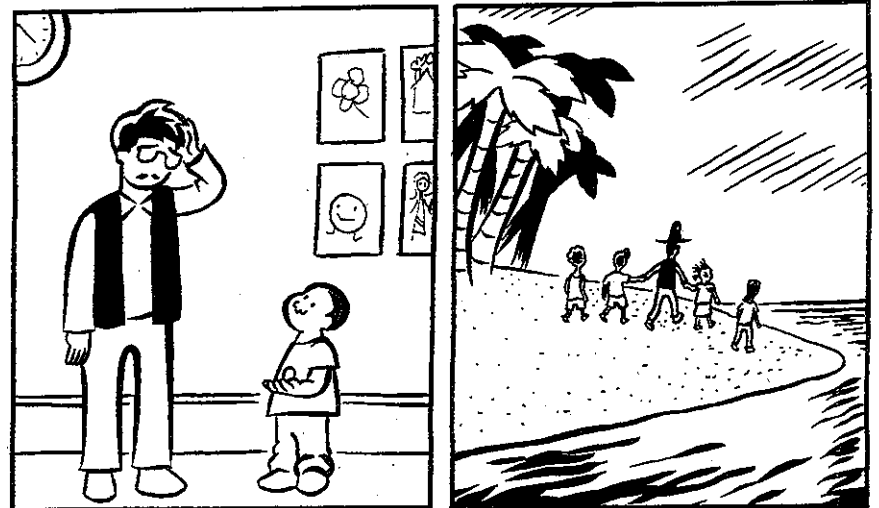


OPENING DAY: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

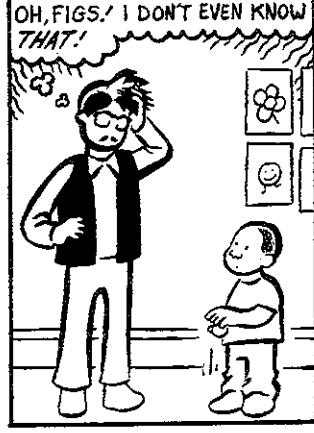
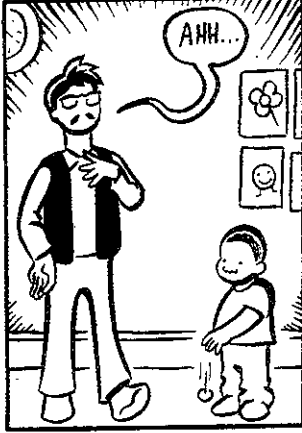
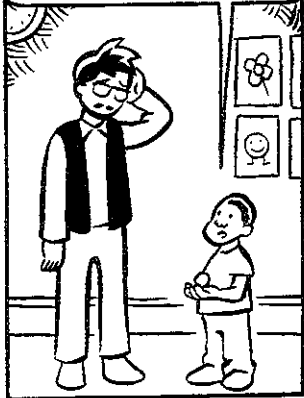
Ayers, William, Ryan Alexander-Tanner, Ilb. To Teach: The Journey, In Comics. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2010.

THE WORDS "TEACHING" AND "TEACHER" EVOKE IN ALMOST EVERYONE PARTICULAR MEMORIES AND IMAGES. FOR SOME, THESE MEMORIES ARE DULL, EVEN FEARFUL — THEY INCLUDE BOREDOM, ROUTINE, AND WORSE. FOR THOSE OF US WHO CONSTRUCT LIVES IN TEACHING, THESE IMAGES ARE NECESSARILY CHANGING AND GROWING, AND WHILE THEY ARE SOMETIMES VIVID AND CONCRETE, THEY CAN AS OFTEN BE CHARACTERIZED BY WONDER. IN EITHER CASE, IMAGES OF TEACHING CAN FILL US WITH AWE, AND WE CAN CHOOSE TO SEE WITHIN THEM AN ABIDING SENSE OF ADVENTURE AND CHALLENGE.



WHEN I BEGAN TEACHING—ON THE FIRST MORNING OF MY VERY FIRST KINDERGARTEN CLASS...

WHY DOES THE BALL BOUNCE?

