



Strike Tool Kit

Getting ready to STRIKE

As we gear up for a potential strike to win the schools New Haven students deserve, let us remember what our fight is about:

1. For Successful Students: Valued Educators = Futures Fulfilled
2. Winning professional pay for all educators
3. Maintaining small class sizes
4. Maintaining student supports

Each school and worksite will have a strike picket captain and assistants to coordinate all the strike activities at your site, including tracking daily picket line duty, food and beverages for strikers, keeping the picket lines orderly, ensuring strikers have all the materials they need, keeping all the strike materials secure, ensuring all members have the latest strike literature and updates, and mobilizing members at your site for city-wide actions during the strike. (For questions on legal rights to strike and strike impacts, accessing the member assistance fund and interest-free loans for strikers—see the NHTA Strike FAQs.)

During a Strike Q&A

How will I know we're on strike?

You will be made aware in a number of ways. You have participated in the official NHTA strike authorization vote and the results have been publicized. A phone blast

will be made to all members at your school site. You'll receive a call via your NHTA site rep/SOS lead phone trees. Notice of the strike will be posted on the NHTA website, social media and you'll receive an email from the NHTA president. Don't be surprised if your principal calls and asks you to cross the picket line. Just say "No way!" Then report it to your site picket captain. It's your legal right to participate in a concerted job action.

What do we do on a day-to-day basis during a strike?

We will have different actions every day like rallies and marches, but every day will start with reporting to your school or work site early in the morning before school starts to set up a picket line. It's important that a picket line start before school, so that anyone hired by the district will have to cross the picket line and the dedicated educators whom they are attempting to undermine. At the morning picket line, the plans for the rest of the day will be discussed, which might include all-day picketing, at school and work sites, a midday meeting for updates, followed by afternoon picketing, an area or all-city rally, or other actions to keep the pressure on the district decision makers to settle a fair contract.

What about restrooms?

Your site picket captain and other NHTA leaders at your school or work site will work to arrange access to restrooms ahead of time, which might be a port-a-potty at a nearby home, a place of worship, business or the home of a friendly neighbor close to the school.

Do I call for a sub each day we're on strike?

No. Once we're on strike, getting your classrooms covered is solely the District's responsibility. Remember that our goal is to have a strong picket line each day with NHTA members, parents and community supporters to put maximum pressure on the District decision-makers to settle a fair contract.

Can I call in sick or use a personal day?

No, do not call in sick or use a personal day. The strike means that no NHTA member should be working and that the District know this. You do not need to tell your principal or the District.

Am I obligated to walk the picket line every day during a strike?

Yes, an active, large picket line at every school and work site is vital to a strike's success. The more members we have out on the picket line, the harder it is for people to cross it. Your picket captain (or their assistant) will verify your attendance every day; members must be on the strike picket lines daily in order to qualify for NHTA member assistance funds and to qualify for the no-interest loans for strikers. We also need every member out at their school or worksite to talk with parents and the public and let them know what's going on with our contract fight and how they can support us. Being at your school or worksite every day to picket is also the best way to get the latest information on how the strike is going and to show the community that educators and education professionals are the union and are united on strike.

Should I picket at my own school or worksite?

Yes! Even if you live far from your school, your rapport with students, parents, and co-workers is important. Parents need to see their child's educator out on the picket line and we all need to see each other out there as coworkers.

Can students and parents join the picket line? What about my own children?

Community supporters are always welcome. An education strike is about the community, and they should be a part of everything we do. However, students need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Members of your own family should also join the picket line and their presence helps promote why we're striking.

How do I respond when coworkers cross our school's picket line? How about other members or other people? Should I encourage classified workers to join our picket line?

Your site picket captain will remind all picketers daily about the Picketing Do's and Don'ts, which include to not physically prevent people from entering the school or worksite. However, you should engage members and strongly encourage them to reconsider crossing and how much stronger our strike will be if they stay out. Leaflet everybody who is entering or leaving the school or worksite. Explain why we're on strike. Members of other unions may choose not to go into the site. All

employees, regardless of whether they are in a union, have the right to not cross a picket line. They can tell their supervisors that they do not feel comfortable crossing it.

Can I teach in another school district while we're on strike?

No! For our strike to be successful, we need all members to report to daily picket duty at their school or worksite. A diminished number of picketers at school sites will demonstrate to the district (and parents) that we're not all in to win a fair contract for educators and students.

Can I visit my classroom while we're on strike?

No, you should assume that you will not be able to go to your classroom (and school) for the duration of the strike.

What about clubs, teams, and other special efforts I'm involved in at my school?

Such activities must be boycotted for the duration of the strike. The District will only take us seriously if we stop all work and additional services we provide.

What do I do with the books, materials, and other items in my classroom?

A date for the strike has been set in advance. Your site reps/SOS leaders will coordinate with all members at your site to have a collective day of action to remove all your most valuable personal items before the strike begins to send a clear message to the principal and district that we're serious about winning a fair contract.

What do I tell my students?

If a strike seems imminent, inform your students that you will need to be out of the classroom if your union goes on strike. Let them know that, while you care about them very much, it may be necessary to temporarily stop working to protect your rights, and fight for better schools for students. You may also want to share some of our key issues with them. Reinforce this when they see you picketing.

