

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poetry

It's Different Now

by Christopher Clauss



TAKING CARE BY MEREDITH STERN VIA JUSTSEEDS.ORG

It's Different Now

They want me to fill out purchase orders / spend my own money on classroom supplies / and get reimbursed / maybe / after the credit card bills have already come due
They want me to inventory the glassware/ plan a budget for what I will spend / a year from now / before this year has even begun / and then they only give me half of what I need

I just want to teach science

They want me to put all of the chairs / on top of the desks / at the end of the school day / otherwise the custodians refuse to sweep
They want me to find and erase the swear words / pick off the gum wads / spray down and disinfect / everything / and never get sick /unless I know I'm going to be sick at least two weeks in advance /so they have time to find a substitute teacher

I just want to teach science

They want me to wear my school identification badge /at all times while in the building
They want me to do bus duty /and lunch duty /and recess duty
They want me to supervise / the hallway in between classes
They want me to supervise / the students lingering in the science lab / in between classes / at the same time as I am standing out in the hallway
They want me to bend / the laws of time and space

I only teach middle school science

They want me to manage the behavior in my classroom
They want me to teach respect and dignity / to children never shown it at home
They want me to inspire children / who seldom are in attendance for me to inspire
They want me to create a safe and welcoming environment
They want me to break up fist fights / but also / to avoid physical interaction with fighting students / for liability purposes
They want me to keep track of which students / go to the bathroom / and how often / and during which classes / and for how long / and how many times per week
They want me to use a calm, soothing tone / and greet every child with a smile
They would not hire me do any of this / without a master's degree

I have a master's degree
in *education* / I just want to teach science

They want me to practice fire drills / shut the doors / lock the windows / count heads in the parking lot
They want me to know the difference between a lockdown / and a shelter in place
They want me to hide in a closet / reassure crying 13-year-olds / this is just a safety drill
They want me to have a plan to barricade my classroom doors
They want to give me a bucket of rocks / for the science classroom / for my students to throw should a gunman enter
They want me to teach my students to throw rocks

They want me to recertify / first aid / CPR / learn what to do if I am first on the scene
It's different now / since the marathon / they tell the teachers, "Lose the limb, save the life." / so now we learn to apply tourniquets
These last years / since Parkland / teachers learn first aid for a bullet wound
I carry a card in my wallet / that says / I can treat a bullet wound

I just want to teach science
They want me to carry a gun

Christopher Clauss is an introvert, Ravenclaw, father, poet, and middle school science teacher from Chesterfield, NH. He is a poetry organizer at Slam Free or Die in Manchester, NH, a venue he has represented six times at the National Poetry Slam. Christopher's poems have been published in *New York Quarterly*, *Plants and Poetry Journal*, *Sylvia*, *FreezeRay*, and *Bureau of Complaint*. Christopher's first full-length book of poetry, *Photosynthesis & Respiration*, is now available from Silver Bow Press or your favorite local bookstore. His mother believes his poetry is "just wonderful." Both of his daughters declare that he is the "best daddy they have," and his pre-teen science students rave that he is "*Fine, I guess. Whatever.*"



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