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Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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Research is to look again, to take a closer second look. One of the principal purposes of research is to undertake a careful examination of the 'facts' derived from conventional wisdom. The best researcher is the seeker of unconventional truths and refuter of conventional myths. The researcher looks again so that the familiar might become strange and the unknown familiar. The research provides us with new cognitive orientations so that our efforts to cope with our current predicaments might be, at best, enlightened, and at least less clumsy.

Our conventional wisdom tells us that many art teachers, especially high school art teachers, harbor secret desires to be artists -- that they are, in fact, failed artists who have chosen to teach because they were not good enough to make the grade as artists; they see themselves, at the very least as artist-teachers. These and other commonly held assumptions about the possible roles of art educators were the beliefs that Thomas Ritenbaugh investigated.

Thomas Ritenbaugh also combines the roles of the good researcher. He is the insightful framer of a problem, careful locator of sources, scrupulous synthesizer of social theory and the imaginative theoretician, meticulous collector and compiler of data, and the insightful explicator of findings. Through his research Ritenbaugh has impelled me to abandon my long-held conventional biases about art educators; he has led me to see the commitment of art teachers to their teaching through a new set of eyes -- eyes that still, when they turn inward, look for the artist in this teacher of art.