

June 11, 2021

To ACPS Special Education Teachers, Paraprofessionals, and Related Service Providers,

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your tireless efforts on behalf of our students with disabilities during this pandemic. We have heard from many parents throughout the past year and--while their children have faced challenges with virtual learning--there has been a constant refrain: *"My child's teacher is doing everything he/she possibly can."*

I am the parent of two students with disabilities, and I often tell people this:

"If you want to have your faith in humanity restored, have a child with a disability. You will meet so many good people who are kind, energetic, generous and creative in their efforts to help your child."

I am talking about you!

Those of us on SEAC know that in a *normal* year your jobs are often challenging...but that during the pandemic, they've become nearly impossible. This spring our committee partnered with Terry Werner, the Executive Director of Specialized Instruction, to administer the Anne R. Lipnick Awards for Specialized Instruction (after a hiatus last year due to the state of emergency). We selected four winners, out of a deserving field of many, to receive the Anne R. Lipnick awards. It is truly a high honor to be chosen as an Anne R. Lipnick winner--and especially so this year! But we also felt it important to acknowledge the excellent work being done by numerous other dedicated ACPS special education professionals throughout this pandemic.

Albert Einstein said, *"Genius is taking the complex and making it simple."*

That's what special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers do each day. You remove barriers to student learning by providing a variety of supports that make engagement and success possible, that take the complex and make it simple. Not much in life is more complex than instructing a non-verbal child with autism via zoom, but I've seen it done successfully this year. You have each taken very complex challenges and found ways to simplify the tasks at hand so that students with a disability can be successful. You've created games and become performers. You've danced along with educational music videos and built relationships through a screen. We know it's been exhausting!

We want to say THANK YOU!

We want you to know that your efforts are appreciated, and that you are our heroes. You have our deepest gratitude.

On behalf of the SEAC,
Cindy Hart
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee