At the beginning of this book I found the author to be at best tiring and trying. He displayed an overt disdain/distaste for the profession that he found himself to be in, having thought that he would be, seemingly, the second coming of either Christ or Ghandi. I’m not quite sure which, maybe both. I found it hard to believe that he was surprised at his newfound lot in life, given his choice of pathways through it, despite his aspirations which were presumptuously profound. He was a post-graduate liberal arts student, really how many other directions are there to go. His best bet outside of teaching was writing, which he mentioned but quickly digressed from. This distaste for the man himself held true until the third chapter of the readings.

Up until then the man was pretentious and arrogant, without displaying any of the good qualities that often come with such position. He silently berated children for not being willing to learn and adapt to the situations around them in order to improve their lot, calling them ‘small minded’ and ‘petty’, while not himself trying to learn or adapt. He attended the school, barely tolerating his students, speaking with but only hearing, never listening to, his coworkers. Even in light of a pool of more greatly experienced individuals with a diversity of practiced methods to draw upon, the author seemed to continue to plod down the same path, with his head down, refusing to see the forest for the trees. That is until he had someone walk in and point out the obvious, essentially lowering a branch and forcing him to walk into it. That someone was the true prophet of the story, Brother Christopher.

Brother Christopher really never said much but what little he said opened windows if not doors in the author’s mind to allow him to see that the error in his ways was the way in which he could correct his students. He could teach them about life and philosophy through their own lives and experiences. In other words, he could tailor the lesson to the student learning it, making the subject applicable, ergo interesting.
This revelation, assuming he finds it to be correct, offers to me confirmation of my own philosophy of teaching, at least in part. I have been taught that much of classroom management can be forestalled, if not prevented by creating a classroom environment and dynamic that is built around the students' interests. In example, if I were to need to teach or reinforce a standard on the scientific method I would best serve the subject and myself to allow the students to design an inquiry of their own. This could be done either as a class or instead within small groups of similar interest. My hand would be used only to guide them through the design process using questions of my own in order to lead them to developing an adequate inquiry. Should a student propose a question and hypothesis, I could ask something to the effect of ‘why would that be a good hypothesis?’ in either the case of good or bad. In the case of ‘good’ I might point out the fact that it is falsifiable and ask them why that is desirable, in the case of bad I would instead ask how they intend to prove it true and at what degree, and of what sort, the evidence is it then irrefutable; serving to illuminate the fact that this judgment is an impossibility. In the student owning the lesson they have more of a stake in its effectiveness and more of an interest in its subject.

From Inchausti’s experience thus far, I can learn more about what not to do than what to. Among these is to keep an open mind, no matter how much or little I think I know, I know probably only half that and can learn from anyone around me. He illustrates the fact that students may be different, but that does not preclude their capability to learn or adapt to changing situations around them. I know from experience that there are limit to that ability for everyone, and with increasing maturity, comes greater potential for that adaptation. From this follows the fact that it is sometimes necessary to lend a helping hand in situations of struggle or discontent; but more often than not a student deserves the opportunity to try it, whatever it may be. I am
looking at Inchausti’s example of this in when the ‘nerd’ of the class expresses his displeasure with a less academically inclined student’s interruption and the older and wiser mentor teacher tells the displeased boy that he must find a way to do something for it himself. At first this might seem to be a bad idea but the logic seems to be that this boy is smart enough to know better than to get himself in trouble while still developing the self reliance to solve problems on his own. The mentor also aided, intentionally, by making this a generally public announcement and thus showing the disruptor that not everyone was amused by his antics, even among his peers. This style of address was incredibly well thought out. It simultaneously addressed two of the classroom problems and helped to teach a different lesson to each boy while not creating an extended disruption to the lesson. This is not something I can learn so much as a skill I would like to develop, but it is duly noted.

Inchausti does show me though the importance of not allowing the tension to build up. His attempts to bear all of the weight of his classroom broke him at the dance but that was more a cumulative effect from having labored under it so long himself, or so I believe. It would have been to his advantage, or at least not his detriment, to share his turmoil with someone else. His wife would have made a good option, as she was feeling dissociated from him. No one could really help him with his problems but simply sharing may well have relieved the stress enough to prevent his burnout. I have to remember what I already know full well, that I have an immense system of people to support me in my own life outside of work. That I can’t bring them with me but that they’d be more than willing to take some of it off my shoulders, and mind, when I get home; if I only let them.