

Candidate statement:

Hugh D. Birdsall, Green Party Candidate for the Clinton Board of Education

As a member of the Connecticut Green Party, I hold grassroots democracy, social justice, non-violence, and ecological wisdom at the heart of all my beliefs.

My perspective as a teacher and a teacher educator may help inform board discussions around teaching and learning, so that those two ideas remain at the center of board policy decisions.

My job as a Board of Education member in Clinton, would be to listen with my full presence to students, teachers, parents, administrators, fellow board members, and my own conscience in order to vote with integrity in the most informed way I can.

I believe:

- in free, high quality public education for all.
- in holistic education: mind, body, heart, and spirit.
- in human learning over conditioning and indoctrination.
- that the Arts, Athletics, and Community are as important as Academics.
- that our students are much more than a set of data points.
- that standards have a place in education, but they must not take up the whole space.
- that the overuse and misuse of standardized assessments are disturbing trends in public education.
- that pro-active, social/emotional, and mindfulness education, and de-escalation training are more productive approaches than punishment or suspension for behavior management.

Since both learning and teaching are autonomous, internal processes that can be enhanced or hindered by the context in which they take place, we need policies and procedures that foster both learner and teacher autonomy. That is, we must intervene as needed in the education process, and avoid interfering with it.

Biographical Summary for Hugh D. Birdsall

Hugh Birdsall has lived in Clinton for the past 24 years, with his wife, Janis, and their two dogs.

Hugh graduated from Yale University with a B.A. in French Literature. He obtained his teaching certification through the Alternate Route to Certification, at Wesleyan University. He received M.A.T.'s in French and TESOL from The School for International Training, in Brattleboro, VT.

He began his teaching career in Dublin, New Hampshire, as a high school French teacher, in 1977.

Hugh took a ten-year hiatus from teaching to co-found, record, and tour with **The Reducers**, a rock and roll band from New London, CT.

In 1988, he returned to teaching at The Hammonasset School in Madison, CT, and later at public schools in Wethersfield and Groton. From 1995 to 2016, he taught English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS), in New London, CT. In 2003, he was one of 4 finalists for Connecticut Teacher of the Year.

As a teacher educator, he has presented numerous workshops to Connecticut teachers on the topics of *Working with English Language Learners* and *The Subordination of Teaching to Learning*. For the past twelve years he has taught graduate students in TESOL at the School for International Training, in Brattleboro, VT.

Hugh is currently volunteering as a language teacher for Syrian refugees and working as a part-time educational consultant for *Reforest the Tropics*, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating carbon offset forests to mitigate climate change in the world.