

NEWS FROM THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Talent Office

Welcome from Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer

Connecting, Engaging, and Learning with One Another

On behalf of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office, I would like to extend fall greetings to all Connecticut educators.

We know that in order to prepare students to live and thrive in an increasingly complex world, we must develop and support our workforce to continuously develop effective practices. Therefore, our goal is to build, develop, and support coherent, high-leverage processes and structures to attract, develop, induct, support, evaluate, advance, and retain skilled educators.

With these processes and structures in place, all classrooms and schools will be staffed by teachers and leaders who have



"We remain committed to supporting educator development throughout the entire talent continuum, from attracting educators to the profession throughout their entire career"

— Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer

pedagogical skills and content knowledge to prepare students for college, careers, and life.

While the priority of the Talent Office during the past three years has been an intense, strategic focus on building and implementing a system for educator evaluation and support, we remain committed to supporting educator development throughout the entire talent continuum, from attracting educators to the profession throughout their entire career. The Talent Office continues to develop strategies to address each of the components

of a comprehensive Talent Management Framework: *attract, prepare, induct, evaluate and support, and retain and advance the*

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TALENT OFFICE NEWSLETTER
Claudine Primack, Chief Editor

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The Talent Office Continuum

Talent Office Mission: The mission of the CSDE Talent Office is to develop and deploy talent management and human capital development strategies to districts and schools statewide so that the most effective educators are in every school and classroom and all students are prepared for college, career, and life.



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best teaching talent in Connecticut to ensure improved educational outcomes for all students (see diagram on page 2). Three bureaus of the Talent Office—the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification, the Bureau of Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning, and the Bureau of Leadership Development—address the entire spectrum of this continuum.

This issue of the Talent Office newsletter includes content that spans the entire educator career continuum. We plan to continue to highlight districts, schools, and teachers who are willing to share their promising practices.

Best wishes for a successful and productive year.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

The Talent Office newsletter regularly features articles written by educators. If you would like to contribute an article or have an idea for an article, please contact Claudine Primack at Claudine.primack@ct.gov or 860-713-6826.

Talent Office Welcomes Two New Teacher-Leaders-In-Residence to Our Team

The Talent Office welcomes Christopher Todd back for a second year as teacher-leader-in-residence and extends a warm welcome to the 2015-16 teacher-leaders-in-residence, **Margaret Fitzgerald** and **Caroline Golschneider**.

Throughout the course of the year, Margaret and Caroline will split time between their districts and the CSDE. They will lend their experience and expertise to the work of the Academic and Talent Offices as they serve in their hybrid role. They will work with the CSDE arts consultant to support initiatives within the arts over the coming year. More specifically, the 2015-16 teacher-leaders-in-residence will be focusing on the arts standards, which are currently being revised.



Margaret Fitzgerald joins the CSDE as a teacher-leader-in-residence. Currently, Margaret is the curriculum leader for the fine and performing arts as well as a grade 4 general music/band teacher in the Brookfield School System. She is also an adjunct

faculty member in the School of Education Graduate Program at the University of Saint Joseph, and is the music director at a local church. Margaret has a broad spectrum of experience in music education ranging from kindergarten music to AP high school music theory and history.

Margaret has a B.S. and M.S. in music education from Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) and a sixth-year in educational leadership from Southern Connecticut State University. She was named Brookfield Teacher of the Year (1998), Connecticut Music Educators' Association (CMEA) Elementary Educator of the Year (2001), and WCSU Alumni Band Director of the Year (2002). In addition, she was presented with the Smithsonian/Computer World Medal of Honor and received an Apple Computer Educational Grant (in conjunction with WCSU faculty) for over \$85,000 to study music and learning differences. Margaret is also active as a TEAM mentor/cooperating teacher, TEAM reviewer, and serves as treasurer of the Brookfield Education Association.

Over the years, Margaret has co-authored "*Chop Monster Jr.*" (Alfred Publishing), published several articles



Caroline Golschneider joins the CSDE as a teacher-leader-in-residence. A music educator in her seventh year at North Street School in Windsor Locks, Caroline is a champion of arts integration and teacher development. Caroline founded the elementary violin program and established

an arts-based curriculum for after-school enrichment in her district. She is an active member of her school's Leadership Team and serves as a TEAM trained mentor. She is currently working on developing interdisciplinary Expeditionary Learning projects for her school.

