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The Teachers No Child Left Behind Leaves Behind

This presentation aims with lyric grace and much nostalgia to describe one teacher's sixteen years of being in the high school classroom, and the reasons why she ultimately quit and became a "high school drop out." It explores the dilemma passionate teachers face in the era of accountability, when they wish to be un-accountable to standardization and accountable to individualization, when they wish to see their students as more than mere accounts received. The presentation is peppered with readings from the letters from students she was gifted with over the years, as together she and her students tried, in the words of poet Audre Lorde, *to touch what matters*. The personal is political, so the saying goes, but what do teachers do when they are torn between their personal love for teaching and their disdain for the politics influencing it? Some have the courage of their convictions and leave, and others have the courage of their convictions and stay. Seeking no easy or pithy answers, this presentation sings about the psychic wear and tear on teachers and students alike in the NCLB era, and ends by suggesting that the myth of the Holy Grail offers wisdom for how we revive the wasteland of modern education.

This presentation aligns with the first goal of One Voice, in that it amplifies the lived experience of one educator with over 20 years of classroom experience, and it suggests wisdom gleaned from the search for the Holy Grail as one mythical resolution to the wounded state of education today.

As a result of participation in this session, attendees will learn/come away with:

- 1) A renewed sense of awe over how lucky we are to be teachers
- 2) A mythological understanding of how to begin healing the wasteland of public education
- 3) A chance to reflect upon the importance of the curriculum versus the importance of the teacher