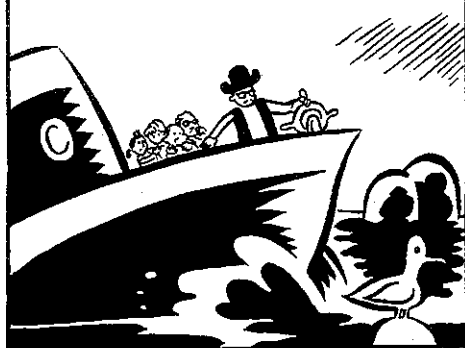


BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS STRUGGLING JUST TO KEEP MY HEAD ABOVE WATER.

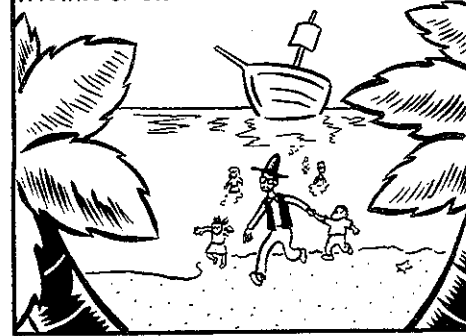


THIS WAS MY FIRST CRISIS. WHAT IS TEACHING, AND WHO IS A TEACHER?

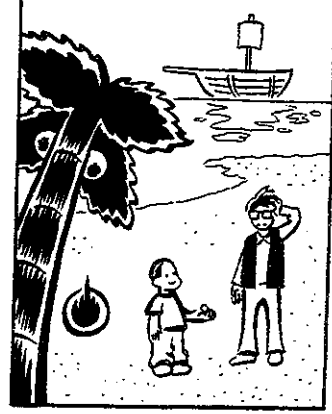
MUST THE TEACHER ALWAYS BE THE MASTER AND COMMANDER OF THE SHIP, POISED WITH COMPLETE CONFIDENCE, IN CHARGE AND IN CONTROL?



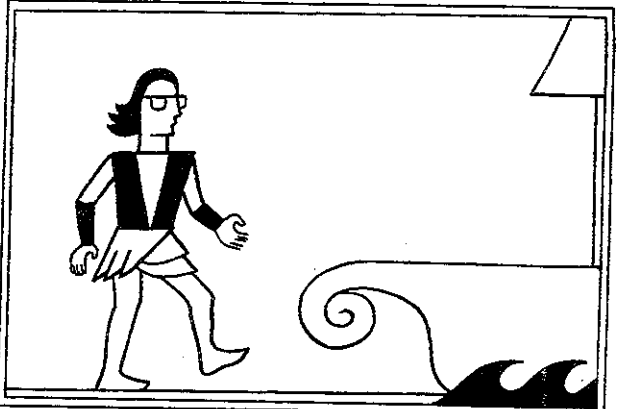
I BEGAN TO WONDER IF I MIGHT MORE HONESTLY AND MORE JOYFULLY THINK OF MYSELF AS AN EXPLORER ON A JOURNEY WITH MY STUDENTS, A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY AND SURPRISE.



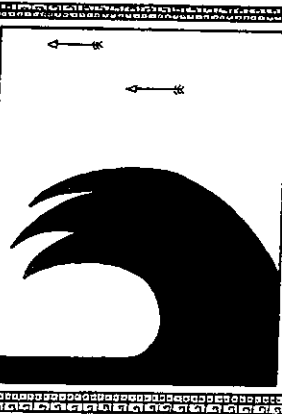
HOWEVER, THE EXPLORER APPROACH IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE.



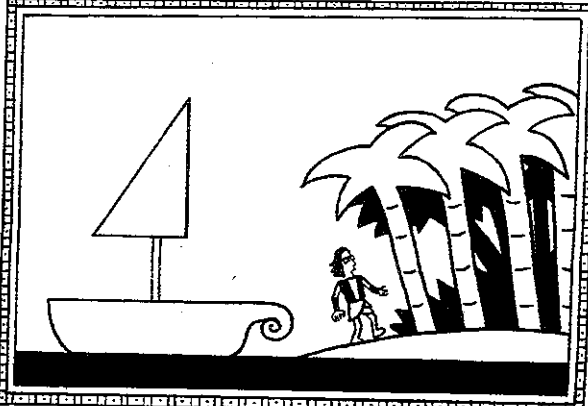
ON THIS ODYSSEY, THE TEACHER MUST ANTICIPATE AN EPIC, SOLITARY QUEST.



