

Article by Lindsay Martinez Paredes, Norwalk High School

## **Lindsay interviews Lauren DeLong**

### **Introduce yourself and tell me about yourself.**

My name is Lauren DeLong. I have been working at NHS as an Art teacher for the past 19 years. I am also a graduate of NHS. I am a mom of 2 teenage girls. I enjoy making my own art, cooking, going to the gym and traveling.

**What did you teach?** Art- specifically Honors Portfolio, Advanced Foundation of Art, Printmaking, and Foundations of Art

**How long was your career in teaching?** 20 years total, 19 years at NHS

**What is special about Norwalk High School?** Well, I am a graduate and pretty much a lifelong Norwalk resident (few years spent elsewhere). Norwalk High Is pretty much my home away from home. I have the best classroom in the building; it's bright, it's colorful and everyone is welcome. The students that come through Norwalk High are incredible, in fact, so many of them choose to return and work here, like myself. I look forward to working with my students each day and I enjoy learning from them.

**What is special about Norwalk Public Schools?** It is a very large district with people from all over the world and NPS does a beautiful job celebrating its rich diversity.

**Tell me a time you were proud to be an educator.** I am proud to teach everyday; I really love my job. I enjoy seeing students that have graduated and hearing about their success and what they've been doing with their lives; it makes me proud that they remember me, my class and what NHS did for them. Also, one of my graduates, who I had for 4 year, is now my colleague. It's really special to be able to teach and learn alongside my past students.

**Who is your hero? Who is your teaching inspiration? Why?** My students are my heroes. They are the ones that inspire me and challenge me each and every day. I see their potential and want to help them become the best individuals they can; they are the future, so much of our planet rests on their shoulders. My teaching inspiration comes from so many places, my past teachers, my mom who taught at West Rocks, but also from leaders like Michelle Obama that states, "life is practice. You are practicing who you are going to be". I feel like I teach students to practice and prepare for the rest of their lives.

**How did you take care of your mental health when you were teaching and now?** I wake up before school each day and I go to the gym. Exercise is my way of taking care of my mental health. I also try to eat very well because nutrition helps with not only our bodies but our minds. I make sure I am present for my own two girls and I unwind with my cat, Figaro at the end of the day. Plus I have the best colleagues that are super supportive and motivating.

**What is your advice to young teachers?** Teaching is such a great career and it is extremely rewarding, but it is hard. It's really hard, and if it doesn't feel hard, you aren't doing it right. Be on time, learn to say no, and find someone in your building you respect and admire, learn from them and work with them.