

# Professional Biographies of NHFT 2020 Election Candidates

\*The candidates featured below submitted a voluntary statement and/or photo which has been edited to comport with guidelines of the NHFT Executive Board, Trustees Council and Elections Committee, and are presented below in the order in which they appear on the ballot.

## Candidates for the Office of President of the NHFT



### David Cicarella

- 13+ years as NHFT President
- 2 terms NHFT Executive Board Trustee
- 2 terms Building Steward (Fair Haven)
- 22 years classroom teacher (Algebra 1, Gr 7-8 science, Gr 7-8 Reading)
- 5 years Math Instructor Gateway CC
- 6 years Math Instructional Coach
- 2 years Curriculum Staff Developer
- Data Team Lead Trainer
- AFT Representative on 15-member PEAC (state evaluation committee)
- Awarded "*Champion of Change*" 2014 at White House, Washington D.C.
- AFT-CT Presidents Award Recipient (2012, 2015)
- Testified before US Congress 2011 "Exploring Teacher Quality Initiatives"
- Appointed to State of CT "*Planning Commission for Education*" 2015 (appointed by President Pro Tempore Martin Looney)



## **Cameo Thorne**

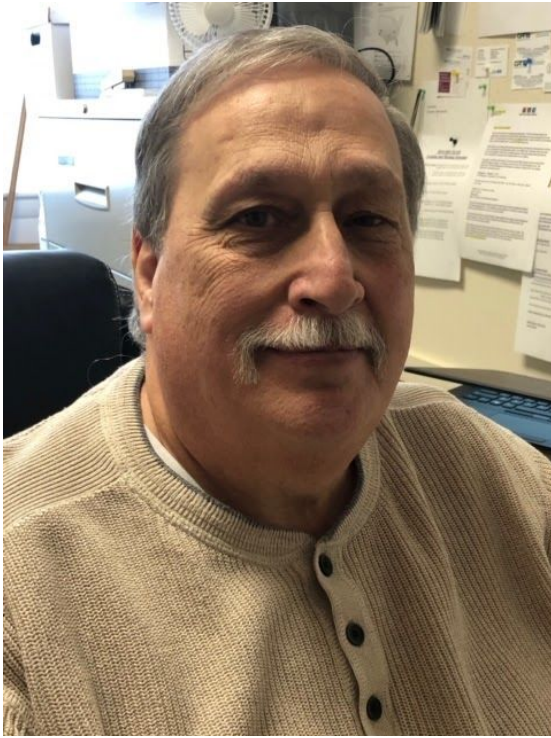
I have been a New Haven Public School teacher for 20 years. As a high school English teacher, I worked with students whose reading levels were far below grade level as well as Advanced Placement students. I taught in a therapeutic classroom working with students who consistently failed and disrupted the learning environment. I served two terms as union steward for High School in the Community. I have attended AFT legislative events at the State Capital including signing up to make statements in support of teachers at the State Legislature. I worked with and chaired the teacher group that worked on TVAL and was New Haven's Teacher of the Year in 2009. I have been the SSST chair and the CAPT Coordinator and later the SBAC Coordinator. I worked on schedules and organized SAT days. I ran multiple clubs including the Interact Club, Philosophy Club, GSA, Homework Club, and a Stop the Violence Group. I was voted into a leadership role by my peers at HSC and managed discipline in the school while teaching two classes a day. During the summers, I train teachers around New England in NYC, Albany, Boston, and the greater Boston area as a contractor with Suffolk University.

## Candidates for the Office of Executive Vice President



**Jennifer Wells-Jackson** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I am honored to have served the New Haven community as an educator and teacher leader for over 23 years. As a Literacy Instructional Coach for over 14 years, I have worked at many schools supporting teachers with their instruction. I continued supporting teachers throughout the district when I was elected to the NHFT Executive Board by attending local conferences and national conventions.



## **Pat DeLucia**

My name is Pat DeLucia and I am running for Executive Vice-President in the rerun of the NHFT election , the position I currently hold. I am a Special Education teacher and have taught in the New Haven Public Schools for 37 years. My last assignment was at Riverside Education Academy as a Resource teacher for 25 years.

