

# PROVOCATOR

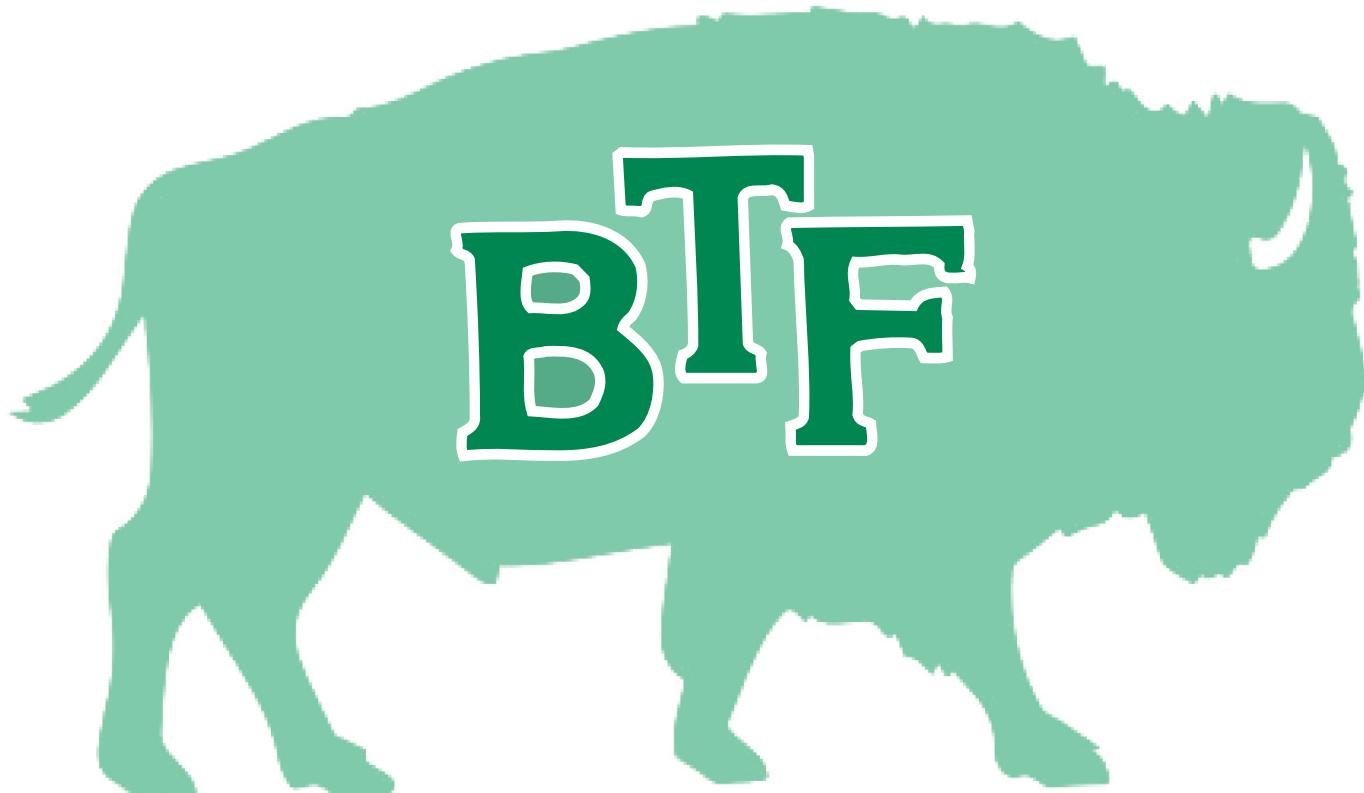
May 2023

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 53/NUMBER 3

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



# VOTE!



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**May 5, 2023**

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# President/Vice President Candidates



## Melissa Kenney President

### **Melissa Kenney for BTF President**

I am seeking your support in my candidacy for BTF President.

Your vote matters.

My teaching career in BPS spans 25 years in secondary English education. Currently I teach at Lewis J. Bennett High School of Innovative Technology. I am a proud graduate of BPS and chose to work here because it is where I grew up.

I chose to stay because I believe our students deserve to have teachers who know and understand their needs.

Being involved in the union was never a question. I feel blessed to have been raised in a union family and to have helped put a union in place at my very first full time teaching job in a catholic school in East Amherst with my vote.

I've worked in BPS on union matters for the last two decades starting as a building alternate in 2003 and now as a member of the Executive Committee. I serve as a NYSTRS delegate, a NYSUT RA delegate, an AFT delegate, and was newly elected as an NEA successor delegate. I am also a member of the NYSUT ELA subject area committee working to improve curricula and all policies related to ELA by the NYS Board of Regents.

In 2015, I worked with NYSUT on the first Member Organizing Institute for the Buffalo Believe campaign speaking directly with voters to help flip the school board resulting in our 2016 contract ratification.

I graduated from NYSUT's Leadership Institute and regularly attend NYSUT conferences taking classes to further my union

training and build coalitions with other locals, as another president said "What happens in Buffalo will happen to us all... we need to support the BTF," and we need to support them. I not only speak up, and speak out, but act when necessary.

We may not always agree with one another, but we all have the same desire when it comes to this union. We want a strong and healthy collective that protects us and continues to fight to meet the needs of our members and our students. We can accomplish so much by working together to fix the issues facing us.

Thank you for your support of not only Trish and I, but for OUR entire Uniting OUR Union team beginning on May 5th. We must BRIDGE the divide while working to strengthen our solidarity and promote unity and unionism.

Yours in Sisterhood and Solidarity,

Melissa Kenney

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Sick Leave Bank Trustee; Teacher Center Policy Board

BTF Committees: Communication/Technology; Negotiations; Political Action (2022-2023)

BTF Interview Committees for Substitute Teachers

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT English Subject Area Committee

NEA Convention Successor (2022-2023)

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



## Trisha Rosokoff Vice President

### **Trisha Rosokoff for BTF Vice-President**

I am seeking the position of Vice President of the BTF.

I have been an Elementary teacher in BPS for the past 25 years. A proud graduate of Buffalo Public Schools, I currently live in Buffalo and have lived in the city for most of my life.

