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Public School in the Year 2031

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building- or district-specific; none will allow me to continue teaching any classes.

In 2005, when an exceedingly talented student named Lauren handed in her term paper on three South African novelists, she said to, “Is that it?” and “I feel like there should be more.” That comment served for years as an effective irritant in a small part of my brain and eventually helped me re-configure my thinking on what a high school term paper can and should be – and how reading literature and writing papers on literature can connect to reading the world and acting in the world. I am proud of my thinking and work on re-thinking the term paper and re-thinking teaching in the English/Language Arts classroom, a place in which my current students often read literature as a way of reading the world and engage deeply in critical thinking about themselves and the world.

As a 25-year veteran teacher, I ask: Is that it? *I feel like there should be more.*

Dana Holley Maloney teaches English at Tenafly High School. In 2012 she was awarded the Princeton University Secondary Teaching Award and the NCTE James Moffett Award. She has taught high school English since 1988.

Public School in the Year 2031

No child left behind
Demanding rigorous 21st century schools
Making our tax dollars work harder
Politicizing education
Legislating product over process
Expelling frivolous summer vacations
Requiring mental craftsmanship in year-round school
Eliminating snow days
Erasing spring breaks
Committing to teaching to the test
Adopting nationwide standards and curricula
Flourishing with publishers’ panaceas
Invading with online texts
Monitoring inexhaustibly from community watchdogs
Proliferating self-proclaimed expertise
Raising the bar for higher expectations
Requiring testing to enter kindergarten
Requiring testing for all grade levels
Requiring testing for graduation
Replacing valedictorians with validation
Assigning conditional diplomas for sub-standard students
Preparing for workplace readiness
Focusing on global perspectives
Mandating lessons peaking students’ interest
Requiring technology
Requiring unmanageable technology solutions
Abolishing unions and employee opinion
Abolishing tenure and seniority
Abolishing cushy pensions and bloated health benefits
Abolishing livable wages