I have served the Union for 21 years. I started as a Trustee , then a High School rep , Vice-President of High Schools , Executive Vice President , Executive Secretary , and now Executive Vice-President for the second time. I have chaired the Finance Committee for 13 years. I have served on and chaired numerous committees city-wide. Some of them are , Survey , Reform , Homebound Redesign , BoE Policy ,By-Laws , Reform, and numerous sub-committees. I have been on the negotiations team for the last five contracts.



**Kirsten C. Hopes-McFadden** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I, Kirsten C. Hopes-McFadden, am running for Executive Vice President and NHFT Delegate. I have taught in New Haven since August, 1997. Currently I teach 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies at ESUMS. I have taught 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.

I hold a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania and a Juris Doctor from Howard University. I am an active member of the NHPS Advocates.

Finally, I am both the ESUMS Steward and a NHFT Delegate. I received training by CT AFT on how to be a better steward.

## Candidates for the Office of Executive Secretary



### **MarcAnthony Solli**

I am an alumnus of New Haven Public Schools, Yale College, UNH and SCSU, and a 21-year veteran who has taught French at Betsy Ross (Grades 5-8), English/Reading at Bailey Middle School (Grades 7-8), English III Honors at West Haven High School, and AP Lang and Composition, English III, Poetry, Mythology and the True Crime Novel at HSC.

I have served on various curriculum creation/revision committees in both West Haven and New Haven, and facilitated professional development sessions for district-wide CIA's since 2010; I have also published curriculum as a fellow in the Yale Teachers' Institute.

Since 1998, I have spent summers teaching both French and SAT Verbal and Mathematics review high school level courses at the Hopkins School in New Haven.

In my professional union role as an NHFT steward at HSC for the last twelve years, I have served on the TEVAL Working Group and Reform Committees during our district initiatives, sat in on the Grievance Committee when requested by leadership, and worked for an eight-year tenure as Head Trustee on the NHFT Executive Board, presiding over three district-wide officers' elections and several contract votes.





### **Jennifer Chisholm**

My name is Jennifer Chisholm and I am running for the Executive Secretary position for the New Haven Federation of Teachers Union. This is my 20th year as a school counselor for the NHPS. I currently serve as the school counselor for both Christopher Columbus Family Academy and East Rock schools. I have also worked at Jackie Robinson, Fair Haven, John C. Daniels, MicroSociety and Worthington Hooker schools throughout my career in New Haven. I have served on the Executive Board for the teachers union for 16 years and have held the position of Executive Secretary since January of 2019.

## Candidates for Vice President for High Schools



### **David Low**

-26 years teaching, 22 years teaching Engineering, Math and Physics at the Sound School. NHFT Executive Board member as Vice President - High Schools, 2002-2005, 2009-present; Union Steward - Sound School, 2002-present; Chair - School Reform Committee, 2009-2012; TEVAL Committee, Professional Development/Evaluation Committee, 2013-present; Contract Negotiating Team for five Teacher Contracts (2003, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018).



## Candidates for Vice President for Middle Schools



**Judith Leach** (also a candidate for Delegate)

This is my 15th year serving NHPS students and their families. I hold a BA degree from Franklin Pierce University With a double major in Elementary Education and English Literature. My Master's Degree is from Southern Connecticut State University In TESOL and Multicultural education. My teaching experience spans grades K-2, 5/6 LA, and currently, 4-8 Reading Intervention. I have supported our union as both a National Delegate and a building steward for the past 12 years. At Columbus School I serve as the SPMT Chairperson, Restorative Practices trainer, and the Comer Student Staff Support Facilitator.

**Delores Marshall** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I have served as a Union Steward, State Delegate, and National Delegate as-well-as on several Middle School committees throughout the learning community.

Currently, I'm an Educator at Hill Central grades 7/8th Reading, and was formerly a Literacy Instructor at Troup , Instructional Coach--Sheridan, Adjunct Professor of English at SCSU and Gateway Community College, Co-op High School : World Literature, and American Literature - 9/10th grades, Yale New Haven Teacher Institute, Fulbright Hayes Scholar at Yale University and a published author.