From an early age, I learned why being in a union is important through my father's work in skilled trades. The union always helped improve his working conditions and wages. He helped shape me into the unionist I have become.

The first years of my career were spent teaching kindergarten at ECC #78. I held the line there on Olympic Avenue in our 2000 strike. I have taught first grade at the International School #45, my "home" for over two decades! In 2003, I became an alternate delegate and then a building delegate until appointed in 2014 to the BTF Executive Committee. In 2018, I graduated from the NYSUT Leadership Institute. The training was invaluable.

I have represented your voice as a delegate to NYSUT, AFT, and NYSTRS. I currently serve on the District's Stakeholder Committee. I also serve on NYSUT's ELL Special Area Committee, where we advocate for ELLs.

Organizing and member engagement are paramount. I am a member of the BTF Membership Committee. I was instrumental in getting members re-committed during Janus. During our last contract, I served on the Action Committee, helping to organize our members for informational picketing and rallies.

We must stand together to protect our collective bargaining rights and not be divided! We will deal with critical concerns such as the daily violence and safety of our members and students, maintaining healthy and clean schools, and proper placement of our most at-risk students, including advocating for better implementation of alternative schools and agency schools. Trainings and technology would be updated to fit the current needs; members would be educated on all the union benefits they are entitled to; meetings (in person and online) to see what our members need and issues they face would be a priority.

Melissa and I recognize that we will all face many challenges; we've been in the classroom right along with you! We would be honored and excited to be your officers. Together, through communication and collaboration, we will accomplish great things!

I kindly ask for your support and vote for our entire "Uniting OUR Union" Team. Thank you!

In Solidarity,

Trish

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Negotiations

BTF Committees: Membership

BTF District Committee of Stakeholders

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT ELL SAC Committee

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



## **Richard Nigro President**

### **Richard Nigro for BTF President**

My BPS journey began 25 years ago as an ELA teacher. I have also taught basic and intermediate computer courses at the Adult Learning Center to ENL students and other adult learners. And I have taught several

courses at the Teacher Center where I first met Melinda. Throughout my career, I have served as a Delegate Chair, Delegate, Alternate, Building Committee member, and SBMT member. I am a Teacher Center Policy Board member, and I sit on the Policy Board's Program Committee vetting courses offered through the Teacher Center based on the expressed interests of teachers. As an Executive Committee member, I sit on the Technology and Safety Committees. I am a vocal advocate for teachers, speaking at nearly every Executive Committee and Council of Delegates meeting, voicing the challenges and concerns teachers face, and offering ideas for improvements gleaned by the many conversations I have had with colleagues.

For the last several years, I have worked as an Instructional Technology Coach, a position that has afforded me unique opportunities to work and collaborate with teachers spanning literally every grade level in every department. During COVID, I provided after-hours technical and instructional support for teachers throughout the pandemic. Many of you even have my personal cell number because I will do everything in my

power and ability to help you. Both Melinda and I embrace hard work, and we are not bashful where communication is concerned. As the cornerstone of every relationship, we understand that everything we seek to accomplish and attain hinges on how we communicate.

I care about my fellow teachers, which includes my wife and daughter – both Buffalo teachers. And with my daughter looking at another 30 years before she can retire, and I want to ensure she has a strong union to stand for and behind her. I aim to see that happen. Helen Keller said, "Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much." In that spirit, I ask for your vote, support, and voice to ensure a unified and viable union for our current and future union brothers, sisters, daughters, and sons. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you. For more information, please visit our website at <https://BTYourVoice.live>.

### **CREDENTIALS**

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Building; Communication/Technology; Safety



## **Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan Vice President**

### **Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan for BTF Vice-President**

I have been a member of the BTF for more than 2 decades. In those years, I have let my voice be heard. In our Union, we may not always agree with one another, but we debate and then come to consensus. We all have contributions to make, and we work together to make changes. I serve as the Secretary in our local, and I have served on NYSUT, AFT and NEA committees as a delegate. Currently, I am the Director of the Buffalo Teacher Resource Center. This has given me a unique perspective by collaborating with teachers leading to an understanding of what both veteran and new teachers need and want to support their work. Working conditions, overtime pay, school safety, and inappropriate special education placements are just a few issues that I hear about daily. I can promise that we will investigate and use your expertise to help bring these issues to the administration and Board of Education working toward resolutions. We need to collaborate with our stakeholders for the sake of the Buffalo school children.

I also hear about the ways in which teachers want and need to be unified. That will be task number one for Rich and me. It is important that we have a welcoming and transparent union where teachers feel comfortable getting involved and providing input

knowing that their ideas and concerns are valued and acted upon. The Buffalo Teachers Federation is the second largest local in the state. We need to strengthen that fact and work with our NYSUT brothers and sisters to create a unified statewide platform for NYS teachers.

In unity there is strength. Rich and I have worked together for years. We value cooperative work. We value innovative ideas. We value teachers. Please reach out to us at (716) 939-2299 with your ideas, questions, or concerns and thank you for your vote.

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan

### **CREDENTIALS**

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board

BTF Committees: Retirement Dinner; Women's (2021-2022)

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT State Delegate to NEA;  
NYSUT Teacher Center Committee

NEA Convention Delegate

AFT Convention Delegate

**DON'T DELAY!**  
**VOTING BEGINS MAY 5, 2023**

**President-Vice President continued on Page 4**



## Marc Bruno President

### Marc Bruno for BTF President

Dear BTF friends and colleagues,

After 42 years on the same road, I firmly believe it is time for a new direction for the Buffalo Teachers Federation. The BTF is at a crossroads, and we have a rare opportunity to reform and rebrand the BTF, the union we all love so dearly. Everything from our communications systems to our public image is outdated and in need of serious reform. My Vice-Presidential running mate Patrick Foster and I have made in person, face-to-face school visits the cornerstone of our campaign and, if elected, regular school visits will be the catalyst for much-needed reforms in our union. Patrick and I will visit all Buffalo Schools on a regular basis and ask these three simple yet important questions: What is working? What isn't working? What can we do to help your specific school?

