

Member Spotlight – Natasha Goddard

Natasha's leadership and experience were in full effect at the fall conference with her presentation on "Activism and Student Voice in Literature."

The Bio: "I can't believe it, but I have been teaching for almost 25 years. I am currently the English Department Head at Wellesley Middle School in Wellesley, MA, and I teach 8th grade English. I've been Department Head for 7 years and I've taught in Wellesley for the last 18 years."

A Favorite Book: "This is a hard question! When I taught 7th grade, I loved teaching [Mississippi Trial, 1955 by Chris Crowe](#). The book is historical fiction in that it is about the Emmett Till murder and trial. However, the book's main character, Hiram Hillburn, is fictional. I loved teaching this book because my students were not only engaged in the book, but also with the time period. They raised questions about racism, privilege, and courage. I guess it makes sense, then, that my favorite 8th grade book is *All American Boys* by [Jason Reynolds](#) and [Brendan Kiely](#). I have a serious crush on Jason Reynolds, and I think this book is incredible at addressing race, class, and family dynamics. I love discussing Quinn's character because he is suddenly made aware of his whiteness and what it means. It's a fascinating journey for me and my students."

Something Personal: "When I can find time to myself I love to run/workout, read, and eat. The running and working out help me relieve stress, the eating and reading help me relax and recover. It's the perfect balance! "



An Influence: "My love of all things James Baldwin motivates me on a daily basis. My favorite quotation of his is, *"I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."* My goal as a teacher is to teach kids to think critically and analytically about their society and themselves. You can't teach kids what to think; you need to teach them how to think. How to ask questions."

A Go-to Strategy: "Socratic Seminars are my go-to. I offer an open-ended question for students to think about and allow them the time and space to take the conversation where ever they like (within reason). I love this strategy because it's all about what the students are thinking in a particular moment. They are leading, arguing, and moving the conversation on their own. It takes a lot of work, but once students get it, it is amazing to watch."