I FOUND MYSELF NAVIGATING TURBULENT WATERS, STRUGGLING TO OVERCOME A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SEA OF DANGEROUS OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY.



UNLIKE THE HEROES OF LEGEND, THE TEACHER TRUDGES TOWARD AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE WITHOUT EASY REWARDS.



IN FACT, IT'S OFTEN THE MYTHS THEMSELVES THAT THE YOUNG TEACHER MUST FIGHT AGAINST.



POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT TEACHING

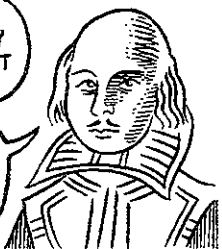
KIDS TODAY ARE WORSE THAN EVER BEFORE

IT'S TRUE! JUST ASK MY CONTEMPORARIES, SOCRATES AND SHAKESPEARE:



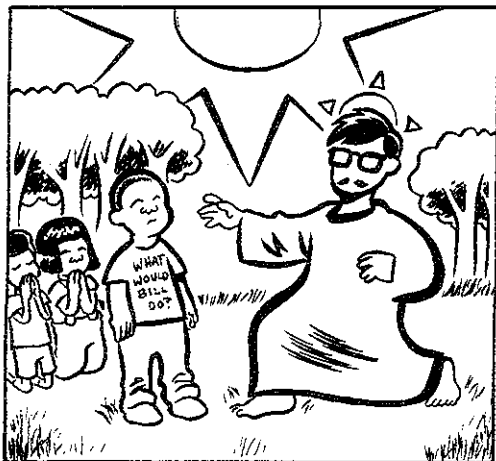
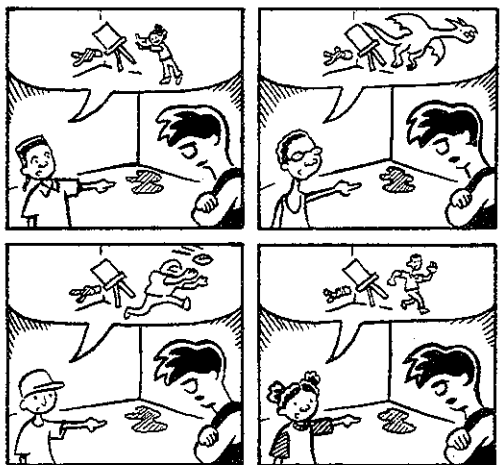
THE CHILDREN NOW LOVE LUXURY. THEY HAVE BAD MANNERS, CONTEMPT FOR AUTHORITY... THEY CONTRADICT THEIR PARENTS, GOBBLE DOWN FOOD AT THE TABLE, AND INTIMIDATE THEIR TEACHERS.

I WOULD THAT THERE WERE NO AGE BETWEEN 10 AND 3 AND 20 — OR THAT BOY WOULD SIMPLY SLEEP OUT THE REST, FOR THERE IS NOTHING IN THE BETWEEN BUT WRONGING THE ANCESTRY, STEALING AND FIGHTING.



TEACHERS ALWAYS KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE CLASSROOM

TEACHERS ALWAYS KNOW ONE STORY OF WHAT'S GOING ON, AND IT'S NEVER THE ONLY STORY. KIDS ARE ACTIVE INTERPRETERS OF CLASSROOM REALITY AND THEIR INTERPRETATIONS ARE ONLY SOMETIMES SYNONYMOUS WITH THE TEACHER'S. TRUE STORIES ARE MULTITUDINOUS.