The main role of any union president is to be the spokesperson for the entire membership and organize the membership to speak with one unified voice. If elected, my running mate Patrick Foster and I will ensure the speakers list is filled at every BOE meeting with members articulating their concerns about our ever-deteriorating working conditions that impact the social and emotional health of both students and teachers. Patrick Foster and I are the only ticket who currently

speak regularly at BOE meetings, who conduct regular face-to-face school visits, support our leadership when needed, and hold them accountable when our constitution and bylaws are violated. Patrick and I speak up when others have stayed silent.

Patrick and I have over 40 years of combined union representative experience. I have been a union representative my entire 22 year career. I have been a member of the Council of Delegates and Executive Committee my entire career. I have a proven track record of advocating for teachers in my school and throughout the BPS, whether it be in the principal's office, at BOE meetings or in various forms of the media. Pat Foster and I are both City of Buffalo residents and have children attending Buffalo Public Schools. We couldn't have more skin in the game for Buffalo Schools to be reformed and succeed. If elected, and with your help, Pat Foster and I will lead the BTF into a new era of strength and significance. Buffalo Teachers deserves nothing less!

In Solidarity,

Marc Bruno

CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson



## Patrick Foster Vice President

### Patrick Foster for BTF Vice-President

Greetings Colleagues,

I have been a teacher and coach in the Buffalo Public Schools since 2001, teaching social studies at Lafayette High School and International Prep for the past twenty-two years and coaching football and basketball in the District for the past seventeen years.

My passion for teaching and learning is matched with a passion for union leadership and advocacy for our teachers, students, and schools. I have served as delegate chairperson and delegate, building committee chairperson, Executive Committee member, and delegate to our NYSUT and AFT conventions over the past twenty years and through some of the most trying and tumultuous times of our profession.

I have often witnessed how the power of our collective voice can create positive and unstoppable change. With members united we stood strong against unfair designations that our schools were failing, austere budgets that denied students and teachers the resources they need and deserve, and an over-emphasis on high stakes testing in schools. Together with you, we fought back and achieved greater resources, time, and innovative programming, and we kept our historic schools open with expanded and improved services for Buffalo students.

In recent school visits, Marc Bruno and I have been awe-inspired by the remarkable dedication of our teachers and their abundant ideas and solutions for positive change. We are committed to making regular school visits as leaders who are highly accessible

and responsive to the unique and universal needs of teachers, students, and schools.

Our vision is to empower teachers and to raise a resounding, collective, and inclusive voice for the membership. To facilitate this, we will consistently speak at Board of Education meetings as proactive stakeholders impacting and contributing to the shaping of District policies. We will improve BTF's communication and digital platforms so members can access, change, and receive information clearly and efficiently.

Marc and I will consistently deliver timely contracts so compensation and benefits keep up with rising costs. We will be steadfast and determined at the bargaining table so as to present agreements worthy of your professionalism minus the long lapses.

Marc Bruno and I would be honored to earn your vote for BTF President and Vice-President. We look forward to earning and holding your trust as leaders who will tirelessly advocate for Buffalo teachers and for the success of our students and schools in these challenging times. Thank you.

CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate

BTF Committees: Grievance; Political Action; Grading Policy Manual (Professional Council)

NYSUT Convention Delegate (2021-2022)

AFT Convention Delegate (2022-2023)

NYSTRS Delegate



# Secretary Candidate



**Mark Mecca**  
**Secretary**

Hello! With your support, I will be Secretary of the BTF for the next two years. I appreciate your confidence in me! I want to thank Phil for his tireless leadership of this organization for the past 42 years - he is truly amazing! Phil was the BTF president when I was a student in BPS and I am honored to have had the opportunity to know him and work with him as part of the BTF's executive committee for the past six years. The BTF is in need of rejuvenation, but as we go forward to make needed changes, we cannot forget our roots and we cannot forego all that Phil has built and established. I have joined the Uniting our Union Team because we are a diverse team that represents both established leaders

and emerging leaders with fresh ideas. We are the team that can move our union forward into the future under new leadership with an emphasis on customer service for our members. Please take time to vote in our next election and please vote for Melissa, Trish and all of the other candidates on our team. Thank you for your support of our team!

## CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023  
BTF Executive Committee  
BTF Vote-Cope  
NYSUT Convention Delegate  
NEA Convention Delegate  
AFT Convention Delegate  
NYSTRS Delegate

# Treasurer Candidate



**Joseph Montante**  
**Treasurer**

It has been my honor to serve as the BTF treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee for the last six years. During that time, I have continued the tradition of transparency the Federation has always demonstrated with its funds. If the BTF's finances were not in order or if expenses exceeded income, we would not be able to perform the services our members need and deserve. I am happy to report that over the past two years we have brought you:

- balanced budgets with no dues increases
- monthly financial reports before the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates
- continued accountability commensurate with accounting standards for reimbursing elected delegates to conventions
- an expected surplus in this year's budget
- annual publication of the CPA audit report of BTF finances

In addition to serving as your treasurer, I also work full time at the BTF office as a Presidential Assistant. In that capacity, I have managed the Extended Pay Plan for over 2000 teachers, helped many with various problems, and served as managing editor of the Provocator.

This union is important to me and I am asking for your vote as BTF treasurer. Trust in my record of experience, integrity, and accountability.

## CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023  
BTF Executive Committee; Negotiations Team; Teacher Center Policy Board  
BTF Committees: Communication/Technology; Finance; Grievance; Membership; Political Action  
BTF Provocator; BTF Retirement Dinner; Retirement Workshop  
NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Pension Committee  
NEA Convention Successor  
AFT Convention Delegate



**REMEMBER TO**  
**VOTE**  
**VOTING BEGINS MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**



# Executive Committee Candidates

## PreK-6 Elementary (6 to be Elected)



### Chris Stephens

My name is Christopher Stephens. I am humbly asking you for your vote for Executive Committee PK-6. I have proudly been an active member of our union for over 20 years. I served as a member of the EC for two terms and look forward to continuing that important work. I also served as delegate chair or building delegate for two decades. I have experience with serving multiple years on SBMT and Building Committee. I have participated in NYSUT's Leadership retreats and currently sit on the BTF's Finance Committee for the 6th year.