## Candidates for Vice President for Elementary Schools



### **Cynthia Heiter**

I have had the pleasure of working in New Haven Public Schools for 25 years. I have taught kindergarten, grade 3 and 6th through 8th. I am currently teaching Reading at Bishop Woods School grades 6th-8th. I have chaired many committees over the years, including SPMT, PBIS, Health and Wellness, and Sunshine to name a few. I was a building leader in the Summer Academy for 10 years and have been the leader of the 21st Century after-school program for the past 5 years. I am also a member of the Bishop Woods Leadership Team. I've been a union steward for 8 years.



## **Evelyn Jaca**

Math Coach. John Martinez Sea and Sky STEM Magnet School

I am a 19 year veteran educator. I have taught Bilingual Education in grades K-4, ESL K-12, Middle School Math at John Martinez School and ESL and Math at the New Haven Adult and Continuing Education Center. I have also served as an administrator in New Haven for six years. I hold a BA in Political Science, a Master in TESOL and a 6th Year Degree in Educational Leadership.



## **Tracy Paige-Harris**

I am a native of New Haven, a teacher for 24 years and an active member of the community. In my 24 years of service I have worked as a teacher facilitator, a team leader and an active member of the New Haven Federation Teachers Union.

I have taught Kindergarten and First Grade at Barnard, and worked as a Lead Teacher/Facilitator and Cornerstone Coach at Ross Woodward School K-8.

I have served on the Executive Board as Vice President for Elementary Schools since 2019.



## **Vincent Squeglia**

I am the Math coach at Augusta Lewis Troup School.

I've been in New Haven for 23 years. I started at Betsy Ross for 3 then Troup for 20. I have been union Steward for Troup for the past 6 years.



## Candidates for Executive Board--High School



**Joe Steele** (also a candidate for Delegate)

-NHPS teacher at Wilbur Cross for 43 years.

-NHFT Executive Board member for 41 years.

-NHFT Delegate for 41 years.



**Toni Criscuolo** (also a candidate for Delegate)

Toni Criscuolo is a life-long New Haven resident and active in her neighborhood's church and civic organizations. She has been a teacher for over 25 years and is completing her 15<sup>th</sup> year as a high school teacher in NHPS; working in both the English and Social Studies departments. At her schools, she initiated and created new courses and new clubs. She joined SPMT. She has been elected steward and delegate to 3 AFT National and State conventions. She worked on the Social Studies Curriculum Team for World History as well as a special project to create a curriculum unit on the New Haven Green. She is the advisor to the ESUMS student government at a school and Citywide level, paying particular attention to building plant issues and chocolate milk campaigns. Toni attends BOE meetings regularly as well as the Budget Mitigation meetings during the summer. She was elected to the Executive Board as a representative for high school and chaired the attendance policy committee for EBOARD and Stewards. She is currently advocating for more options in the 403b providers for teachers.



**Al Meadows** (also a candidate for Delegate)

NHPS (21) years, Delegate (12) yrs, Steward (16) yrs.

**Richard Cowes**

I have been a teacher for 10 years in New Haven. 9 years teaching middle school mathematics at Clinton Avenue, and 1 year teaching at New Haven Adult Education. I have been a Union Steward for 5 years, holding that position at each school that I have had an assignment at.



**Steve Staysniak** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I have been an English teacher at Metropolitan Business Academy for 9 years. I am an active member in the English Department at the district level, working as a curriculum facilitator under the TIF grant and planning / leading CIA sessions whenever asked. I have received training in restorative practices, mastery-based learning, and the Comer School Development Program. I use this training on a daily basis in various leadership capacities in my building.

## Candidates for Executive Board-- Pre-k - 8



**Kara Steele-Distante** (also a candidate for Delegate)

NHPS Teacher for 4 years at Celentano Biotech, Health, and Medical Magnet School

Current NHFT Executive Board Member





**Reginald Augustine** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I have been a New Haven Public School teacher for 25 years and a lifelong resident of New Haven and a student of this school system. During my tenure, I have worked as an after school director for various buildings, a theater director for at least 11 productions, a writer, designer, and artist for many schools. I am a former ambassador for International Education having taken New Haven high School students to Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, and Greece. I helped establish drama programs and art programs in Hill Central, Barnard, and Wexler Grant schools. I was also a summer school building leader for 18 years and the coordinator/director of the after school /21st century grant programs in the schools that I worked in.