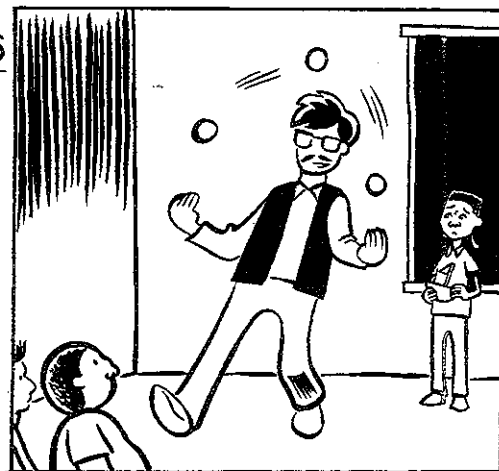


THE TEACHER'S WORK IS TO "SAVE" THE CHILDREN

"CHILD-SAVING" HAS A SAD AND TROUBLED HISTORY, FILLED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS BUT ALSO PATRONIZATION AND GLIB ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES. CHILDREN NEED TO BE VALUED AND SUPPORTED, LOVED AND ENCOURAGED, NOURISHED AND CHALLENGED. LEAVE THE "SAVING" AT THE DOOR. TEACH.

GOOD TEACHERS ARE GOOD PERFORMERS

SOMETIMES... BUT GOOD TEACHERS DO NOT ROUTINELY CLAIM "CENTER STAGE." THAT SPOT IS RESERVED FOR THEIR STUDENTS. GOOD TEACHERS AREN'T "FUN." FUN IS AMUSING AND DIVERTING. LEARNING CAN BE ENGROSSING, AMAZING, DISORIENTING, TRANSPORTING — AND IF IT'S JOYFUL OR DELIGHTFUL, EVEN BETTER.



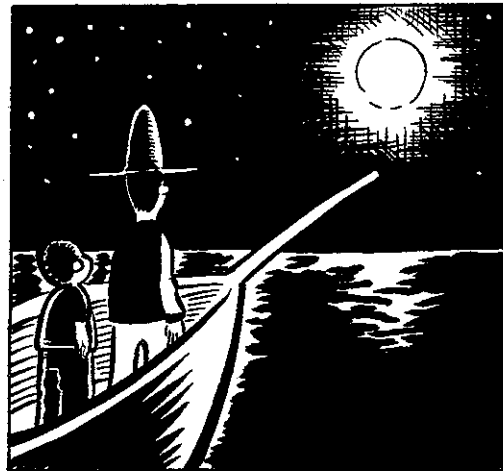
ALL CHILDREN ARE ABOVE AVERAGE

THIS IS THE "MYTH OF THE 3RD GRADE": "SHE'S READING AT THE 3RD-GRADE LEVEL." IT'S AS IF THERE'S AN IDEAL 3RD-GRADER ON MOUNT OLYMPUS. EVERY 4TH-GRADE TEACHER IS ANGRY AT EVERY 3RD-GRADE TEACHER — MOST KIDS DON'T ARRIVE "ON LEVEL" OR "READY." THE TRUTH IS 3RD-GRADERS ARE VARIOUS, AND GOOD TEACHERS TEACH TO THAT DIVERSITY.



GOOD TEACHERS ALWAYS KNOW THE MATERIAL

SURE, THAT'S WHY TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS READING, WONDERING, EXPLORING, COLLECTING, GOING TO THE MOVIES OR MUSEUMS OR CONCERTS OR LECTURES AND EXPOSITIONS; WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH. BUT THE UNIVERSE IS EXPANDING, AND KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE. AT SOME POINT, GOOD TEACHERS MUST PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN ALONGSIDE THEIR STUDENTS, TO ADVENTURE ON TOGETHER.



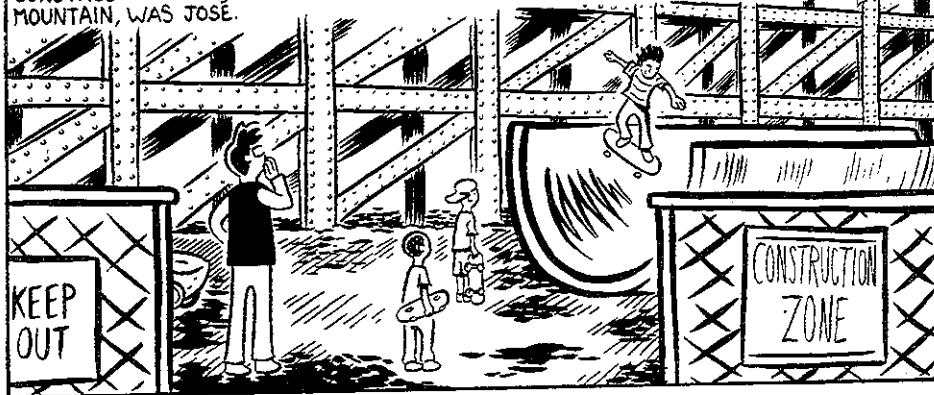
NOW LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT A COUPLE OF REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS...

