this study has limitations, it is felt that practice and implementation of these methods would produce a collection of insightful information.

Implications for Further Study

The method of this study could be further expanded by a cooperative project involving many other art teachers. The combined findings of these teachers might be a powerful voice for change in the field.

Further refinement of a model to be used by interested others is also necessary. While findings will differ, professional growth might occur as a result. A narrowing of focus because of individual findings might also be an extension of this study. Any single aspect of one's own teaching is worthy of deeper inquiry.

Finally, it is felt that using the method of this study might help bridge theory to practice. Further sharing of insights with scholars would improve the practice of art teaching.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

My first attempt at writing fieldnotes.

Monday. Feb. 29. 1988
Today went very quickly and hectically. Every hour was different and continual. Only had one hour for a break and that turned out to be mostly used on hanging large paintings and in a meeting about a small yearbook project. This bothers me in that I would like to spend more time planning and organizing. It also bothers me when projects no matter how good are so involved that hey take away from my time with them. The description of the project was to paint large faces, first in black and with colors. The kids were very excited about doing such work and got right in to it. 15 pots of color including gold and silver comprised of the painting. I noticed when I gave a demonstration showing the fae not to touch the edges that is what they did. But when I painted a face that went off the edges they also did that. It reminds me how conditioned they are to authority. Got to do it right...

It is also worthy to note how impressed everybody is by how these paintings look in the hall. Very bright and very large. People say to me good job and I say thanks, but I really did not do it, they did it and they are good. I think a part of there excitement about the painting was that there were not any rules other than large faces. The black edging was my idea and thus it is idea of goodn art. But with all the motion I really didn't have any time to focus on any one childs art.

I think also that I had something going on different every hour and thus the pure physicalness of the media kind of overpowers me andn keeps me from interacting with the kids. I know how good it feels to be praised and it should be a goal of mine to touch every kid every day. Good feelings are just that, feelings that make one feel good. And it is a give and take.

Another incident today was when I was giving a demonstration about how to draw fancy snakes. Kids like snakes and I felt it was a good project to get them going on patterning and the textureal qualities of things. Both in terms of design and in terms of texture. But what bothered me was that some just did't have the patience to hear me through and they right away wanted to get at it before I talked through the whole thing. This made me very upset and I told them so. I just didn't understand why they could not wait. I feel it was very effective and they knew I was hurt. I said I was sorry for my anger and I didn't like the fact that I lost my cool. They understood and the rest of the hour went very well. I did make sure that I sat at there tables and talked with them. Many kids wont't look at me right in the face. But that is another story.

APPENDIX B

My second attempt at writing fieldnotes.

TUESDAY   WEEK 1

HNILICA 4TH. sitting down. Entering the classroom for these kids is really amazing. Deciding where to sit or who to sit next to is indeed a decision to make. I got really tired of that as I want to get down to business. Then I did this astty thing showing them how silly I felt it was to worry about where to sit. The kids even gave me a round of applause for my acting. Did part 1) A fourth grader who knows how to sit down. 2) a fourth grader who does not. 3) A fourth grader who knows how to come into a room, 2) one who does not. They were so surprised that they really listened, will next week, will see. We worked in clay. and went really well.

PLANTS 6TH. major big deal . . . mess. [started working on a "semi-realistic standing figure sculpture" consisting of wire, wood, burlap + plaster. all built up on the wire armature. The sculpture is all hanging to its head fell. This is a major big deal and is a mess. This is also a long term project which requires 5 weeks to do. Several concepts here - that doing major big time projects are good. - wrote the argument less is more. that doing the figure in motion and that doing a built up project is as well good. Last week Danny (6th grader with learning problems) really took to the wire, where other kids had trouble with wire. Danny did not. I more or less let them go and decided to allow the sculpture to grow. By building it up. Danny was uneasy was not real crazy about the mess and slowed down a lot. He also helped other students for me. I really like him

* More about Danny. I also worked with Danny in Math Tutory. He prided himself for knowing his long division. I gave him some problems and he did them. They were very large problems. Later, he came back, with problems completed. The kid can move with his hands and may be an artist. Can't draw alike but he is good.

PARSONS 1ST. process showing - Decided to stain with magic markers not paint. Discussed the difference. that stain goes in the clay surface and paint lays on top. After staining with paint we then rinsed them with water and used a toothbrush. The kids were very excited about having their work to take home. (which ends a lot of talk I have heard that kids don't care much about product. I feel they do and want to show their things off. The product, then is part of what they do and it goes home. (I think more than the older kids.)

RYBICKI 3RD. - Matt · Beck · Busy Stained thin-made I can't get over the quality of these mask faces and how detailed some of them are.

I told matt that he should overstain his mask with thin, watered down black over his purple, magenta mini mask. He did and was very disappointed with the results. I felt very bad and said I was sorry. He is by far one of the most talented 3rd graders I have. He did it for me, and while most wouldn't even understand thin black as a stain He did and was disappointed.

APPENDIX C

My first attempt at taking snapshots.

APPENDIX D

An example of fieldnotes from final period.

Lecture List.

Thursday.   4-14-88
Memory, Field Trip, house walk
Writing, Sesame Street, Room

* Demo from memory with 6th grade students on a "look work" again. This was a real bomb as soon as moment outside minds scattered, why do this?

* Talked with a Teacher for quite a while about our field trip coming up at the Detroit Inst of Arts. She had some concerns about her parents going as they are "as bad as the kids." She was referring to the notion that her kids have parents as bad as her students. She was real excited though. The design of the Trip is such that I'm talking about 50 to 60 Students to the Museum all Special Ed. kids – now I'm really excited about this. Those kids are most interested in viewing art. I feel it's not real important to talk about the art in any official way just view the stuff – take it in.

* Asked some students to (6th grade) to write three paragraphs about their artwork of which the chose the best one. The reaction to writing in art class was really surprising. The first paragraph was about a Description, the second why they choose it to be the best and Thirdly – what they would have done to improve it. ———→

APPENDIX E

An example of a snapshot from final period.

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