Caroline graduated magna cum laude from Yale University with a B.A. in music, and recently received her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Caroline previously worked as a graduate associate at Project Zero, an educational research group at Harvard University. While there, she served as project assistant for *Out of Eden Learn*, a unique online learning community connecting classrooms around the world. She is currently assisting with the opening of an innovative alternative arts school in New Haven, CT. Caroline is a proud supporter of local arts organizations, playing violin with the Farmington Valley Symphony Orchestra, and singing with several local choirs.

"As teacher-leader-in-residence, I look forward to advocating for my profession at the state level. I hope to bridge the disconnect between policy and practice, ensuring that teachers' voices are heard and championed. I am excited for the opportunity to both learn and innovate!"

—Caroline Golschneider

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what's new?

in Educator Evaluation
and Support

Student and Educator Support Specialist Update

Additional resources are now available for Student and Educator Support Specialists, including the *CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2015*. This new and improved rubric, released this summer, recognizes that the practice of support specialists/service providers can vary depending on their assigned roles and responsibilities.

Another new resource, *Educator Evaluation and Support: A Guidebook for Student and Educator Support Specialists*, is due to be released this fall. The guidebook is intended for use by both service providers and their evaluators. It provides suggestions for implementing a differentiated system for ongoing professional learning.

Finally, a new training, *The Big Picture on Educator Evaluation for Student and Educator Support Specialists*, is being offered for service providers and evaluators of service providers. The focus is on use of the *CCT Rubric for Effective Service Delivery 2015* and the goal-setting process. Please see the [2015-16 Professional Learning Opportunities for Educator Evaluation and Support Training Brochure](#) for more information.

New Teacher-Leaders-In-Residence, continued from page 3

in the Journal for the Music Educators National Conference (MENC, now known as the National Association for Music Education-NAfME), and contributed to the MENC publication, *Benchmarks for the National Standards* (1998). She remains very involved in districtwide activities, including curriculum development, planning and providing professional development, as well as participating on various district committees. She is a member of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), CMEA and NAfME. Margaret is a strong and visible advocate for the arts in education and teacher leadership.

“I am very humbled to have the opportunity to be a teacher-leader-in-residence for the arts at the State Department of Education Talent Office. I believe the arts are critical to the complete education of every child. Through participation in the arts, we learn to explore that in ourselves which make us human: we create, we problem solve, we go outside our comfort level looking for answers that are not black and white, not simply multiple choice. Our students must be engaged in these indispensable experiences so that they may be ready to become 21st-century thinkers and participants.” —Margaret Fitzgerald

New Process for Selecting Educators-in-Residence

Historically, the process for becoming an educator-in-residence has been through the selection of teachers and principals who have engaged with the CSDE in some capacity. While this method provided the CSDE with many passionate and dedicated educators who served as teachers- and leaders-in-residence over the years, it limited the opportunity only to those who were engaged with the CSDE through other work. To expand this opportunity to all educators across the state, the Talent Office has instituted a new application process to identify and select educators-in-residence for the 2015-16 school year and going forward.

The Talent and Academic Office leadership, in collaboration with the current teacher-leaders-in-residence, co-authored a job description and designed an online application process for the position of teacher-leader-in-residence for the arts. The application process involves an official job description posting, an online application, and a selective review process.

The CSDE was excited to have over 200 educators show interest in the position, and 56 who submitted a complete application. All applicants were cross-scored by at least four individuals, and the applicant pool was narrowed down to 10 semifinalists. In July, interviews were conducted, and two individuals were selected as 2015-16 teacher-leaders-in-residence.

Anne McKernan Joins the Talent Office

We are happy to welcome our newest colleague, Anne McKernan, to the Talent Office team. Anne serves as the new chief for the Bureau of Leadership Development. In her role, Anne is dedicated to providing high-quality leadership development programs for all educators throughout the state with a specific focus on developing and supporting school and district leaders in Alliance Districts and the Commissioner's Network schools. In collaboration with key partners, Anne works to design and implement unique programs for Connecticut teacher-leaders, aspiring principals, and school administrators. Anne brings a broad range of experience to the Department.