I am driven and very passionate about bringing pride back to our union. I understand the needs of the Elementary Teacher and want to represent us. I am willing to question people's intentions and possess the desire and willingness to speak up and advocate for others.

Your vote for me will be a vote for someone vested in the BTF. My wife and brother are BTF members, and I have many friendships with teachers throughout the district. I am also invested in my school, and my students, as I have taught at #95 for over 20 years.

MY VOICE WILL BE YOUR VOICE!

**VOTE CHRISTOPHER STEPHENS PK-6**

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate (2022-2023)

BTF Committees: Finance



### Janine Schuster

#### RE-ELECT JANINE SCHUSTER FOR PRE-K-6

Currently, I'm teaching Pre-K at B.E.S.T. #6 where I have taught for most of my 22 years in BPS. Even with 35 years of experience as a teacher, each year presents its own unique challenges! Persevering through adversity enables me to face and solve a myriad of problems with the support of my colleagues and the strength of my union sisters and brothers watching my back.

Before I was elected to the Executive Committee of the BTF, I was building delegate and delegate chair. My Executive Committee position allows me to advocate for the entire BTF membership. My focus has been on the Teacher Center Policy Board and the BPS Professional Learning Team, both of which offer professional development opportunities. We are in constant need of continuing education to be prepared for the myriad of changes we face with in our daily teaching.

I would be honored to continue to work for you on the Executive Committee to help get you the professional development you need and will continue to work on the BTF Finance Committee, Educators of Special Education Committee and serve as a Delegate for the NYSUT Convention.

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board

BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education; Finance; Professional Learning Team

NYSUT Committee on Recommendations for Education during COVID (2021-2022)



### Kim Parzymieso

I am excited to be nominated for Executive Committee and would be proud to represent PK-6 teachers.

I grew up in Buffalo and graduated from McKinley High School. I have been teaching in Buffalo for 16 years. I spent four years at School 37 before transferring to International School #45. I currently teach 2nd grade but have also taught Kindergarten and 4th grade. I serve as Delegate Chair, and I am on Building Committee. I have also served on my school's SBMT for 10 years and served as a Delegate for 7. Throughout the years, I have attended several BTF Delegate workshops and have participated in the BTF/NYSUT/NEA's Buffalo Students Deserve Week of Action. I have also attended many BTF rallies, protests, and pickets. I believe in and donate to NYSUT's Vote Cope fund.

I would like to represent your classroom/building needs and concerns as an Executive Committee member. Thank you for your support!

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson (2022-2023)

BTF Building Delegate (2021-2022)



### Tara Rosa

I'm a 6th Grade Teacher at Hillery Park #27. I am committed to Teachers' voices being heard and not just sitting in the room. Being the building Delegate, a member of SBMT as well as on our school's Instructional Leadership Team, I have learned you have to be in the room to make the change. When it comes to this committee, I know I may not seem as experienced as some of our current members, however I have nine years Teaching experience. Having lived in Buffalo most of my life, I think I am the perfect candidate to help bring forth new ideas.

I know what it is like being a student, parent, and teacher in BPS. Keeping our district safe and holding those accountable to a high standard is what I represent. I want to bring a new voice to our committee who supports BTF as a whole community, federation members, district, parents, and Students working together as one. The Buffalo Public School should match the other surrounding schools in resources, so that BPS does not continue to lose good teachers to other districts. Our students deserve the best and so do we so VOTE for me!

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson (2022-2023)



## April Hall

I'm a third-grade teacher at HHE, BPS#80. Over the past few years, I have felt honored to serve on the Executive Committee of the BTF. This prominent position gives me the opportunity to stand as a pillar and represent the best interest of my hard-working colleagues, and the young scholars that we serve here in the Buffalo District. In the upcoming years of my service, it is my plan to use my past achievements applicably to our community where necessary and most beneficial. That said, it is with humility that I familiarize you with my most recent accomplishment. In 2022-2023, I was elected to attend the 2-part NYSUT Leadership Institute. It was a privilege. There was so much to learn. There is so much to practice. I can't wait! Amid several aspects of the course, 1-on-1 conversations are ones I can use with you, immediately as the new season begins. These conversations prove to foster shared interests, knowledge, open mindedness, and of course SOLIDARITY among both novel and veteran teachers. You will see that these conversations will impact union changes as well as bring new and active members aboard. Please consider my previous experiences, and latest gains. Vote for me.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Ethnic Minority Involvement

BTF Interviewing Teams; SBMT (2022-2023)

NYSUT Leadership Convention (2021-2022)

NYSTRS Delegate (2022-2023)



## Rachel Binda-Lis

My name is Rachel Binda-Lis. I have been a classroom teacher in the city of Buffalo for 21 years. During this time, I served my building as a BTF delegate and a member of the building committee. Proudly, I have represented Buffalo teachers locally and nationally as a voting delegate for NYSTRS, NYSUT, AFT & NEA. I have been privileged to represent PreK-6 teachers on the executive committee and have also co-chaired Public Relations for over 10 years.

I recognize that change is needed! I believe that we need to Unite OUR Union and remember WHY we have one of the strongest collective bargaining units in the state. My commitment to Buffalo teachers will always remain the same. I will represent YOU to the best of my abilities, and work toward amicable relations between the board and teachers... which will strengthen appropriate and positive morale.

I look forward to reunifying OUR union and show everyone how strong we are TOGETHER! My purpose is to continue to bring the concerns of Elementary teachers to the board, administration, and to the community. I remain excited and look forward to serving YOU in the next term! Thank you in advance for your support.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Building; Public Relations

NEA Convention Delegate

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate

**Online voting  
May 5-16**

# **Executive Committee Candidates**

## **7-12 Secondary (7 to be Elected)**



### M. Sue Raichilson

I am a Riverside CTE/Business teacher and serve on the BTF Executive Committee and am actively involved on many BTF committees as well as NYSUT, NEA and AFT. Currently, I am Retirement Workshop Chairperson, co-founder of the Women's Committee, Trustee of the Supplemental Benefit Fund, and Secretary to the BTF Council of Delegates. I am also a NYSTRS Delegate, Delegate to the NEA Annual Representative Assembly and the AFT Convention, NEA Women's Caucus Treasurer and the NYS Alternate to the NEA Board of Directors.

