

Woman of the Year - Jahana Hayes

Jahana Hayes is a history teacher and the chairperson of the School of Academic Renown (SOAR) Program at Kennedy High School in the Waterbury Public School District. In the last 10 years she has taught World History, Roots of American Citizenship, U.S. History, Civics, Geography and African American History, a course for which she helped write the curriculum and implement.

In addition to her teaching duties, Mrs. Hayes serves as the chairperson of the Kennedy School Governance Council. She also worked for seven years as the lead teacher for the 21st Century After School Program and served as a NEASC chairperson and a visiting committee member. In the past year, Mrs. Hayes helped secure a Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention grant for the district from the Connecticut State Department of Education. As part of this grant she did extensive work and employed collaborative efforts among students, teachers, community members and parents to address the challenges the district faces in minority teacher recruitment. She is currently implementing programs to introduce students to teaching as a profession and continues to work closely with district personnel on minority recruitment and retention efforts. Mrs. Hayes mentors new teachers and is currently assisting with establishing district-wide mentorship programs.

Mrs. Hayes has a passion for service learning and spearheads community service efforts at her school. As co-advisor of the Helping Out People Everywhere (HOPE) club, she has traveled around the country with students to build homes with Habitat for Humanity. She has raised thousands of dollars for Relay for Life and the American Cancer Society. Her other service activities include helping to beautify the city as a member of the Board of Directors for the Citywide Front Porch Clean-Up, the Taft Global Leadership Institute, and the Annual Kennedy Cancer Walk. She organizes annual coat drives and engages students in City of Dreams, an organization to raise awareness about homelessness. Mrs. Hayes compels students to find their “call to action” and get involved in improving their community. Her goal is to write and implement a service learning curriculum to teach students the benefits and importance of helping others.

In November 2015, Mrs. Hayes was named the Connecticut Teacher of the Year and is currently one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year.