Previously, Anne served as the chief academic officer for Enfield Public Schools, overseeing all academic matters for students in pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. Prior to her tenure in Enfield, she served as the assistant superintendent for the Capitol Region Education Council's (CREC) magnet schools. During her time as assistant superintendent, Anne oversaw academic programming for 15 uniquely themed magnet schools serving students from nearly 70 towns and cities throughout Connecticut. From 2004 to 2010, Anne had the privilege of being the principal of CREC's Metropolitan Learning Center Interdistrict Magnet School for Global and International Studies (MLC). During this period, MLC was cited by the United States Department of Education as one of eight outstanding magnet schools in the country. The school was recognized by the Magnet Schools of America as a Magnet School of Distinction on five occasions and as a Magnet School of Excellence in 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Anne began her career as a social studies teacher in the New York City Public Schools before returning to Connecticut where she worked in the Newington Public School system and CREC before entering education administration.

Anne completed her undergraduate studies and



Anne McKernan, Chief, Bureau of Leadership Development

earned a B.A. in political science at Fordham University in the Bronx, NY. She has an M.A. in public policy from Trinity College and has completed the Executive Leadership Program at the University of Connecticut.

A primary focus of Anne's work is LEAD Connecticut, a Connecticut State Department of Education-funded initiative, which aims to recruit, select, prepare, develop, and retain educational leaders to strengthen student learning across all Connecticut districts and classrooms with a priority focus on the schools and districts in most need of improvement. Through partnerships with the Connecticut Center for School Change, the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), New Leaders, and the University of Connecticut, LEAD CT leverages the expertise of both state and national organizations to impact school and district leadership, drive systems change, and build long-term sustainability of the capacity within Connecticut.

Celebrating Excellence in Education

Each year, the Connecticut State Board of Education recognizes outstanding educators across the state for their exemplary service to the field of education and the students of Connecticut.

This year's event was held at A.I. Prince Technical High School in Hartford, CT, on June 5, 2015. Honorees were accompanied by

their superintendent or school official and family members. State Board of Education members and the State Department of Education representatives were also present as well.

While the evening was intended to provide the opportunity to celebrate outstanding educators, it also showcased students from various schools as they prepared and served food, provided the entertainment, flowers, art work, and graciously served as escorts. Guests were welcomed by A.I. Prince Technical High School students. The school was adorned

with baskets of fresh flowers provided by the students from the Nonnewaug Floriculture Program (Nonnewaug High School, Woodbury). Future Farmers of America (FFA) student members (Nonnewaug High School, Woodbury) pinned corsages on the honorees. The A.I. Prince Technical High School culinary arts students had prepared and served a delicious array of cheeses, vegetables, fruit, and hot and cold hors d'oeuvres. The Hall High School Jazz Trio (West Hartford) provided the music for the event.

During the presentation of the awards, Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer, introduced each awardee and State Board of Education Vice Chairperson Theresa Hopkins-Staten handed out the awards. Awardees then had their photo taken with Commissioner Dianna Wentzell and State Board of Education Chairman Allan Taylor.

It was a splendid evening and a fitting celebration of the dedicated, excellent educators who make a difference for Connecticut's students each and every day.



"We are incredibly fortunate to be celebrating such exemplary educators. Each of the educators being honored this year has made unique and outstanding contributions to public education in Connecticut."

— Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell

Honorees	Awards	District
Dr. Elizabeth Feser	Superintendent of the Year	Milford Public Schools
Alicia Bowman	Principal of the Year - Elementary School	Westwoods Upper Elementary School, Farmington
Dr. Judy DeLeeuw	Principal of the Year - Middle School	East Lyme Middle School, Niantic
Francis Kennedy, Jr.	Principal of the Year - High School	Berlin High School, Berlin
Sherrod McNeill	Assistant Principal of the Year - Elementary School	John G. Prendergast School, Ansonia
Dr. Krista Bauchman	Assistant Principal of the Year - Middle School	Irving A. Robbins Middle School, Farmington
Kayrn Morgan	Assistant Principal of the Year - High School	Staples High School, Westport
Billie Shea	First-Year Principal of the Year – Elementary	John B. Stanton Elementary School, Norwich
Mandy Ryan	First-Year Principal of the Year - Middle School	Old Saybrook Middle School, Old Saybrook
Sheila Riffle	First-Year Principal of the Year - High School	Old Saybrook High School, Old Saybrook
Theresa Yonsky	School Business Official of the Year	Bethel Public Schools, Bethel
Geri Lavallee	Paraeducator of the Year	Squadron Line Elementary School, Simsbury
Kristina Ngai	National Board Certified Teacher	William J. Johnston Middle School, Colchester
Desi Nesmith	Milken Award	Metacomet Elementary School, Bloomfield
Nicole Gilson	Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching	Peck Place School, Orange
Douglas I. Kiss	Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching	Woodside Intermediate School, Cromwell
Liesl Fressola	Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching	Sandy Hook Elementary School, Newtown
Kristen Senise	Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching	Spring Glen Elementary School, Hamden
Cara Quinn	2015 CT Teacher of the Year	Sunset Ridge School, East Hartford
Juliane Givoni	Teacher of the Year - Finalist	Joel Barlow High School, Region #9
Justin Taylor	Teacher of the Year - Finalist	Bulkeley High School, Hartford
Edward White	Teacher of the Year - Finalist	New Fairfield High School, New Fairfield
Diane Blake	CTHSS Teacher of the Year	Windham Technical High School, Willimantic
Dr. Elliot Landon	CT PTA Outstanding Superintendent of the Year	Westport Public Schools, Westport
Kristin Irvine	CT PTA Principal of the Year	Edgewood School, Bristol
Shelley Somers	CT PTA Principal of the Year	Central Middle School, Greenwich
John Dodig	CT PTA Principal of the Year	Staples High School, Westport
Johnna Hunt	CSDE Principal-Leader-in-Residence	Hillside Intermediate School, Naugatuck
Francine Hakim	CSDE Teacher-Leader-in-Residence	Brookside Elementary School, Norwalk
David Low	CSDE Teacher-Leader-in-Residence	The Sound School Regional Vocational Aquaculture School, New Haven
Christopher Poulos	CSDE Teacher-Leader-in-Residence	Joel Barlow High School, Region #9
Pamela Serlin	CSDE Teacher-Leader-in-Residence	Brookside Elementary School, Norwalk