STARTING WITH JOSÉ LA LUZ, A FORMER STUDENT OF MINE.

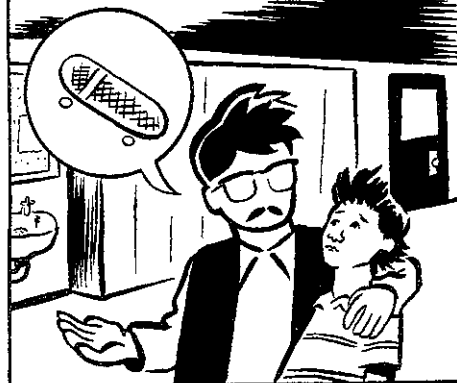
SCHOOL FAILURE FIT JOSÉ AND FOLLOWED HIM LIKE A SHADOW. HE MISBEHAVED SO OFTEN THAT THE PATH TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE BECAME A RUT HE WALKED MANY TIMES.



MY STRUGGLE WAS TO FIND SOMETHING JOSÉ VALUED THAT WE MIGHT BUILD UPON. IN MARCH I SAW A KNOT OF KIDS SKATEBOARDING OVER AND AROUND SOME HUGE DRAIN PIPES AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE NEAR SCHOOL, AND IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL, KING OF THE MOUNTAIN, WAS JOSÉ.



I ASKED JOSÉ SOME DAYS LATER IF HE COULD TEACH A MINICOURSE ON SKATEBOARDING TO THE CLASS. HE AGREED.



PROVIDING A SPACE FOR JOSÉ'S PASSION AND EXPERTISE ALLOWED HIM TO BRING HIS OWN WISDOM INTO THE ROOM. THE RESULT WASN'T A SUDDEN OR PERFECT TURNAROUND, BUT IT WAS A START.



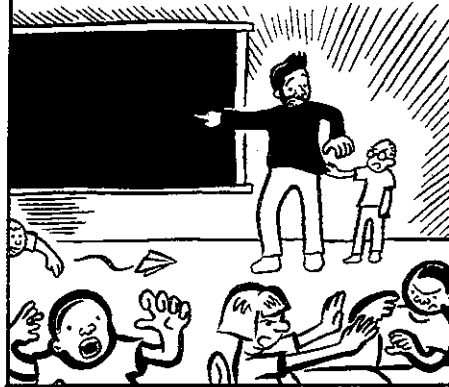
TEACHERS MIGHT EXAMINE THEIR OWN INTERESTS IN SEARCH OF A CONNECTION...

PAUL UNDERHILL IS A 4TH-GRADE TEACHER, FRESH OUT OF GRAD SCHOOL.

HE SEES TEACHING AS A NOBLE PROFESSION, AND DREAMS HIS CLASSROOM CAN BECOME A POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY.



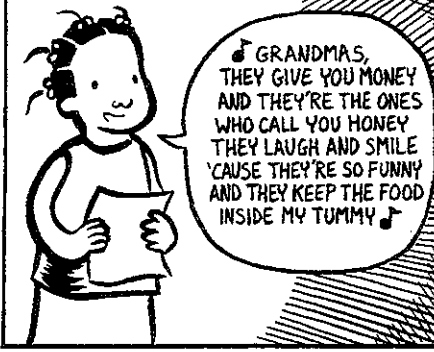
HIS IDEALS CLASH REGULARLY WITH REALITY—CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT ALONE IS AN OVERWHELMING CHALLENGE.



HE DOES SO MUCH, AND YET FEELS ONLY THE WEIGHT OF WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE. TEACHING OCCUPIES HIM DAY AND NIGHT.



