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Public School in the Year 2031

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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