I have fought vigorously for all our members, stood strong and united against those who have tried to threaten our union and profession. Now, more than ever, education is being challenged, books and curriculum banned, teachers under professional and personal attacks. We are concerned because our students' academic progress and freedoms, as well as their personal and emotional well-beings are at stake. We must remain strong and even more united than ever for them and for all teachers. I am committed to all of you, our dedicated, hard-working Buffalo teachers. Please

allow me the privilege to continue to fight for our students, our union and our profession. Thank you.

M. Sue Raichilson

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee; Secretary to the Council of Delegates; Retirement Workshop Chairperson

BTF Committees: Social; Women's; Retirement Dinner

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT State Delegate to NEA; NYSUT Committees: Women's; Career & Technical Education; APIC; Hispanic; African-American; LGBTQ+; Peace and Justice

NEA Convention Delegate; NEA Board of Directors (NYS Alternate); NEA Women's Caucus Steering Committee; NEA Women's Caucus Northeast Coordinator; NEA Caucuses: APIC; Hispanic; African-American; LGBTQ+; Peace and Justice; Unity

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



## Thomas (Tom) Anthony

Throughout my 17-year career in BPS I have taught mathematics in several buildings: International Prep (06-13), Futures (14-15) and Middle Early College HS since 2014. While teaching, I have met many colleagues and worked with many people. My union service includes serving as BTF delegate or alternate at I Prep from 2007 to 2014, member of the Executive Committee for the past 7 years and as a NYSUT RA Delegate from 2011 – 2016 and 2019 - 2023. I serve as a delegate for the AFT and attended the 2022 AFT convention. I am a member of the NYSUT Educational Technology Committee. I have attended BTF Leadership workshops in 2015 and 2017 and the NYSUT Leadership Conferences in 2019 and 2023. I am the chairman of the BTF technology committee, where I am working to create better communication throughout BTF. I am working to get a BTF App, so our members can communicate with each other. My goal for BTF is to increase member communication and member involvement by creating workshops for teachers and having an all-membership meeting at least once a year. We are one union. We need to work together and remain strong.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Committees: Building; Communication/Technology

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Educational Technology Committee

AFT Convention Delegate



## Eve Shippens

I am a 22-year BPS science teacher and am currently at Community East High School. I have been involved in union work for about 13 years, first as a Building Delegate, then Delegate Chair, and now serve BTF as co-chair the Community Engagement Committee and on Executive and Political Action Committees. During this time, I have been active within our union, and with other unions, community groups, and organizing workers, on issue-based campaigns and in direct actions/pickets for workers' rights and social justice issues.

I am also a Delegate to NYSUT and AFT and serve on the NYSUT Social Justice Steering Committee. I have been part of the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute as participant and as a coach, conducting one-to-one member organizing for public education, against the proposed New York State constitutional convention, and for recommitment to the union after the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision. Additionally, I have gone through numerous union trainings including the 2016 NYSUT Leadership Institute and annual NYSUT Summer and Winter Leadership Conferences.

I am running for re-election for Executive Committee 7-12 to continue to the work for our union values of economic, social, and racial justice!

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Community Engagement; Political Action

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Social Justice Steering Committee

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



## Richard Pyszczek

A native of Buffalo, NY, I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and later attended SUNY College at Buffalo where I earned my Permanent Certification in Secondary Social Studies 7-12. I have spent most of my education career at Grover Cleveland High School in Buffalo, NY. I have taught every grade level of Social Studies for grades 7-12. Grade 12 Economics and Civics, Grade 11 United States History, Global History and Geography I & II, US & NYS History grades 7 & 8, IB Economics Standard Level, AP Human Geography.

In 2018 & 2013, I was named NYS History Day Teacher of the Year for my work with students in the BPS and the entire WNY History Day region. In 2015, I was named Distinguished Alumni for SUNY Erie Community College for my work with the BPS as a classroom teacher and NFCSS President. In 2018, I was awarded the Daniel B. Niederlander Award by the Buffalo History Museum for my leadership of the NFCSS. In 2018 I was awarded the Empire State Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2022 I was named to the NYS 250th Commemoration Commission.



## Dennis Brancato

It is an honor to have served for many years as your voice on the BTF Executive Committee and the Council of Delegates. Teachers' concerns remain at the center of my service on the Council and Executive Committee. Concerns vary by teachers' circumstances, positions, and stages of life and career. All teachers' concerns matter, and I represent everyone. Every teacher in our union is important. As a trustee for the SLB, a Grievance Committee member, and an Executive Committee member, I work hard to protect our teachers, make sure our teachers receive their benefits, and continually improve working conditions for all BTF members.

My union experiences include serving as the Senior Sick Leave Bank Trustee, BTF and NYSUT Leadership Workshops, serving as a NYSTRS Delegate, serving as NYSUT Convention Delegate, and serving by appointment as Sergeant-at-Arms for the NYSUT Representative Assembly. Locally, I represent BTF at the NYSUT district meetings and WNY Area Labor Federation (WNYALF) meetings. In these activities, I represent you. It would be an honor to continue to represent you for the challenges ahead, and the changes that BTF needs to make to serve you better.

Please vote for Dennis Brancato for 7-12 Executive Committee

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Sick Leave Bank Trustee

BTF Committees: Grievance; Political Action

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Political Action

AFT Convention Delegate; Organization

WNYALF Area Labor Federation

NYSTRS Delegate

**7-12 Secondary continued on Page 9**



## **Mike Jeffers**

I am requesting continued support as an Executive Committee member. I've spent the past decade plus teaching at School 131 (currently 19). We are at a crossroads in the history of OUR union. An experienced team with experienced leadership is our only way forward while bringing in and fostering the fresh ideas of people new to running for the Executive Committee. The ball is in our court. We need to continue to support those who have been in the trenches and can offer new and achievable solutions to our problems as Educators in the BPS. Now is not the time to give in to those who wish to sully the legacy of the BTF while offering no real solutions or needed experience. We need strength and solidarity. There is a war, and we are the weapons. We need a Team that represents all levels of education, from birth through adulthood. We have that Team.

