

# **20 District/Charter Educational Support Professionals of the Year honored, one to be named state winner**

Twenty educational support professionals have been selected to represent their districts or the Delaware Charter School Network in the state's first Delaware Educational Support Professional of the Year Program.

“Educational support professionals provide vital services for our students and teachers. They are the paraprofessionals who often work with our students one-on-one or in small groups to provide the individualized instructional support some students need. They are the bus drivers and aides who safely transport our children to and from school daily. They are the custodial staff and office personnel who keep our schools running each day. They are the nutrition staff workers who make sure our children have the healthy meals they need to concentrate on learning. They are the technology staff helping students access instruction in person or from home. These are just a few examples of the crucial roles educational support personnel play in our schools,” Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said. “I laud each of these nominees for his or her outstanding work and look forward to honoring one of them with the state award.”

Launching this year, the Delaware State Educational Support Professional of the Year (ESPY) program recognizes outstanding

service by school employees who provide direct or indirect services to students and their families. The Delaware Charter School Network also is invited to participate. Employees considered for the award include:

- Paraprofessionals
- Custodial staff
- Secretaries
- Nutritional staff
- School- and district-employed bus drivers
- School- and district-employed bus aides

From those nominated at a building level, one educational support professional of the year moves forward to represent each district or the charter school community in the state program. Each district/charter network winner receives a \$1,000 personal award from the winner's district or charter school. The state program then chooses one person annually to serve as Delaware's Educational Support Professional of the Year. State winners receive an additional \$1,500 personal award from DDOE as well as \$2,500 to be used for the educational benefit of his or her students.

A selection committee reviewed the local winners' state applications, and Secretary Bunting will name the first Delaware winner on Friday. That person will serve as the 2021 Delaware Educational Support Professional of the Year.

DDOE is excited to recognize these outstanding professionals whose work is vital to students' success.

The 20 nominees are:

Appoquinimink: Middletown High paraprofessional Valerie Raab  
(awarded posthumously)

Brandywine: P.S. duPont Middle paraprofessional Ryan Matthews

Caesar Rodney: W.B. Simpson Elementary paraprofessional Paula  
Kohout

Cape Henlopen: Richard Shields Elementary paraprofessional  
Chantal Smith

Capital: William Henry Middle School paraprofessional Jamel  
Trott

Delaware Charter School Network: Charter School of Wilmington  
Assistant to the President/Admissions Director Suzanne  
Musacchio

Christina: Jennie E. Smith Elementary senior administrative  
secretary Alice Williams

Colonial: Southern Elementary paraprofessional Holly  
Wiedenmann

Delmar: Delmar High School Intensive Learning Center assistant  
Odell Jones Jr.

Indian River: Indian River High IT technician David Clark

Lake Forest: Lake Forest North Elementary Child Nutrition  
Services Manager Karen Mast

Laurel: Laurel High School custodian Justin Saulsbury

Milford: Lulu Ross Elementary paraprofessional Robert Newsome

NCCVT: Hodgson Vo-Tech paraprofessional Megan McClelland

POLYTECH: POLYECH High Technician Plant Operator & Maintenance  
James Demko

Red Clay Consolidated: A.I. duPont High paraprofessional  
Kathryn Ellis

Seaford: Central Elementary school behavioral interventionist  
LuAnn Holden

Smyrna: North Smyrna Elementary paraprofessional Nadine  
Collins

Sussex Tech: Sussex Tech High School Technology Coordinator  
Philip Wilson

Woodbridge: Woodbridge Middle School chief custodian Thomas  
"Pete" Faulk

Find photos of the nominees and learn more about the program  
[here](#).