

2011 Joe Koons Memorial Scholarship Recipient

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I have the somewhat enviable problem of being a full time ceramics teacher. I have a passion for clay, so I feel fortunate to have such an amazing teaching assignment. However, teaching ceramics has its own specialized set of challenges: you must simultaneously manage space, time, materials, tools, clean-up, chemicals and creativity. That being said, this year's conference with Clay Strand in Bakersfield was my favorite.

Our Clay Strand day started in Yvonne Cavanagh's classroom at Bakersfield High School. One of the most valuable parts of the Clay Strand was seeing how a fellow teacher sets up her ceramic classroom. We all enjoyed wandering around, looking at the walls, equipment and organization of Yvonne's room. Throughout the day we learned to make pinch pot sea creatures, inspired cupcakes, textured slab hangings and wheel-thrown face jugs. Each lesson was well thought out and deeply applicable. The conversations that emerged as we played with clay were charged with the energy of our shared passion. I collected just as many valuable bits of information from my fellow Clay Strand attendees as I did from our formal presenters. Amongst the buzz was the thought that a Clay Strand for next year's conference could be feasible. If so, sign me up! Simply put, the Clay Strand at the Bakersfield CAEA conference was the single most jam-packed, valuable day of professional development I've had since entering the teaching profession.

As the Joe Koons Memorial Scholarship recipient I feel incredibly lucky to have attended this year's conference. I'm already planning to present a workshop for Riverside so I can manage to go next year. Bring on the Clay Strand, Riverside style!