I have served the BTF as Delegate Chair, Building Committee Chair, SBMT, Delegate to the NYSUT Representative Assembly, Delegate for the AFT Convention, a member of NYSUT's Member Organizing Institute, and my committee involvement includes: Vote/Cope, ReVisioning Alternative Programming Committee, and the Elections Committee.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Building; ReVisioning Alternative Programming; Vote/Cope; SBMT

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Member Organizing Institute; NYSUT Winter Leadership Conference (2022-2023)

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



## **Sam Fritz**

Eight years ago, my colleagues at School 3 asked me to fill a leadership void in our union representation. I accepted the Delegate Chair position with the understanding that I would not pursue aggressive confrontation unless all other options had been exhausted. I was determined to build bridges and open dialogue. I am proud of my record in this regard. Since then, I, along with our building union teams, have developed a relationship with our administrators that has allowed for difficult issues to be discussed and addressed with appropriate passion and respect. The relationship between our District Administration and our Union is the most dysfunctional and toxic Management/Workforce partnership in which I have ever worked. This toxic relationship has led to countless delays in contract and MOU negotiations and the many punitive policies under which we work. If entrusted with a position on the Executive Committee, I will continue my commitment to bridge-building and cooperative dialogue in pursuit of our common goals. Please vote for me for Executive Committee (7-12) so I can bring my relationship building skills to the task of strengthening our union and its relationship with our administration. We can do better.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Sick Leave Bank Trustee; Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson

SBMT member

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## **Aaron Conners**

# **Executive Committee Candidates**

## **K-12 Art, Music, other... (7 to be Elected)**



### **Susan Baker**

Elect Susan Baker for BTF Executive Committee!

Hello my name is Susan Baker and I am running to serve you on the K-12 Uniting Our Union slate.

I have been teaching in Buffalo for the past 18 years as a Music Teacher.

As a current Executive Committee member, I serve on the Special

Education Committee, attend numerous trainings and support NYSUT's Vote Cope Fund.

I would be honored to represent you and your concerns.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education (2022-2023)



### **Amy Flynn**

I am a proud union member that has over 12 years of experience in the union. Though I am an experienced BTF Executive Committee member, I have not forgotten my roots as a Delegate Chairperson, SBMT member, and I am still on the Federation Building Committee. While fighting for all BTF members on the Executive Committee,

my building level experiences of successfully standing up for our teachers proves valuable as I stand up for all teachers at the district level.

I am committed to the BTF and to my colleagues in all schools; together, we are the BTF! My dedication on the BTF Executive Committee has evolved into representing BTF on joint BTF-District committees and representing the BTF at AFT and NYSUT activities. Most recently I have completed NYSUT Leadership Institute and look forward to putting that training to good use.

We continue to stand strong as a union when we stand behind every BTF member. We stand shoulder to shoulder with newly hired teachers, veteran teachers, and our retired colleagues. It would be an honor to continue to serve you on the BTF Executive Committee. Please vote for Amy Flynn for K-12 Executive Committee. Thank you.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Building; Educators of Special Education; Finance; Women's (2021-2022)

BTF Professional Learning Teams

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Commissioner's Advisory Council; NYSUT Leadership Institute (2022-2023)

AFT Convention Delegate (2022-2023)

NYSTRS Delegate



## Melinda Cuvillo

My name is Melinda (Mindy) Cuvillo, and I am running for Executive Committee to represent K-12 Teachers. I have been teaching in the district for the past 10 years, and my interest is in representing the teachers in our district that have opinions and views that have seemed to go unheard. We all deserve a voice, and I would love the chance to sit with the team and bring some new, fresh ideas and viewpoints to the table. No one group, union experience or not, should have a monopoly on

the decisions and negotiations. I am not running under any "slate", as many other candidates seem to be.

I'm on the BPS Teacher slate. That is my only team. And we are all on it.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. With that being said, please consider taking a chance on me.

Thank you!



## Desirée Breckenridge-Barnes

Re-Elect Executive Board Member and K-12 Special Education Teacher Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes

With over three decades of service in and out of the classroom, I have worked with the BTF, NYSUT, AFT and NEA. Service is my mission as I seek to uplift and engage our local community. I believe we as a BPS community, need to focus on maintaining strategic retention in the Union with Solidarity, safe learning environments for the protection of our colleagues and the children we teach.

I have led various inclusion initiatives within union leadership and set BPS community goals that encourage the intergenerational communication within our union and in our classroom community. My experience is advocating for teachers and students who identify as LGBTQIA+ who have been affected by the social justice movement.

With experience and inclusive leadership practices, I have the perspective to help build a stronger future for the BTF and our shared priorities by engaging and doing the work. Serving on the Women's Committee, Safety Community, Ethnic Minority Involvement, Interview Team, Report card Committee.



## Sean Crowley

My name is Sean Crowley and I am running for Pre K-12. I started teaching in 1988 at Burgard and the faculty there all understood a simple truth: We do better when we stick together and look out for each other.

Collegiality isn't what it used to be. I want to belong to a union that looks out for its members and makes everyone feel like they're doing something important. If you and I disagree in our

feelings, that's fine, you don't have to agree with my point of view. How we treat each other is going to go a lot further towards the work climate we end up with than my opinions about the way negotiations should go.

I'm running to be part of an invigorated BTF that pulls members together and keeps us on the same team. My daughter, a Tulane Law graduate, started working for the NLRB in August. Knowing my daughter sought out labor law and she's willing to fight for Starbucks and Tesla workers makes me proud. I think I can borrow some of her energy for this task. Let's pull together now and remember we are stronger when we're united.