*Celebrating
Excellence
in Education*

“My journey as Connecticut Teacher of the Year helped me to find my voice. But realization that this recognition was not about me... Realization that it was easy to speak when I spoke and shared the voices of teachers throughout our country... and when I spoke to share the voices of the students that sit in my classroom each day.” —Cara Quinn

Reflections as Connecticut’s 2015 Teacher of the Year

By Cara Quinn, 2015 Connecticut Teacher of the Year

“Speak up, even if your voice shakes.” I recall reading this quote over and over again prior to addressing my colleagues at our back to school convocation last fall. Public speaking seemed like a daunting task, and my experience in this department was limited to the infrequent maid of honor speech. Little did I know that in the coming year my voice would become so essential and would enable me to advocate for what is most important in education.

I found my voice in my journey as Connecticut Teacher of the Year, but it was not just my voice that I wished to share. This was an opportunity to speak on behalf of my esteemed colleagues and to share the voices and stories of the students that have filled my classroom for the past 12 years. The opportunity to communicate, advocate, and inspire is one of the things that I have appreciated most about being Connecticut Teacher of the Year.

In my time as Connecticut Teacher of the Year, I have sought to remind teachers and the greater community that teaching is the most direct and profound way to positively change our world. I have worked to remind teachers that “you matter,” that teachers are the greatest resource in their classrooms and that the relationships they form with students are integral to their success.

As a teacher in an urban district, I have felt compelled to share our collective success stories and to challenge the misperceptions about our schools, teachers, and students. It has brought me great pride to tell stories of students that have made incredible growth, realized their potential, and emerged brighter and more confident along the way. There is so much to celebrate in East Hartford and other urban communities. I’m proud to represent the incredible teachers and students in these districts!

While celebrating our success in urban districts, I felt it was also important to acknowledge the incredible challenges that we witness our children and families face, particularly the challenges of poverty. I am so encouraged



Cara Quinn, 2015 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, with President Obama at the White House Recognition of State Teachers of the Year, April 2015

and grateful to the members of the Connecticut Education Association who committed to focus their advocacy on addressing issues of childhood poverty at the [CEA Representative Assembly](#).

Over the course of this year, I have had incredible opportunities to collaborate with policy members at both the state and national level. It has been so affirming to me to participate in this work to identify priority issues, find common ground, and explore solutions together. We are all in this together and only when working together will we see the positive changes we seek!

This year, I have drawn so much inspiration from the passionate educators I have met and worked with every step of the way on this journey. I’ve often wondered, why me and why not you?! I want to thank you for reinvigorating my love for this profession and reigniting my desire to do more. It has been a true honor to represent you.

With gratitude,
Cara Quinn

Jahana Hayes Named 2016 Connecticut Teacher of the Year

On the morning of October 9, Governor Dannel Malloy surprised Jahana Hayes, a history teacher at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, Connecticut, when he came to her classroom to deliver the news that she had been named the 2016 Connecticut Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Hayes was selected from among more than 100 educators by a statewide committee of former Teachers of the Year and representatives from educational organizations, businesses, and the community through a rigorous selection process. She is the first Waterbury teacher in 62 years to receive this honor.