ONE PLACE HE FINDS SOLACE IS A WEEKLY ELECTIVE OF HIS OWN INVENTION. "THE LYRICISTS LOUNGE" IS A CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY WHERE KIDS RHYME AND PERFORM ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS:



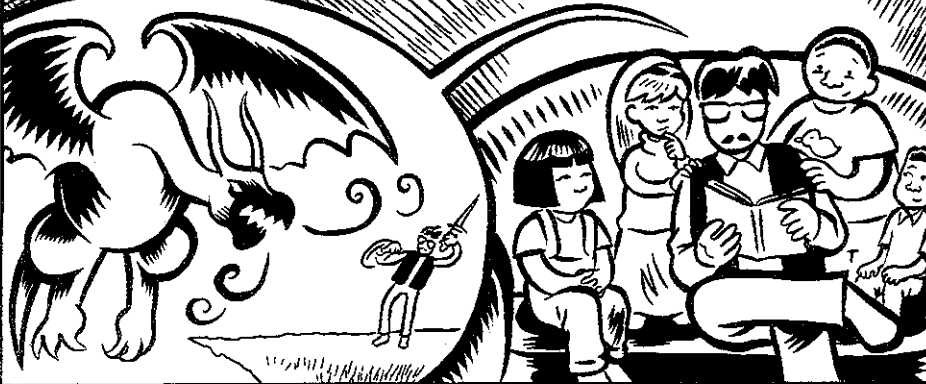
PAUL'S PASSION MEETS THE KIDS' INTERESTS IN AN IMAGINATIVE COMMON GROUND, THE FOUNDATION FOR CREATING A PRODUCTIVE CLASSROOM. PAUL'S JOURNEY IS JUST BEGINNING...



BUT SKATEBOARDS AND RAPPING SOLVE ALL YOUR CLASSROOM PROBLEMS ONLY IN THE MOVIES. I ENJOY A TRIP TO THE CINEMA AS MUCH AS ANYONE, BUT PROJECTING SILVER SCREEN MYTHS ONTO OUR STUDENTS OBSCURES THE PATH TO DISCOVERY. IN ORDER TO FIND YOUR WAY, YOU MUST TURN THE PROJECTOR AROUND AND SEARCH WITHIN.



MYTHS TOWER ABOVE THE WORLD OF TEACHING LIKE GIANT, FIRE-BREATHING DRAGONS. SOMEHOW TEACHERS NEED TO SLAY THESE CREATURES IN ORDER TO MOVE FROM MYTH TO REALITY.



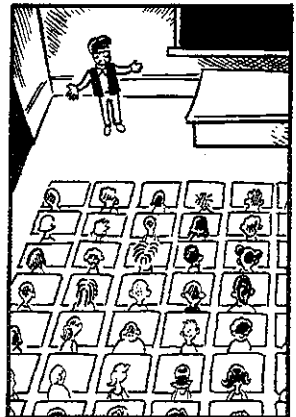
AND THE REALITIES CAN BE HARSH. I CAN THINK OF A MILLION REASONS NOT TO TEACH JUST OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD...



TEACHERS ARE BADLY PAID, SO BADLY THAT IT'S A NATIONAL DISGRACE. THERE IS NO OTHER PROFESSION THAT DEMANDS SO MUCH AND RECEIVES SO LITTLE IN COMPENSATION.



EXCEPT FOR "COMICS ARTIST."



TEACHERS OFTEN WORK IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS UNDER IMPOSSIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES, WITH TOO MANY KIDS, TOO LITTLE TIME, STINGY RESOURCES AND HEARTLESS BUREAUCRATS PEERING THROUGH THE DOOR.

TEACHERS SUFFER LOW STATUS IN SOCIETY, IN PART AS A LEGACY OF SEXISM. TEACHING IS LARGELY WOMEN'S WORK, AND IT IS CONSTANTLY BEING DESKILLED, MADE INTO SOMETHING TO BE PERFORMED MECHANICALLY, COVERED OVER WITH LAYERS OF SUPERVISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY, AND HELD IN LOW ESTEEM.



