

# Looking to the Future of Art Education

Ken Vieth



It was not so long ago that people began discussing the workplace needs of the future and the readiness of our students to meet those demands. I believe that as artists/teachers we are in a position to positively influence and prepare our students for the needs of the twenty-first century.

The American workplace is still changing; yet we can anticipate some qualities that future employers will want. Most will look for people who are willing to collaborate and work in teams. They will want the individuals and teams they hire to be problem solvers and to show flexibility in dealing with others. They will want employees who are able to address

complex social issues, devise creative solutions, and imagine new worlds and possibilities.

## The Role of Artists/Teachers

Our opportunity to prepare students for their future is exciting. As artists/teachers, we can contribute significantly to this preparation by stressing the importance of visual problem solving, encouraging students' creative thinking, risk-taking, decision-making, and quality work, and involving them in cooperative projects. Our role as artists/teachers is one of strong

leadership, sharing that vision with our students, our colleagues, the administration, and the larger community.

**Our role as artists/teachers is one of strong leadership, sharing that vision with our students, our colleagues, the administration, and the larger community.**

For me, strong leadership is about:

- A passion for our subject, which inspires learning.
- The willingness to work hard to capture the imagination and engage our students' spirits.
- Celebrating the individual and his or her work.
- Showing that there are no limits to students' potential for personal expression.
- The ability to generate new ideas as we never outgrow our curiosity.

It is also my belief that as we continue to strengthen our work as artists, we can positively impact our ability to be better teachers. Our skills need to be honed and we need to be continually growing as artists. As teachers, we also need to stay abreast of the current thinking in our field. This can be done in many ways such as reading professional journals, attending state and national art education conferences, and discussing with our fellow art teachers our thoughts and ideas.

We need to continue to inspire the students we teach, but also each other. Our journey as artists/teachers is one of discovery and invention. As Robert Henri in *The Art Spirit* states: "We are not here to do what has already been done."

We need to have a vision that shares creativity and increased skill levels, and enthusiasm that celebrates the role we play in the field of art education. As the arts continue to struggle for validation in our public schools, we as artists/teachers need to be front-runners to make art a top priority. ☺

*Ken Vieth was an art teacher for thirty-three years and is a contributing editor for SchoolArts, the author of From Ordinary to Extraordinary and Engaging the Adolescent Mind, and co-author of The Visual Experience, all from Davis Publications.*