## Melisa (Mel) Holden

I am running for K12 executive committee to represent my union brothers and sisters as we work together to uphold our contractual rights. I have worked in the BPS for 23 years (I paid strike dues and was affected by the wage freeze just like many of you). I have been an active and dedicated delegate at #195 for over 15 years, and served as delegate chair for 5 of those years. In addition, I served on our school's

building committee for ten years (which is a difficult and important balancing act in a building). In 2016 I served as a delegate for the NYSUT RA. I believe strongly in strengthening the power of the union from the rank and file up, and will build on my years of union work next at the executive committee level. As a school librarian, I plan to be a voice for teachers in special content areas, as I know we have different situations and issues than content area teachers. I look forward to serving you all for the next two years!



## Ruyvette Townsend

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as we embarked on a new contract in this post pandemic time where our students and staff are experiencing emotional and social stress, making our job hard but doable. We must maintain our union strength by re-braiding the strands that hold us together; Solidarity, unity, and the fight to preserve the best union in the state. This union represents every teacher, in the schools, at city hall, in the courts and across the state. I have been vocal for us on every level. I am asking that you vote for me once again so that I can retain a seat on the Executive Committee, allowing me to continue to represent you in maintaining what we have acquired and obtain what we deserve.

I have worked in this district for the past 30 years. I am currently an Attendance Teacher. I have been an active, visible part of this union for 15 years. I work to help maintain our strength, using what I have learned as a Co-Chair of the Public Relations Committee, and the Minority Committee.

I look forward to continuing to show my commitment of solidarity. Love

I thank you for your vote.

Ruyvette Townsend

CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee; Teacher Center Policy Board

BTF Committees: Ethnic Minority Involvement; Political Action; Public Relations

BTF Professional Learning Teams

NYSUT Committee of 100 Institute

AFT Convention Delegate

NEA Black Caucus

NYSTRS Delegate



## Jean Marie Dickey

My name is Jean Marie Dickey, and I am running for the K-12 Executive Committee. I am a 7th and 8th grade teacher at South Side in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department. I have worked at many schools throughout the district and have a very good understanding of the challenges faced by teachers.

I have been with the BPS for 22 years and have served as a Delegate and Alternate. I regularly attend BTF Rally's and have

attended school board meetings in support of our teachers.

I regularly contact our union leadership and I am not afraid to speak on issues that affect teachers. I will do my best to represent you with any concerns you may have regarding student success, school safety, equity, and contract issues.

I have a strong passion for our union, and I will advocate for all concerns of our BTF membership. I am humbly asking for your trust and vote so that I can represent and strongly advocate for all members' best interests. Together we will stay united. Thank you very much for your consideration.



## Jennifer Kosobucki

My name is Jennifer Kosobucki. I am a Special Education teacher at Houghton Academy School #69. I have been teaching for 17 years. I have been a Buffalo Public School employee since 2013. In 2018, I became more involved with the union because I wanted to become more familiar with our contract and contribute by having a voice. I began by being a delegate and on the building committee. The last 3 school years I have been our building Delegate Chairperson. I have represented the teachers in my building to the best of my

ability with fidelity to our contract. With the many struggles we face in our buildings and the district. I want to continue to strive for positive changes and a fresh voice by being a member on the B.T.F Executive Committee. I am confident I can represent all BPS teachers in a way that would make a positive impact for all members. We are better together!

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson



## Karen Kane

I have been a Buffalo teacher and active BTF member for over thirty years. I am proud to have continued a family tradition of union activism during my career - serving as BTF delegate, alternate, and delegate chair. As BTF delegate chair, I worked hard to keep members informed and engaged while addressing a myriad of issues. I now hope to extend

my advocacy for teachers by serving on Executive Committee. I have demonstrated my firm belief in public education and the importance of our collective voice by participating in numerous BTF and NYSUT sponsored trainings, forums, and seminars; attending countless rallies and protests; and by serving two terms as a trustee on the Orchard Park Board of Education.

I believe the key to our future strength as a union is you. All members should feel empowered, well-informed, and heard. Effective outreach to all members will require innovative approaches and coordinated efforts and resources. I reflect often on the words of Alice Walker, "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." I hope to serve on the BTF team that empowers all members and helps them appreciate solidarity and unionism.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson

## Phil Gangi

Dear BTF membership,

My name is Philip Gangi and I am running for executive committee for grades k-12. I have been in education for 26 years, 22 of them at Buffalo public schools. I have been an active union member for the last 12 years both as a delegate and delegate chairperson. It has been my honor to serve my colleagues and building in a multitude of duties. I am well versed in the contract and well suited to handle the many problems that arise on a daily basis.

My wish is to be an impactful member of our executive committee and usher in a new day for the BTF. One in which we do not have expired contracts, unfulfilled grievances and unhappy teachers. I will strive to work tirelessly so that we can be efficient problem solvers for the future of Buffalo educators.

Please consider voting for me, Phil Gangi (executive committee k-12) on election day. Thank you.

In Solidarity,

Phil Gangi

Delegate chairperson #357

## Melissa Johnson



## Shawn Edinger

Shawn Edinger, PE/Health Teacher Burgard HS. Running as an independent for Executive Committee K-12 teachers. Union Officers for Local 264 Blue Collar City PME DPT of Buffalo and Baltimore City where I became Union Delegate as a teacher.



## Ellen Malone

My name is Ellen Malone, and I am a part-time hourly teacher at School #46, also known as the Adult Learning Center (ALC). I have had the privilege to serve two terms on the Executive Committee and with your support, I look forward to serving for a third term.

The ALC offers High School Equivalency (aka GED), English as a Second Language, Career & Technical Training to individuals 16 years and older. Most ALC teachers are part-time hourly and have temporary status under the contract. ALC teachers, like all teachers, deserve improved pay, work rules and improved status under the contract that aligns with contract and probationary teachers. For far too long, our teachers have faced distinctive challenges that rarely get addressed in new contracts

– it is vital for ALC to continue to have informed and experienced representation on the Executive Committee.

While on the Executive Committee, I have continually raised issues affecting ALC teachers and how the current contract has adversely impacted, and how the proposed contract provisions may affect our ALC teachers. During current negotiations, I was fortunate to represent ALC teachers and hope to continue serving all teachers in the future. Please Re-elect Ellen Malone for K-12!