I have been involved in the NHFT as a union steward since the early 2000's, serving first as a union steward, then as an executive board member. I have been the chairperson for the unified arts team in my building and as such, maintained a role on the Barnard leadership committee for several years.



### **Erica McDaniel-Epps**

As a native New Havener, I have been a collaborative member of the New Haven Public School System for the past 15 years. After graduating from Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) in 2005 with a BA in Elementary Education and a BS in Psychology, I became a 3rd Grade teacher at Katherine Brennan School. Here I spent the first five years of my career.

Then, in 2010, I transferred to Conte West Hills Magnet School. For the past ten years, I have taught 3rd and 4th grade students. In the 2011-2012 school year, I was runner-up for Teacher of the Year award for my “exemplary service”.

For the past 12 years (4 terms), I have proudly been a collective participant on the Executive Board for our Teachers’ Union. In this position, I served on the Grievance Committee for one term. Currently, I continue to represent Pre-K to 8th grade teachers as an executive board member.



## **Iris Festa**

This is Iris Festa , prek- 8 representative. I have served for the past 3 years in this position, and my 10 years of work in the union office served me well. I have served as a school counselor for 13 years in New haven, most recently at Conte West Hills Magnet School. I've been fortunate to work in various schools in New Haven such as Clemente, Bishop Woods, Truman and most recently Conte.



**David Minella**

I am currently in my 24th year of teaching in New Haven, and have taught Music Education, 9 years at Hill Central and 15 years at Celentano Biotech, Health and Medical Magnet School.

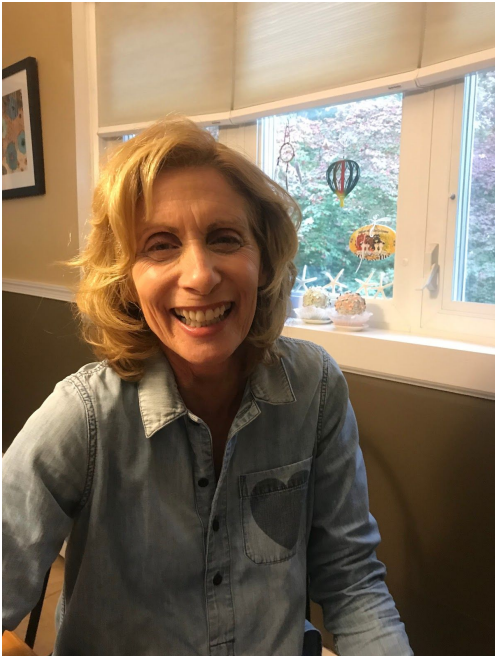
I have served on two Negotiations Teams for the last two contracts.



## **Michael Soares**

As a child, I joined other children on the New Haven City Green while my father marched on strike with Yale Local 35. In 2003, after serving in the US Peace Corps, I began my teaching career as a bilingual 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Hill Central Pre K-8. Currently, I proudly teach ESL at Fair Haven Pre K-8. I am entering my 9th year as FHS Union Steward. I was elected to the NHFT Executive Board in 2019. I hold a seat on the School Leadership Team and served on school and district level interview / transition committees. As a Student Support Facilitator, I served as the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) Chairperson and am currently the Student and Staff Support Team (SSST) Chairperson.

## Candidates for Executive Board--Special Services



**Jane Roth** (also a candidate for Delegate)

For the last 19 of my 25 years of experience as a special education resource teacher, I have worked for NHPS. The last 3 years, I have been with the John C. Daniels team. I have served as union steward for both Hyde Leadership High School and Daniels for a combined 13 years. I was an active participant in the TEVAL working group as one of the original authors. Additionally, I have represented our local as a delegate, a position I held for 6 years and have represented locals at AFT National Conventions. I have also served as a member of the SPMT, for both Hyde and Daniels. I attend a Legislative Brunch that is held yearly in which union representatives from New Haven and surrounding towns meet with state representatives and state senators to share concerns and to see how we can work together.





**J. Peter Wilson** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I have been a Special Education teacher in the New Haven Public Schools since 1976.  
Currently sit on the NHFT 933 Executive Board as Special Education representative.  
Currently a Steward on the Steward's Assembly.  
Past Chief Steward for NHFT 933.