AND THAT'S BARELY THE START OF IT! THE LIST COULD GO ON AND ON...

IN SPITE OF ALL OF THIS, THE WORLD OF TEACHING CAN BE DEEPLY SATISFYING.



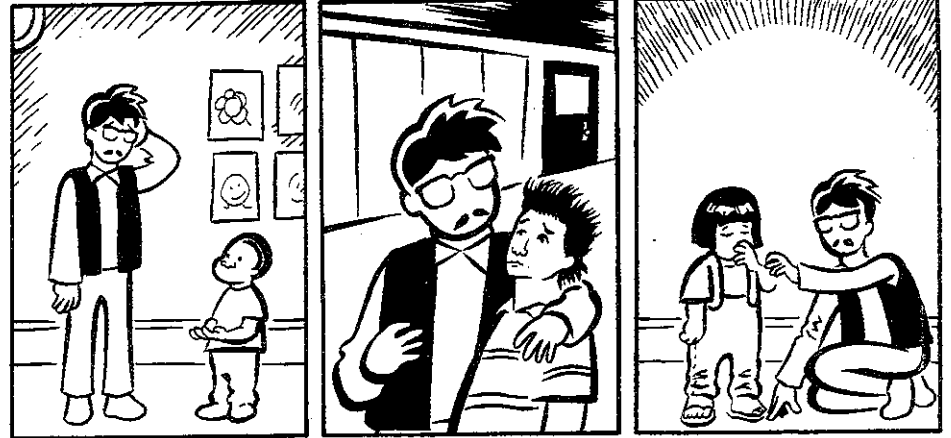
THERE ARE STILL CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO NEED THOUGHTFUL AND CARING ADULTS IN THEIR LIVES—MENTORS WHO CAN UNDERSTAND AND GUIDE THEM.



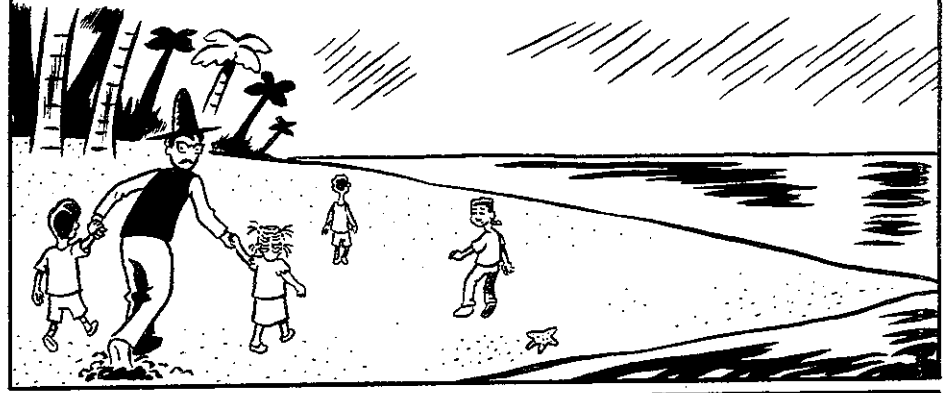
AND OUR COMMUNITIES AND COUNTRY ARE STILL IN NEED OF RENEWAL AND REPAIR.



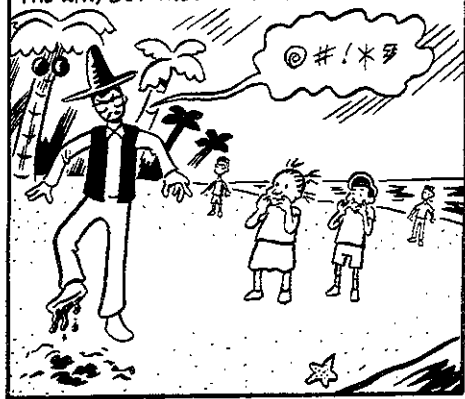
THERE ARE ALWAYS SPECIFIC, INDIVIDUAL WORLDS TO BE CHANGED, ONE BY ONE.