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Membership



## Greg Sawicki

THANK YOU for your past support electing me, since 2015, to serve on OUR BTF Executive Committee. It's truly an honor to serve. The experience, cohesiveness and actions of the Executive Committee have kept our Union strong. Our union is working to secure a fair, new contract IMMEDIATELY and will likely be facing very new challenges in the coming year. I want to continue being a watchdog and voice of reason for US.

I am an active member of OUR Executive Committee, extending my union passion and experience to make a difference for ALL OF US. I also serve: on the Teacher Center Policy board, as a NYSUT delegate, NYSTRS delegate, and on the NYSUT Special Area subcommittee (Special Education). I have volunteered at phone banks and polls during election season. I attend all BTF leadership and NYSUT leadership training events.

I have attended EVERY Council of Delegates meeting since 2011 and have only missed two Executive Committee meetings since I began in 2014. I promise to continue that dedication - for ALL of US.

I humbly ask you for your vote this year, so I can continue to be a strong advocate for EVERY BUFFALO TEACHER's best interests.

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board

BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education

NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Special Education Subcommittee

NYSTRS Delegate

# At-Large Teachers (3 to be Elected)



## Brian Meyer

Thank you for the nomination to represent you as a member of our executive committee. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously – and I look forward to advocating for you under our new President & Vice-President. I will continue to bring your issues to the table for discussion, and I hope that they are acknowledged and actually acted upon in a timely fashion. I have spent the better part of my two decades as a member of BTF in the capacity of instructional technology coach, helping teachers and students alike, and pledge to continue to do so in this role.

Our union has had many challenges lately – internally and externally. We need rise above this and come together now more than ever before and uphold the values of what it means to be a UNION. Better communication is the key, along with essential upgrades to equity and safety. The time is now. It would be an honor to have your vote.

In solidarity!

Brian Meyer

### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee

BTF Committees: Communication/Technology



## David Stephens

I am a special education teacher at WNYDT school #273. In my twenty-year career I have held most special education jobs possible at Burgard, Pathways, East and many various summer positions. I can no longer be a passive bystander to the waning solidarity. I want to help improve communication, engage the membership, and encourage participation for all but especially those

who feel as if they are not part of the process. Many of us don't even vote in our BTF elections or stick around for the union portion of the monthly school faculty meetings. As a first time building BTF delegate chair I have found there has been a lack of union education opportunities or prioritized talking points to bring back to the membership at the building level communicated to me. I would like to bring the rank and file's voice to the forefront, so that we can all feel as if we are proud to be a part of the BTF. Transparency, democratic principles, and fair representation must be central tenets of any healthy labor Union. I ask for your vote to continue to represent you, but in an expanded capacity.

### CREDENTIALS

2022-2023

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson



### Michael Mecca

My name is Michael Mecca: I am seeking reelection for a fifth term to the Executive Committee in the At-Large category. If reelected, I would bring my extensive experience to the Executive Committee. During my career as a Buffalo teacher, I have gained wide-ranging union experience by serving for most of my 28 years as BTF Delegate Chair, delegate, alternate delegate, Building Committee Chair, and with the Executive Committee. I also have gained extensive union experience by serving you on the BTF Finance Committee, BTF Membership Committee, as a NYSUT convention delegate, an AFT convention delegate, and as a NYSTRS delegate. This is a difficult time for educators, regardless of experience or tenure area. As a teacher of over 28 years and an active BTF member, I bring experienced leadership with a background including my union experience, and teaching experience in both Junior High and as a High School teacher. I am optimistic that you will vote in this election and find that an experienced, team oriented individual like myself is worthy of your consideration for Executive Committee. Thank you, and please vote for Michael Mecca.

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Executive Committee; Building Delegate Chairperson/Building Committee Chairperson

BTF Committees: Finance; Membership

NYSUT Convention Delegate

AFT Convention Delegate

NYSTRS Delegate



### Dr. Daphne C. McNab

I am a tenured ENL teacher with the Buffalo Public School District. I teach at schools #42 Occupational Training Center and #131@86 Alternative. I have been able to deepen my involvement with our local union as an alternate, and the Ethnic Minority Involvement Committee, the Juneteenth Parade Committee, Safety Committee, and the Women's Committee, Teacher Recruitment Day representing the union, and the BTF interview teams (Social Studies, ELA, and Substitute Teacher). Our focus this year is how to make the union better and make it more inclusive to ensure that our union remains strong and being more inclusive of minority teachers. With the rapid pace of how things are changing it is important that we repair the harm of the past and provide timely feedback on issues that concern our teachers with agency. It would be my honor and privilege to be able to serve as a new face as an At-Large member for the BTF.

#### Dr. Daphne C. McNab

#### CREDENTIALS

2021-2022, 2022-2023

BTF Committees: Ethnic Minority Involvement; Safety (2022-2023); Women's;

BTF Interview Teams (Social Studies, ELA, Substitute Teachers)

**TAKE THE TIME  
TO VOTE.  
IT IS BOTH YOUR RIGHT AND  
RESPONSIBILITY!!**

**Voting opens Friday  
May 5, 2023 and closes  
Tuesday, May 16, 2023  
at 11:59 p.m.**

*The BTF Elections Committee thanks ALL the Officer Candidates  
for participating in our BTF Elections 2023!*



*Mary Favata, Chairperson*

*Brian Hilton, Secretary*

*Maria Baker*

*April Bartosz*

*Frances Costanzo*

*Gabrielle Lockwood*

*Chelsey Waz*

**BTF ELECTIONS**

**VOTE**



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MAY  
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**VICE PRESIDENT**

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Mark Mecca #197

**K- 6TH**

1. Rachel Binda- Lis #65
2. April Hall #80
3. Melissa Johnson #195
4. Kim Parzymieso #45
5. Tara Rosa #27
6. Janine Schuster #6

**At-Large**

1. Dr. Daphne McNab #42 & #131@86

**Secondary 7-12th**

1. Thomas "Tom" Anthony #335@200
2. Mike Jeffers #19
3. Sue Raichilson #208
4. Eve Shippens #309

**PRE-K - 12TH**

1. Susan Baker #3 & #74
2. Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes #355@28
3. Sean Crowley #208
4. Mel Holden #195
5. Karen Kane #12
6. Ellen Malone #46

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