What do my students do during a strike?

This can be the toughest part of a strike—knowing that your students will not be getting an education while you're out on the line. The District will scramble to try to find replacements, but most likely, administrators will end up essentially babysitting the students. For the families that can, they will simply choose to keep their children home. We must remember that we are in this struggle for our students.

Should I tell parents to keep their children out of school during the strike?

No! As a credentialed educator, you should not tell parents to keep their children home from school during the strike. Doing so could put your credential in jeopardy. What you can share with parents is that outside substitutes who may not be qualified to teach typically show movies to students in the multipurpose room, students have minimal supervision and little education takes place.

Tips for the Picket Line: Dealing with the Media

Anticipate that the media may show up at your school or worksite during a strike and at actions that occur before a strike begins.

Whenever possible, send the media to your school's designated spokesperson. Every school/worksite should have a member trained and prepared to deal with the media.

If you do engage with the media, always think before you speak with the media. Reporters are often on the lookout for something that can be sensationalized. Never agree to provide "off the record" information or trust an assurance that you won't be quoted. A good rule to remember is that nothing is ever really off the record.

Don't agree to an interview if you're not comfortable with your knowledge of the subject matter. Don't attempt to answer a question when you're not sure of the response. Instead, say you'll look into it and get back to them. Don't let yourself be badgered.

Prior to an interview, have key points in mind to get across. Promote that message in all your answers.

Keep your answers brief and to the point. Short comments are best.

Keep an interview within its proper focus by politely redirecting the course of dialogue. Don't let a reporter force you to respond a certain way by asking different versions of the same basic question. Don't engage in arguments with the media.

Don't be intimidated by silence. Once you're done making a point, stop. You'll avoid rambling and perhaps saying something you hadn't planned to say.

Do's & Don'ts on the Picket Line

- You have the legal right to picket, march, pass out materials on public property adjacent to District facilities, including schools.
- Cooperate at all times when picketing with the instructions of your site picket captain, site rep/SOS lead, cluster leader, NHTA leadership or CTA staff.
- Remain peaceful, calm and orderly at all times. In the event of a confrontation, please let your site picket captain, cluster leader, NHTA leadership or CTA staff handle it.
- Don't block or otherwise physically interfere with anyone crossing a picket line to enter or leave a school or worksite. Do not threaten, intimidate, or coerce picket line crossers (scabs). Engage them in a firm but respectful manner. Entrances and exits cannot legally be blocked.
- Avoid situations that could deviate from a positive purpose. If a person insists on debating, ask them to step aside and speak with the site picket captain or their assistant.

- Don't go onto school grounds, even after school lets out.
- Use only picket signs, banners, flyers/leaflets and other materials with NHTA's message. Make sure picket signs are readable and acceptable to the public; nothing offensive.
- Keep the picket line moving, using chants and songs to keep the lines lively.
- Wear comfortable shoes and plan accordingly for the weather.
- Do not debate or argue with people who may try to disrupt our picket line or action.

We ask that NHTA members follow the instructions of site picket captains and other NHTA leaders and staff at school sites and citywide actions. Disruptive or other unsanctioned activities will not be allowed. Anyone who refuses to cooperate or who instigates noncompliance with the above will be asked to leave.

Nine Steps to Planning Ahead Financially

A strike involves sacrifice and one that you need to get financially ready for. Here are nine steps to consider:

- 1. Prepare a complete household budget.** Do this as a family project and include your:
 - Fixed expenses such as mortgage/rent, insurance, loans, installment payments, etc.
 - Monthly expenses such as food, vehicle gas and maintenance, repairs, union dues, prescriptions, entertainment, etc.
 - Future expenses such as income and property taxes

- 2. Set priorities for your expenses.** List payments in order of importance. The most important will be your mortgage/rent. Next are utilities, insurance and car payments and gasoline. Child support and alimony (if applicable) are also high priorities.
- 3. Make a complete list of creditors.** For each, list contact person's name, address, phone number and email address; account number, total amount owed, and payment schedule and amount.
- 4. Notify your creditors before getting behind.** Determine how much you can regularly pay on each bill. If negotiating lower payments is needed, notify your creditors before you get behind. Creditors are usually easier to work with when you inform them before a severe problem arises. Contact them in writing and include your account number, phone number and address. State why you need to work out payment reduction, refinancing, or delay. Keep copies of your letters and notes from any phone conversations.
- 5. Pay what you can.** Even if you can't pay the total amount, pay something regularly. This lowers your overdue balance and lets creditors know you're acting in good faith. Partial payments may keep your account from being turned over to a collection agency.
- 6. Stay in touch with creditors.** After your first letter, keep in regular contact with your creditors. This is reassuring, shows a responsible attitude, and may keep them from "hounding" you. Important: Don't ignore your mail. That only makes things worse. If you don't understand a bill or notice, promptly contact the sender.
- 7. Stop credit card purchases.** Stop relying on plastic. Interest on most credit cards is extremely high. Make larger payments to reduce your balance.
- 8. Reduce household expenses.** With your family, plan reductions to stay within your budget.

9. Check into other financial resources. If you have life insurance, review your policy or talk to an agent to see if you can borrow against your policy. If you have the resources, also consider dipping into savings.