

Yes, there are things we have learned about the mind, about intelligence, perhaps even about imagination. We know something about the ways in which the culture shapes us as individuals and the ways in which we strive to achieve a sense of agency. The pedagogies we have learned to use have focused on maintaining a way of life, on honing the skills and capacities demanded at this time in economic and technological history. But how do we conceive our way of life, purportedly one we share? How does it find symbolic expression, metaphorical expression? What are the values we choose to live by--we and those close to us? What of those lived by the newcomers among us, people from distant places and diverse cultures?

These are old and familiar questions for those of us involved in educating. They have been posed on some level since the schools began facing industrialization and urbanization, along with the break-up of small, homogeneous communities; but they have become so familiar we are seldom aware of them. We ride off on our particular hobby horses in the conviction that the roads we took are the reliable ones, that our conceptions of democracy, equality, freedom, and justice are correct, that our views on the growth of children and their nurture or their training are sound. Some of us do so in a kind of weariness. The ongoing wars, the distortions of truth we have witnessed, the widening gaps between rich and poor disturb us more than we can say; but we have had so many reminders of powerlessness that we have retreated before the challenge of bringing such issues into our classrooms. At once, we cannot but realize that one of our primary obligations is to try to provide equal opportunities for the young. And we realize full that this cannot happen if our students are not equipped with what are thought to be survival skills, not to speak of a more or less equal range of literacies. And yet the tendency to describe the young as "human resources," with the implication that they are mainly grist for the mills of globalized business is offensive not merely to educators, but to anyone committed to resist dehumanization of any kind. Since the core emphasis of the legislation named "No Child Left Behind" is on graded achievement, assessment, and the rest, it is difficult to believe that humanization is a central national goal.

These are old and familiar questions, so familiar that, for all our differences, we are scarcely aware of them. We ride off on our particular hobby horses in the assurance that the roads we took are the reliable ones--that our definitions of democracy, equity, freedom, or justice are correct, that our views of education and the child are true. Few of us deny the fact that we cannot release the young into society without a range of survival skills and literacies. Certain ones of us are content with official conceptions of capacity and achievement. We accept the claim that they must be monitored by measures of assessment and by some structure of accountability. On occasion, we take note of the apparent harm done by "high stakes testing" and try to reduce the pressures the practice imposes on adults as well as children. Accepting the frameworks and rubrics and scaffolds, however, we try to bypass the deep-lying questions: those having to do with children's entry into languages (the dominant one, perhaps, and a 'borderland' language) and the ways in which this relates to their making of meanings. And there are those having to do with the connection between information and what we take to be

knowledge; the difference between knowing and understanding; the role of emotion and memory; the place of imagination. And, often, there is the matter of imposed, official 'facts' and claims. Not open to question; masquerading as what is objectively 'given.'

Contemplating our students in all their variety, we cannot but realize that they are more than merely responding creatures, more than static 'minds'. With cognitive, physical, emotional, and imaginative potentials, with consciousnesses thrusting into the world, they are continually involved in transactions with other persons and with their environment. They are who they are because of the way they participate. Aware or not, they are always changing, becoming different as they move. Some allow what they have learned in earlier years to feed into present experiences; present learning becomes continuous with meanings already funded. There are expansions of understanding...