



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools
Superintendents of Unified School Districts
Executive Directors, Regional Educational Service Centers
Directors of Public Charter Schools

FROM: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

DATE: May 5, 2025

SUBJECT: 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award

With the support of the State Board of Education, it is my honor to recognize and celebrate Connecticut paraeducators. Paraeducators are instrumental in supporting students in the various aspects of the educational process, including their overall well-being.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is now accepting applications for the [2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award](#). This program recognizes the important role of paraeducators in supporting students academically, socially, and emotionally. In honor of Anne Marie Murphy, a paraeducator who lost her life at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December 2012, the award acknowledges the service and commitment of all Connecticut paraeducators, and honors one paraeducator, who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in the performance of their job. The honoree has thereby earned the respect and admiration of other paraeducators, students, teachers, administrators, co-workers, and parents. Superintendents and pupil services directors are invited to identify one district paraeducator of the year to apply for this award.

The process begins with each school district nominating their own Paraeducator of the Year. To be eligible, the nominated candidates must be serving as a paraeducator who assists teachers in the delivery of instruction and related services to students and will serve in a paraeducator role for the 2025-26 school year. Candidates must apply on the Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year portal at <https://bit.ly/2026CTParaeducator> to be considered for state honors. All submissions from the 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year application must be received by **Friday, June 27, 2025**.

The 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year will be honored at the 2026 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Ceremony, which will take place on Tuesday, December 2, 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jessica Ocasio at 860-713-6717 or via e-mail at jessica.g.ocasio@ct.gov.

CRT:jgo

cc: Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Deputy Commissioner of Educational Supports & Wellness

Dr. Shuana K. Tucker, Chief Talent Officer

Jade Gopie, Bureau Chief, Talent Office

Dr. Jessica Ocasio, Program Manager, Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program

2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

The Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program recognizes outstanding paraeducator contributions to schools and communities. The program honors one paraeducator who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in the performance of their job, thereby earning them the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, co-workers, and parents.

Timeline for Selection of Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SELECTION PROCESS AND RECOGNITION</u>
May 1, 2025	Application link becomes available to all superintendents.
June 27, 2025	Deadline for district-selected paraeducators of the year to submit an application (using the application link provided) for the 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award.
July – August 2025	Applications will be scored. The CSDE will invite Semi-Finalists for interviews by mid-August.
September/October 2025	The 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year is identified by state selection committee.
December 2, 2025	2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year is honored during the 2025 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Ceremony at The Bushnell Auditorium.

Application Procedures

The following requirements must be met for your district paraeducator of the year to apply for Connecticut's 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program.

The method and materials used to select the district paraeducator of the year may vary by district. The process must be fair and inclusive. Prior to **Friday, June 27, 2025**, the district-selected paraeducators of the year may apply for Connecticut's 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award. Applicants should submit the electronic application via the following survey link: [2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award](https://bit.ly/2026CTParaeducator) (<https://bit.ly/2026CTParaeducator>).

Applicants must provide three (3) letters of recommendation with their application, one of which must be from the paraeducator's principal or supervisor, and one from a teacher or related services staff member the paraeducator has worked with in the previous three (3) years. The third letter may come from a paraeducator colleague, parent, another teacher/related services staff member with whom the applicant has worked, a student, or other administrator.

Recommendation letters must provide specific examples of the paraeducator's contributions to his/her school and district, and should relate to the candidate's work as a paraeducator.

- No more than three (3) recommendation letters (limited to one (1) page each) will be accepted. All recommendations should be in PDF or WORD format and should be labelled with the district's name and the author's last name.

- Please provide a photo of you working with students that meets your school district's media release policy. Photos should be in JPEG format with at least 1,000 x 600 pixels and labelled with the district's name and the paraeducator's last name.

Selection committee members will review the application materials to assist in identifying the finalists. Selection committee members may include representatives from:

- the CSDE
- the CT Teacher of the Year Council
- educator professional and service organizations
- paraeducators
- higher education faculty
- teachers
- parents and
- administrators

Award Recognition

The 2026 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year will be honored during the 2026 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Ceremony at The Bushnell Auditorium in Hartford, CT, on December 2, 2025. The awardee will become a member of the School Paraeducator Advisory Council during the 2025-26 school year and may represent paraeducators in forums and conferences.

Eligibility

Connecticut defines paraeducator as follows: a paraeducator is an employee who assists teachers and/or other certified professionals or therapists in the delivery of instructional and related services to students. The paraeducator works under the direct supervision of the teacher and/or other certified or licensed professional(s). The ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs, including assessment of student progress, is a collaborative effort between certified and licensed staff.

Only paraeducators who assist teachers in the delivery of instruction and related services to students are eligible for this award. The 2026 honoree must be serving in the role of a paraeducator during the 2025-26 school year.

Each district may identify only one paraeducator of the year annually to apply for the Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year award. Only the district superintendent or school principal should forward the application link to the district-selected paraeducator of the year.

Selection of the district paraeducator of the year should be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws.

Selection Criteria

Each district applicant will be evaluated based on six criteria adapted from the National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP) Model, which Connecticut selected as a framework for articulating key competencies for Connecticut paraeducators. The model defines six (6) primary areas of responsibilities for paraeducators:

1. Assisting teachers/providers with building and maintaining effective instructional teams.
2. Assisting teachers/providers with maintaining learner-centered supportive environments.
3. Supporting teachers/providers with planning and organizing learning experiences.
4. Assisting teachers/providers with engaging students in learning and assisting in instruction.
5. Assisting teachers/providers with assessing learner needs, progress, and achievement.
6. Meeting standards of professional and ethical conduct.

Additional information regarding this framework can be located in the [Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraeducators](#), pages 29-37.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Jessica Ocasio, Program Manager, Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year, by phone at (860) 713-6717 or by e-mail: jessica.g.ocasio@ct.gov.