



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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HARTFORD'S DENISE SEEL NAMED CONNECTICUT'S 2016 ANNE MARIE MURPHY PARAEDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

(Hartford, CT) – State Department of Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell joined Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman and Hartford Public School officials Monday to announce that Denise R. Seel, a Lisbon resident and paraeducator at the L.W. Batchelder Elementary School in Hartford, has been named Connecticut's 2016 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 his/her job, thereby earning them the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. Paraeducators assist certified teachers in the classroom and play a vital role in supporting students and creating a learning environment that engages the whole child.

Commissioner Wentzell, Lt. Governor Wyman and State Department of Education Chief Talent Officer Sarah Barzee visited Batchelder School Monday to make the announcement.

"Educators are our most important resource—Connecticut is honored to count Denise Seel among them," said Lt. Governor Wyman. "I want to congratulate Denise on receiving the Paraeducator of the Year award, but more importantly, thank her and the many others who are tireless in their commitment to our students and their futures."

"Strong paraeducators are critical to helping our students develop a lifelong love of learning and achieve the kind of success in school that allows them to pursue their dreams," said Commissioner Wentzell. "Denise Seel is a dedicated educator whose passion for helping all students thrive in school and rise to their potential has impacted hundreds of students and their families throughout her career. I congratulate Ms. Seel on this honor."

"We are so fortunate and so proud to have Denise Seel in our district. She exemplifies the best that our paraeducators have to offer our students; bringing personal and professional commitment to this very important work," said Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools Beth Schiavino-Narvaez.

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.

Ms. Seel was chosen among three finalists, 10 semi-finalists, and 40 district Paraeducators of the Year. The rigorous selection process, which includes candidate applications and interviews, was conducted by representatives of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council comprised of former state Paraeducators of the Year and representatives from educational organizations and collective bargaining.

Connecticut's Paraeducator of the Year is selected from approximately 14,000 public school paraeducators in the state and represents the profession in forums and advisory committees impacting education policy and public awareness of the successes that take place daily in schools, as well as the challenges they face.

Ms. Seel'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 two and throughout the 17 years that he lived, she learned that her passion to help children, adults and families was going to be a lifelong commitment. This led to a working career focused on the education of children with multiple disabilities, complex medical needs and the behaviorally challenged.

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

Ms. Seel and her husband, Richard, have a son, Dr. Darren Seel, who lives with his wife, Megan, in West Charlton, N.Y. with their grandson, Samuel Seel. She will succeed 2015 Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year Geraldine Lavallee, who is a Behavior Coach at Squadron Line Elementary School in Simsbury. Ms. Lavallee will conclude her term as Paraeducator of the Year on December 31.

Ms. Seel will be honored at a ceremony on October 1, 2016 at the Four Points Sheraton in Meriden.

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