**Stephen Leon Mikolike** (also a candidate for Delegate)

Background/Bio:

- Executive Board member (four terms)
- Union Steward (two terms @ present school)
- Member of negotiating team for three of our last teachers' contracts.
- Participated in our K-12 Council at AFT in Rocky Hill, which represents our teachers' voices across the state.
- Trained by AFT in mobilizing members on a local and statewide level, including support of union endorsed candidates during government elections, achieved via door knocking, phone call canvassing, and committee work at local and statewide locations. Mobilizing members to have a voice also included union walks supporting other Locals during times when they were in need of support as well.
- 26 years teaching, 21 years in New Haven Public Schools.

**Melody Gallagher** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I began my teaching career in New Haven over 13 years ago as a visual arts educator. Throughout my tenure I have written curriculum for the visual arts department, participated in the Yale New Haven Teachers Institute as a participant, contact, representative, and coordinator and have sat on SMPTs for the past 10 years. I have been a building steward at Mauro-Sheridan going on 5 years. Between February 2015 and February 2018, I attended nearly every general NHPS Board of Education Meeting as well as many BOE sub committee meetings. I've spoken publicly at many of these meetings on behalf of our students, families and teachers of NHPS. I've been a PTO member at both East Rock and Mauro-Sheridan as a teacher, worked with City-Wide PTO and their leaders, as well as other community organizations such as the NAACP. Additionally, I have attended some AFT state level meetings as well as some state level events at the capital.

## Candidates for Trustee



**Joe Gonzalez**

CTE Teacher, Wilbur Cross High School

I have taught over 14 years in the NHPS system as a Business teacher at Wilbur Cross High School. I hold 3 degrees from Sacred Heart University and I have spent the last 10 years representing our Union as a building steward and the last 2 as a Trustee.



**Derlene Ortiz**

I am a Speech/Language Pathologist. I began working for the NHPS in August 2006. I have served on the Executive Board as a Trustee for three years and was a member of the NHFT Negotiations Team for our two most recent contracts.



**Kris Wetmore** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I am a thirty-one year veteran educator in NHPS. I teach Visual Arts at Co-op High School. I have been an active member of our union for 19 years. Nineteen years as a Steward, 13 as a Delegate, and 4 as a Trustee.





**Rachele Thomas** (also a candidate for Delegate)

I am a science educator who teaches both AP and College Biology at James Hillhouse High School.

I have been employed by the New Haven Board of Education for 15 years, working as a curriculum facilitator, team leader, TEAM mentor, and an active member of the New Haven Federation of Teachers Union. During my tenure here in the district I have supported our union as a National Delegate, as well as attended and presented at an AFT National Conference. I was recently elected to serve as a Trustee on the NHFT Executive Board.

## Candidates for Delegate Only



### **David Weinreb**

My name is David Weinreb, I serve as the Magnet Resource Teacher at Elm City Montessori School, previously taught 5th grade bilingual newcomers at the Fair Haven School, and am proud to be running for a position as delegate for NHFT. I have engaged with teachers, community, and our city in a variety of ways since joining the union in 2015. I led Fair Haven School to develop a schoolyard habitat and garden in partnership with Audubon Society, IHeartNewHaven, and the New Haven Land Trust. I helped launch our school's Family Teacher Organization. I cofounded Code Haven, a programming partnership with Yale computer science students that is currently running at six schools. I steward the City of New Haven's first LGBTQ Youth Task Force. I have co-chaired Fair Haven Arts & Ideas Festival, and last year won a community leadership award presented by the Mary Wade Home.

I've been attending union steward and executive board meetings intermittently since January 2018.



**Jim Carlson**

Over the past seven years, during my tenure as a Social Studies teacher at High School in the Community, I have been involved with NHFT union activities, such as attending general membership and executive board meetings, as well as rarely missing a holiday or end-of-the-year party.

I've had the privilege of being a unionized employee since my time as a member of UFCW 919 while working at Stop & Shop Supermarket throughout college and beyond. In my U.S. History classroom, I teach my students the importance and history of the labor movement. I have worked as a Curriculum Facilitator for the Social Studies department.

I hold a bachelor's degree in English and M.S. in Education from the University of New Haven, and an Ed.S. (Sixth Year Degree) in Educational Leadership from Arkansas State University. Additionally, I am dual-certified in English Language Arts.