Jahana Hayes

Mrs. Hayes' career as an educator spans 13 years with 11 years in Waterbury. Her role as a history teacher extends beyond the walls of her classroom and into the community where

she regularly encourages her students to get involved in service learning projects and help their neighbors and improve the world around them.

"I am extremely humbled by this honor and thrilled by what it means for the students at Kennedy High School and for the Waterbury community. I've been telling my



Governor Malloy surprises 2016 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes in her classroom at Kennedy High School on October 9, 2015.

students that excellence happens here every day. Our students need to know that they have value and can make a difference in the world. This honor makes that real for them," Mrs. Hayes said.

"Jahana Hayes is an inspiration not only to her students, but to all educators who seek to deliver on the promise of an outstanding education for every student," said state Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell.

The Connecticut Teacher of the Year and the Teacher of the Year finalists, Dylan Connor from Bunnell High School in Stratford, Daniel Clement from Somers High School, and Shaun Mitchell from Central High School in Bridgeport, serve as teacher-ambassadors for public education. Along with the program's semifinalists, they have the opportunity to present workshops; speak at education conferences and meetings; address student, civic, college and university, and governmental groups; and operate special programs in accordance with their interests and expertise.

Mrs. Hayes now becomes Connecticut's representative for the National Teacher of the Year program. Mrs. Hayes and all district Teachers of the Year were honored at a ceremony on Tuesday November 10, 2015 at The Bushnell in Hartford. Our congratulations and best wishes to Jahana Hayes!

NNSTOY's YouTube Channel is New and Improved

There are plenty of instructional and inspiring videos to view that include: professional development on how to create lessons, culture, and instructional practices that will lead to improved student performance; monthly webinars facilitated by leading educators and researchers; and State Teachers of the Year discussing teacher leadership.

Check out all of the videos on the National Network of State Teachers of the Year's YouTube Channel [Here](#).

Connecticut Educators Receive Highest Honor for Teachers in Mathematics and Science

On July 1, 2015, President Obama named 108 mathematics and science teachers as recipients of the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science (including computer science). Two Connecticut educators are among the 108 awardees: Jacqueline Corricelli from Conard High School in West Hartford and Joshua Steffenson from Glastonbury High School.

Since 1983, more than 4,300 teachers have been recognized for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities, and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education. Awardees join an active network of outstanding educators from throughout the nation.

Presidential awardees receive a certificate signed by the president of the United States, a trip to Washington, D.C., to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities, and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

Jacqueline Corricelli from Conard High School in West Hartford was announced as Connecticut's 2015 Presidential Awardee for Excellence in Mathematics

and Science Teaching. Jackie has been a public school educator for 12 years. She has spent the last five years at Conard teaching grades 9 through 12 in advanced placement (AP) computer science (CS), geometry, and computer science principles. Prior to Conard, she taught at East Windsor High School. Jackie has a B.A. in math and statistics from the University of Connecticut and an M.S. in mathematics secondary education from Westfield State University.

Jackie believes that high school students should learn computer science. She sees computer science as a way to help students create using mathematics. Supported and inspired by her family, students, supervisor, and coworkers, she sought approval, pursued training, and designed curriculum to offer AP Computer Science A and Computer Science Principles for the first time in her school system.

Jackie's passion for computer science education goes beyond the classroom. She is a member of the Connecticut State Department of Education CS Advisory Group, which was created to improve access to and define computer science education at the state level. Jackie is endorsed and receives ongoing training from the College Board as a pilot instructor for CS principles.

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Jacqueline Corricelli and Joshua Steffenson, center, hold their Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching certificates with Megan Smith, left, U.S. chief technology officer, and Dr. France A. Córdoba, right, director of the National Science Foundation.

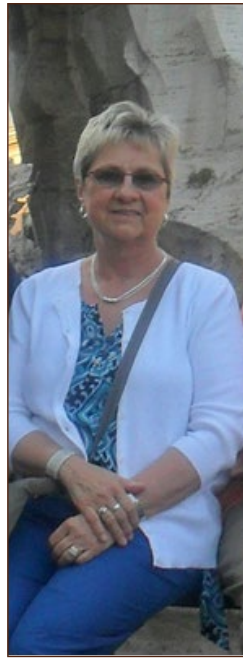
Recognizing Excellence in Education

Denise R. Seel Named Connecticut's 2016 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

On October 1, 2015, Denise R. Seel, a Lisbon resident and paraeducator at the L.W. Batchelder Elementary School in Hartford, was recognized as Connecticut's 2016 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year at a ceremony held at the Four Points Sheraton in Meriden. Denise's family, local and state officials, and the L.W. Batchelder Elementary School community attended at this momentous occasion.

