

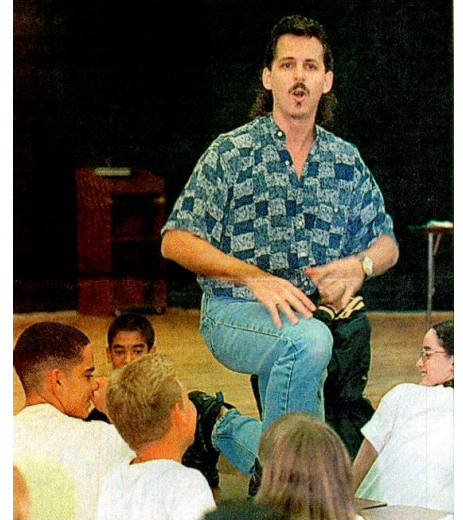
# The Osceola Sentinel

An Edition of the Orlando Sentinel

## Artist fires up his students

### Mark Simon believes in pursuing your dreams

By BARBARA J. SAFFER of the Sentinel Staff



Success came to Parkway Middle School Thursday with a typical artist's flair. Sporting a goatee and black tennis shoes, Mark Simon echoed the banner on the cafeteria wall, which read, "Reach for the Stars. Your Success at Parkway Begins Today."

About 150 students in Katie Froehle's art classes jammed the room to hear Simon. The successful storyboard artist, who boasts Disney and Nickelodeon as clients, explained how his profession is not just fun but can be lucrative, too.

I wake up every morning excited about what I do for a living. "How many people can say that?" he said. "If you love art, be an artist. It's the greatest thing in the world."

Simon wants students to know they can make a living by doing what makes them happy.

Perhaps it was the Hot Wheels and the hot-pink "Workout Barbie" he used during his talk, or maybe it was the mere mention of his association with Steven Spielberg, but the children ate up his lively performance, even clamoring for autographs at the end.

"I heard words of wisdom from a professional artist," said Wesley Butler, 12, a seventh-grader who wants to be an artist and was busy copying one of Simon's cartoons as the children swarmed around Simon.

Milton Torres, 11, a sixth-grader who also loves to draw, said he learned that "you can earn a lot of money doing art."

Over the past year, the Orlando-based Simon has spoken at area schools to share his love of art and dispel the notion that one has to be a "starving artist."



He said his company, Animatics & Storyboards Inc. made six figures last year creating storyboards, animatics (animated video storyboards), illustration and character design for film, television and corporate clients.

Simon, 33, said he has been an artist since he started designing skateboards as a teenager. After graduating from art school, he left his hometown of Houston for Hollywood, working as an art director and set construction coordinator

before finding his niche as a storyboard artist.

He explained that storyboarding is creating a set of drawings that provide a visual blueprint for directors - a set of drawings that turn a script into pictures so they know what a movie will look like before it's filmed.

He has even written a book on the subject, *Storyboards: Motion in Art*.

Simon told the group that he loves working as an artist because he can dress however he wants, he loves entertaining people, he gets to be creative and is able to do neat things -- such as tour NASA's inner sanctum.

Froehle, the teacher who invited Simon to speak, seemed impressed with her students' enthusiasm. "This will open their eyes about what they're able to do with art," she said.