



Congratulations to Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year District Nominees and Semi-Finalists

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council received over 20 applications for the Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Award and is pleased to congratulate the following semi-finalists for the award:

Samantha Abdullah is currently a paraprofessional at Goodwin Elementary School in Mansfield, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 5 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "She has taught Goodwin's students about the dignity of every child. This is a gift they will carry with them forever."

Tenesia Baker is currently a paraprofessional at Sunset Ridge Elementary Academy for Arts and World Language in East Hartford, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 8 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Tenesia is the type of person that makes others feel better about themselves, which is crucial for working with students with special needs and exceptionalities. It is obvious that she accepts all student's diversities and learning differences."

Krystle Corlett is currently a paraprofessional at Canton Middle School in Canton, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 8 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Krystle is a key link in the daily communication between the regular education classroom and the special education teacher. Her consistent efforts in the regular education classes allow all students to be successful in their learning."

Deborah Gawel is currently a paraprofessional at Nathan Hale School in Meriden, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 24 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Debbie is an active member of our community. She has worked with so many of our struggling learners over the past years and she has quite a following."

Debra Stevenson is currently a paraprofessional at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 29 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Debra has a positive attitude and can always see possibilities when working with any student. She has a strong vision of what she thinks a student is capable of doing and works hard toward achieving that goal."

Semi-finalists will be interviewed by members of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council this month. The Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year will be announced at the SERC Annual Paraprofessionals as Partners Conference on Wednesday, November 14, 2012, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell.

Connecticut State Department of Education

August 2012 Update for District Contacts For Paraprofessional Issues

The Connecticut State Department of Education and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council acknowledges the following paraprofessionals who were nominated for the award by their districts:

Valerie Blythe is currently a paraprofessional at Stafford Middle School in Stafford, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 7 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Valerie works very hard throughout the year in creating the school yearbook for the students. She often can be seen at many in-school and out-of-school events photographing students and staff."

Cindy Boas is currently a paraprofessional at Joel Barlow High School in Redding, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 16 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Cindy is part of the classroom and uses whatever professional development she has attended, to help all students learn, be it literacy, SRBI, or school climate. Cindy works with a wide variety of students with special needs and each is integrated into the general setting because of Cindy."

Karen Carlotto is currently a paraprofessional at Polk Elementary School in Watertown, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 7 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Last year, we had a child who left this district to start at another one. That district started school before ours. She volunteered to go on her own time to help with that transition."

Karen DeRosa is currently a paraprofessional at Church St. School in Hamden, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 9 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "She is never afraid to ask questions or make suggestions, and she always accepts and integrates suggestions provided to her to maximize the child's learning potential."

Nancy Hollenbeck-Dyson is currently a paraprofessional at Bulkeley High School in Hartford, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 16 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "In an effort to create opportunities for her student to become more involved in school activities and develop connections with her peers, Ms. Dyson called upon her professional background in art and began to create murals around the school."

Susan James is currently a paraprofessional at Franklin Elementary School in Franklin, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 12 years.



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Quote from letter of recommendation: “ She works collaboratively with the Reading Specialist to visually chart and analyze student achievement within the area of Reading and has a thorough understanding of data-driven decision making which greatly impacts the growth of her students.”

Maryann Kunst is currently a paraprofessional at W.C. Polson Middle School in Madison, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 20 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: “Dedicated, kind, energetic, knowledgeable, student centered, committed are words that immediately come to mind when I think of Maryann, but the list of positive attributes can go on and on.”

Michelle Mihalcik is currently a paraprofessional at Laurel Ledge School in Beacon Falls, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 17 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: “No matter how difficult the situation seems to get, Michelle can always be counted upon to stay in complete control and give her students just the kind of assistance they need. She carefully fosters their independence and success while being careful not to let them get overwhelmed or frustrated.”

JoAnn Munson is currently a paraprofessional at Smith Middle School in Glastonbury, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 18 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: “JoAnn defines the role of a paraprofessional and works to the highest standard. She is dedicated, knowledgeable and a consummate team player. She works extremely well with students and staff, is caring and compassionate, and she continually gets involved in our Smith community with in-school and out of school activities.”

Susan Paquette is currently a paraprofessional at E.C. Stevens Elementary School in Wallingford, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 23 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: “ She is always ready to apply herself to know more and improve her practice. Mrs. Paquette takes the initiative to learn the instructional technology in her classroom-most recently, she has begun to use the Smart Board in the classroom.”

Luciana Perelli is currently a paraprofessional at Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 9 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: “She treats each student with respect and has high expectations for their success in meeting the goals set for them. She is always eager to learn and has participated in the in-service training offered, as well as scheduled professional development sessions.”

Barbara Perretta is currently a paraprofessional at William Strong Elementary School in Plantsville, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 8 years.

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Quote from letter of recommendation: "Mrs. Perretta is very conscientious and trustworthy, as well as completes her tasks in a caring and loving manner. In the classroom, she assists her student to focus during instruction an complete independent tasks satisfactorily."

Dolina Potter is currently a paraprofessional at North Branford High School in North Branford, CT. She has worked as a paraprofessional for 22 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "In the past, I have received correspondences from Dolly that suggest ideas for lessons, materials to use in the classroom, or approaches in dealing with certain students. Her assistance throughout the years has, in many instances, made me a better teacher in these particular classrooms."

Dawna Royce is currently a paraprofessional at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School in East Hampton, CT. She has been a paraprofessional for 14 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Dawna is very sensitive to the needs of the children. She wants them to grow and become independent learners. Dawna is very positive and really works hard in making sure the students and staff feels comfortable in the environment she is in."

Julie Santella is currently a paraprofessional at Gilead Hill School in Hebron, CT. She has been a paraprofessional for 2 and 1/2 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Julie is a reflective educator who continues to seek out ways to keep learning. She borrows professional books, attends professional development programs offered here in Hebron, and seeks out workshops outside our district."

Colleen Suzio is currently a paraprofessional at LEARN in Old Lyme, CT. She has been a paraprofessional for 2 years.

Quote from letter of recommendation: "Colleen seeks opportunities to educate and support students in inclusion by collaborating with both the special education teachers and staff, and general education teachers and staff. She has been able to create seamless transitions for her students in the inclusion setting by responding to her students' individual needs and tracking and monitoring their progress daily."

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