In March 2013, the CSDE and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council renamed the Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year Award to the Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award in honor of Anne Marie Murphy, a special education paraprofessional who was killed in Newtown. The Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program recognizes outstanding paraeducator contributions to schools and communities. The award is given to one paraeducator who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in the performance of his or her job, thereby earning the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. The awardee is selected from approximately 14,000 public school paraeducators in the state and will represent Connecticut paraeducators in forums and advisory committees focused on education policy and public awareness concerning the challenges and successes that take place daily in schools.

The rigorous selection process includes candidate applications and interviews conducted by representatives of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council. Denise was chosen from three finalists, 10 semifinalists, and 40 district Paraeducators of the Year.



Denise R. Seel, a Lisbon resident and paraeducator at the L.W. Batchelder Elementary School in Hartford, was recognized as Connecticut's 2016 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

Denise's career as a paraeducator spans 21 years and began in 1993 at LEARN in southeastern Connecticut shortly before her son Jamie passed away. Jamie was diagnosed with cerebral palsy around the age of 2, and throughout the 17 years that he lived she learned that her passion to help children, adults, and families was going to be a life-long commitment. This has led to a working career focused on the education of children with multiple disabilities, complex medical needs, and behavioral challenges.

Denise earned an associate degree from Three Rivers Community College and believes that "all paraeducators who work in a school should be able to recognize every student's potential." While working as a paraeducator, she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from Charter Oak State College as a way to provide excellence in education for all students.

Denise has served as chairperson of the Region #6 Human Rights Committee, which is a part of the former Department of Mental Retardation. She has also been a member of the State of Connecticut's Family Support Advisory Council, and she is the co-founder of Lighthouse Vocational Education Center of southeastern Connecticut, an afterschool program for special needs children.

Paraeducators are instrumental in providing a quality education for all students. As Connecticut's Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year, Denise's message is, "ALL students are capable of learning and succeeding. Paraeducators play a vital role in assisting students to realize their potential and in helping them to achieve to the best of their ability. Be dedicated; be committed; and most of all remain focused."

Reflection

Remember the student learner you used to be

It's a bright, clear morning—launch day. My classmates and I trail out in a single file line to the field that is about to come alive with exploration. The grass is still dewy, but there are no clouds to be seen, perfect conditions for viewing and tracking the launch. We are shown the area in which we must wait, a safe distance away from the action, but with a great view of the field and sky. I take a moment to look around. Seventeen nervously excited people clutch the brightly colored, haphazardly stickered, hot-glue-gun constructed rockets



By Juliane Givoni
Region 9 Public Schools

we began building two days before. Today, with our teacher's help, we will watch them fly.

3...2...1...nothing. The group groans. What a disappointment; Kevin's rocket doesn't make it off the pad. They try again. Even more anticipation. Ugh, total let down. Now I start to worry. My rocket is set to launch fifth—what if it doesn't go? I'll be so disappointed. I run through the construction steps in my head, reassuring myself I followed directions the best I could. Jim is up next. 3...2...1... fffffssshhhhoooo! Blast off. Yes!! We point and whoop and follow it all the way back to the ground. We tell Jim it was a great flight, but he is already reflecting on the fact that the parachute didn't open fully, thinking he should have folded

it differently. The next two launches quickly follow with more cheers and pats on the back.

My rocket is purple (my favorite color) with a gold tip. I've painstakingly stickered the base with blue stars. As I approach the launch area for my turn, I send it one last hopeful look, willing it to fly. My teacher repeats the launch instructions, now for the fifth time, and I nod to indicate I understand. He readies the group and shouts, 3...2...1...wham! My rocket flies so high, I lose sight of it almost immediately. I wildly scan the sky, desperately hoping it hasn't crashed into a nearby tree. And then there it is drifting down to my right, its orange parachute guiding it to a gentle landing in the grass.

As I head back to the group, my classmates cheer and congratulate me on the flight, marveling at the height my rocket was able to achieve. My friend, Sarah, asks me about the placement of my rocket's fins, thinking that must have been the secret to my success. I don't really know that the fins had anything at all to do with it, I'm just proud that something I built flew so well.