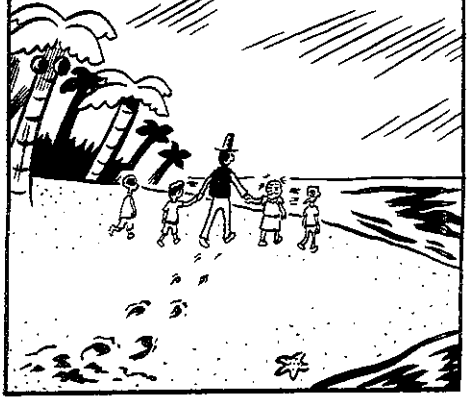
TO NAME ONESELF AS A TEACHER IS TO LIVE WITH ONE FOOT IN THE MUCK OF THE WORLD AS WE FIND IT— WITH ITS CONVENTIONAL PATTERNS AND RECEIVED WISDOM— AND THE OTHER FOOT STRIDING TOWARD A WORLD THAT COULD BE BUT ISN'T YET.



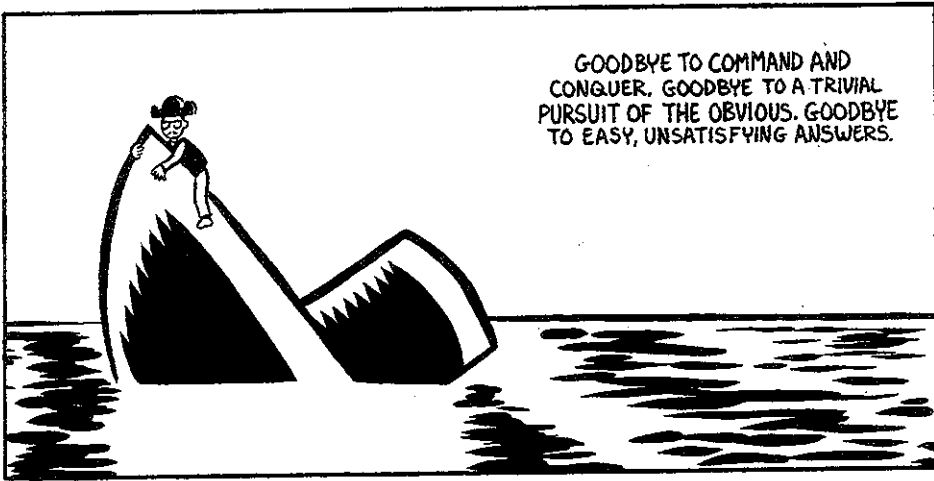
EVEN THE MOST COMMITTED, CARING TEACHERS WILL MAKE MISTAKES ALONG THE WAY, BUT THEY WON'T BE DISASTROUS.



TEACHING AT ITS BEST IS NOT A MATTER OF TECHNIQUE— IT'S PRIMARILY AN ACT OF LOVE.



GOODBYE TO COMMAND AND CONQUER. GOODBYE TO A TRIVIAL PURSUIT OF THE OBVIOUS. GOODBYE TO EASY, UNSATISFYING ANSWERS.



WELCOME TO THE HARD WORK OF TEACHING TOWARD A BETTER WORLD. WELCOME TO A CLASSROOM WHERE INSTRUCTION JUMPS OFF THE PAGE AND OVERFLOWS WITH LOVE. WELCOME TO LEARNING AS AN ACT OF CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION.



WELCOME

BIENVENIDO

مرحباً

2

SEEING THE STUDENT

TEACHING IS AN INTERACTIVE PRACTICE THAT BEGINS AND ENDS WITH SEEING THE STUDENT. IT IS ONGOING AND NEVER COMPLETELY FINISHED. THE STUDENT GROWS AND CHANGES, THE TEACHER LEARNS, THE SITUATION SHIFTS, AND SEEING BECOMES AN EVOLVING CHALLENGE. AS LAYERS OF MYSTIFICATION AND OBFUSCATION ARE PEELED AWAY, AS THE STUDENT BECOMES MORE FULLY PRESENT TO THE TEACHER, EXPERIENCES AND WAYS OF THINKING AND KNOWING THAT WERE INITIALLY OBSCURE BECOME THE GROUND ON WHICH AN AUTHENTIC AND VITAL TEACHING PRACTICE CAN BE CONSTRUCTED.

