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Public School in the Year 2031

Joe Pizzo
Black River Middle School in Chester, NJ

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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