I join the group in cheering on the rest of the rockets, some successful and some not so much. More than anything, I feel accomplished standing in this sunny field, having constructed a tube of plastic, wood, and paint that defied gravity. Maybe this is the start of something for me...

This is not a memory from middle school, but rather a story from only a few weeks

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Teachers Receive Math and Science Honor, continued from page 10

My experiences during the week in Washington:

“This week was completely surreal. When I look back, I still cannot believe I was there! Our professional development was with trendsetters and experts. For example, when we had a seminar at the National Science Foundation on Big Data, we met with the chief data scientist who had just written a memo to President Obama that morning! In each meeting, we reflected on our strengths and our weaknesses in the context of a national STEM movement. Then, we considered collectively how we could use each to influence meaningful change. Our opinions were valued and our networking opportunities were limitless. I am so grateful for the opportunity to represent the many hard-working teachers of mathematics in our state, and I feel so completely humbled by this experience.

Education should break barriers and help students to do more than they think they can. This week in (Washington) D.C. did this for me.”—Jacqueline Corricelli

Joshua Steffenson from Glastonbury High School was announced as Connecticut’s 2015 Presidential Awardee for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Joshua has taught physics and advanced placement physics to 11th- and 12th-graders at Glastonbury High School for the past 10 years. He is also an adjunct professor for the University of Connecticut Early College Experience program.

Joshua has a B.A., magna cum laude, in physics from Gustavus Adolphus College, an M.S. in secondary education

from the University of New Haven, and has completed coursework in school leadership at Sacred Heart University. Joshua is praised for his design of superbly organized lessons that emphasize the most important concepts; his flair for designing and implementing engaging experiments and demonstrations; his ability for inspiring young people and his skill in developing excellent relationships with them.

Joshua has helped grow Glastonbury’s AP physics enrollment to nearly 25 percent of each graduating class. He founded a Boosting Engineering, Science, and Technology (B.E.S.T.) Robotics competition team that has won the Northern Plains championships.

Joshua has served as president of the Glastonbury Education Association for five years, and is a TEAM mentor. Joshua’s contributions to education include professional development presentations on 21st-century classrooms, iBooks Author, and the use of video analysis.

“This award is an incredible recognition of teachers’ efforts toward a national shared vision for improving the way students think and engage with the world around them. Education and careers in STEM fields are a means for our students to be globally competitive in the highest sense, while affording unique opportunities for students to excel. Additionally, this award is special to me because it represents the combined efforts of my own former teachers and my current peers in education.” —Joshua Steffenson

Remember the Student Learner You Used to Be, continued from page 12

ago when I had the honor and pleasure of spending the week at the International Space Camp for Educators in Huntsville, Alabama. Over the course of the week the State Teachers of the Year and other honored guests worked, played, and learned together about space and rocketry. We engaged in astronaut training simulations, science experiments, lectures, and team challenges all the while demonstrating the creativity, curiosity, and risk-taking we seek to instill in our own students. Through the focus of the work, ideas took root, limits were tested, and lasting friendships emerged. Most rewarding of all was the reminder, indicated in the story above, of the immeasurable excitement situated learning experiences provide and the lasting impact those experiences have on students.

Teachers, as you begin another school year, I encourage you to remember the student learner you used to be, the things that excited you, challenged you, and pushed you. Make the student-you a member of your class, and as you make plans, try to find ways to tap into your own passion as a learner, for it will surely impact your students. Allow your own curiosity and enthusiasm to permeate your classroom, and you will help your students to defy gravity.

Best wishes for a school year that is out of this world!

—Juliane Givoni, Finalist, 2015 Connecticut State Teacher of the Year, Region #9 Public Schools

Check out this professional learning opportunity!

Fund for Teachers

In 2016, Fund for Teachers will award 100 grants for Connecticut teachers to pursue self-directed professional learning across the world.

Fund for Teachers (FFT) awards summer fellowship grants to pre-K–12 teachers to pursue self-designed professional learning. Teachers



decide what they want to learn and where they want to

learn it. Their odysseys take them all over the world — as scientists, researchers, artists and agents of change — and they return to their classrooms with new ideas that transform student learning and achievement.

Who is eligible?

Full-time pre-K–12th-grade teachers:

- spending at least 50 percent of their work week in direct classroom instruction;
- intending to return to the classroom in the consecutive school year; and
- with at least three years' experience as a pre-K–12th-grade teacher.

