



Connecticut State Department of Education October 2013 Update for District Contacts for Paraeducator Issues

Congratulations to Georgina Cabrera and Anne Marie Murphy the 2014 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducators of the Year

Georgina Cabrera is currently a paraeducator at Moses Y. Beach Elementary School in Wallingford, CT. Georgina came to this country 18 years ago, from her native Chile, where she was a teacher. She did not know any English when she arrived, but worked hard to be successful.

Georgina provides direct support to Spanish speaking Bilingual Program students in and out of the classroom. She assists them with academics, language development, behavior, and learning a new culture. In his letter of recommendation, her principal, Robert Arciero, calls Georgina, a “person who is deeply committed to the success of all learners. She always makes decisions in the best interest of children. The staff here holds her in the highest esteem for the wonderful testimony she has produced here on North Main Street.” Susan Rhodes, a K-2 Bilingual Teacher who works with Ms. Cabrera adds that “Georgina is a true team-player who is very effective at supporting instruction for Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (and other children) in all classrooms at our school. She has a great understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, respects teachers’ routines and practices, and has a natural gift for motivating children to learn and make the best of their school day.”

Among her contributions, Georgina is creative with getting parents involved in their children’s education. She draws non-native speakers of English into the Moses Beach School community and is a huge lever in making ALL families feel welcome and a part of the school. For example, when teaching students number recognition, Georgina not only makes an individual set of cards for the parents to use, but on the back she has written out a phonetic rendition of how the children should be pronouncing the numbers in English.

Georgina’s work doesn’t end at school. She also works at the Public Library as a homework helper for the town and she volunteers for her church as a catechism teacher for the Spanish community. In addition to working at the library, she has had the opportunity to work in the Summer School Programs, which provide an academic and social support to the ESL students during the summer.

Georgina’s message to other paraeducators, is as follows: “RESPECT is the key to doing our jobs well, especially if we choose to teach. If we show respect to our children, no matter their language, culture, needs or personality we can create a bond between us. Respect for their families and their interests, shows them that we care for them. This is one of the biggest advantages that we have in our careers and we have to use this in our favor. IF we compromise respect for each other we can’t be successful educators.”

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors. The focus of this newsletter is to provide resources for more effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration.

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for Paraeducator Issues

Anne Marie Murphy was born July 25, 1960 in Mount Kisco, NY. She was the daughter of Dr. Hugh and Alice McGowan of Katonah, and graduated from St. Mary's School in Katonah, John F. Kennedy H.S. in Somers, NY and Southern Connecticut State University with an MS degree in Education.

Anne Marie was a one to one paraprofessional for ten years. Most recently, she worked with a student with Autism who was in the first grade. She accompanied him during all subjects and special areas, and in each area she ensured her student's daily success. She volunteered to assist with various tasks during the school day in order to help the safety and health of all learners within the school community. Her insatiable desire for professional growth was evident in the questions she asked, the research she initiated, and time she spent observing and interacting with students and staff. She was an integral part in contributing objective information to help teachers to facilitate planning and problem solving to ensure student success.

Katherine Anderhaggen, a 4th grade teacher at Sandy Hook Elementary, states that not only did Anne Marie help one of her students progress tremendously, she also taught her entire class to be sensitive to people with disabilities: "She taught them how to show kindness towards one another no matter what their individual qualities were. She showed them that even though we may be different from one another, there are so many things we can learn from each other." Katherine goes on to explain the lesson she learned from Anne Marie: "Anne Marie showed me right up until the very last minute of her life the most important thing to her was making sure her students felt safe, protected and beyond anything else, loved."

Laura Esposito, Special Education Teacher, goes on to add: "She was a rare find and an extremely valuable member of our school community. Her legacy and memory will live on in our hearts as she continues to inspire us in our daily work."

Anne leaves behind four courageous young adults, Kelly, a teacher at Newtown High School, Colleen, recently graduated from the University of New Haven, Thomas, a second year nursing student at Western Connecticut State University and Paige, who is attending UCONN.

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