

mentor's introduction

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artistry is first and foremost an activity of the mind
Howard Gardner, 1983

Edward was hired to teach art at David H. Hickman High School in Columbia, Missouri in 1985. One of his primary assignments was to re-design a two hour advanced studio art class into an Advanced Placement art class. During the past thirteen years it became apparent to him that the students in this class have been for the most part above average in artistic ability but also above average in academic ability. This observation served as the stimulus for his interest in the profile of the talented student and the focus of his graduate studies. Readings on gifted and talented, such as those by Clark and Zimmerman, confirmed what he had been observing about these very bright and very talented young people.

In the late 80s and early 90s the education community became interested in critical thinking. As a result, efforts were exerted to consider the extent that critical thinking existed in the present curriculum and the feasibility of increasing and strengthening the critical thinking of the students. Art educators realized that they were indeed involving their students in the process of critical thinking such as writing about art through aesthetics, art criticism and art history. It became apparent that students involved in problem finding and problem solving in the studio areas were also engaging in critical thinking activities.

A question arose whether there was any transference or overlap between critical thinking in general and the critical thinking used when students are engaged in studio activities. A number of studies asserted a rise in achievement in academic areas such as reading, math and science, in the presence of good fine arts programs. Edward became interested as to whether or not critical thinking might be a factor. This then became the focus of Edward's study to consider critical thinking as a predictor of drawing ability.