Individuals may apply for up to \$5,000. Teams may apply for up to \$10,000.

All applicants must apply online between October 1, 2015, and January 28, 2016, with final submission made by 5 p.m. CST on Thursday, January 28, 2016. Applicants will be notified of the selection committee results on April 5, 2016. Apply at www.fundforteachers.org.

Connecticut 2015 Fund for Teachers Fellows

This summer, 13 teachers representing seven schools embark on self-designed learning odysseys as scholars, researchers, adventurers, and Fund for Teachers Fellows. After pursuing scientific data, participating in seminars, volunteering with community organizations, and observing best practices, these teachers will return to their classrooms as lead learners to inspire their students and school communities.

Smith Mowry

Columbus Magnet Elementary School

Train with world-class athletes at the Triathlon School for Beginners in Hawaii, gaining a better understanding of kinesiology, training and healthy habits to combat childhood obesity and develop life-long strategies for elementary school students.

Andrew Pearce

Columbus Magnet Elementary School

Participate in zero-gravity weightless flight experience in Houston, Texas, to enhance current Young Astronauts curriculum and inspire a new generation of students to embrace STEM principles.

Marina Outwater

Long River Middle School

Investigate the water crisis in India, one of the most populated countries in the world, to establish an inquiry-based, interdisciplinary unit, and inspire students to be active agents of change.

Joe LaPrad, Kelsey Murphy, Susan Quatrella

Brien McMahon High School

Study in Colombia methods of special education and science instruction (course progression, student-centered learning activities, inquiry-based learning) to better help students transition into the school system.

Diana Manousos

Brien McMahon High School

Attend Taft Educational Center's AP Art History workshop in Watertown, CT, followed by an independent study tour of masterpieces throughout Italy, to teach a new course on the 250 works of art students need to know.

Louis Schede

Norwalk High School

Participate in a monthlong NOLS Wilderness course in the North Cascades Mountains of the Pacific Northwest, using new skills to establish a Wilderness Club that fosters students' perseverance, teamwork, and leadership.

Linda Ventura

Port Chester High School

Study performing and teaching musical improvisation with world-renowned jazz pianist/instructor Mr. Billy Lester to learn strategies for teaching creative musical improvisation, instrumental and vocal.

Jean Ramos and Heather Temple

Port Chester Middle School

Examine multiple aspects of Cuba's history and art to broaden students' awareness and expand current repertoire of cultures explored within language classes serving a diverse population of Latino/Hispanic students.

Jeannette Sanderson

Port Chester Middle School

Participate in a cultural immersion program in Costa Rica to learn Spanish, volunteer in a local school, and improve understanding of Latin American culture to build relationships with students and their families, many of whom are native Spanish speakers from this region.

Missy Giandurco

Wolfpit Elementary School

Explore the Hawaiian Islands' historical and cultural traditions and incorporate findings into current study of myths and folklore to develop vocabulary and story-writing skills with mainstream, special education, and ELL students.



Mentors Matter

*By Carly Weiland-Quiros
Education Specialist, Education Connection*

Stop for a moment and recall your first year as a new teacher. *How would you describe your first year? What did you feel when you faced your first class? What were the challenges you faced?*

In the first year of teaching, beginning teachers experience a wide range of emotions, including excitement, anticipation, confusion, and even frustration. The guided support of a mentor can be a valuable resource in assisting the beginning teacher to meet these challenges and develop professional, reflective practices that will serve the teacher for the rest of his or her career.

The Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM), Connecticut's induction program for beginning teachers, pairs beginning teachers with skilled mentors to participate in five learning modules aligned to the [Common Core of Teaching](#) (CCT). The foundation of this successful mentoring relationship is built on trust, mutual respect, and collaboration. New teachers are more willing to express their concerns and ask questions when they feel safe in a supportive relationship where learning



Teacher Alex Nocito talking with mentor Ellen Dalton.

and reflection are the focus.

A skilled mentor knows how to foster meaningful relationships by actively listening and generating questions to invite deep thinking on the part of the beginning teacher. Effective mentors exude a passion for teaching and learning, and they know and use a variety of effective classroom management and instructional strategies. Above all, mentors are committed to supporting a beginning teacher's professional growth. Do you possess these skills and dispositions? If you are interested in learning more about how you can become a mentor, visit the TEAM website at ctteam.org or contact your TEAM District Facilitator.