



# Barnstable Public Schools

## Special Education Parent Advisory Council

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### **Wind Beneath My Wings Award 2016 Recognition for Excellence in Supporting Special Education**

#### **Nomination Statement – Tara Ewald**

I am nominating Tara Ewald, a fifth grade general education teacher at BUES. From my interactions at meetings this year, as well, as visits in her class, and feedback from other staff members, I feel that she is an exceptional teacher who actively and regularly engages ALL students in her classroom regardless of their diverse learning styles or challenges. She does not see any of her students in her classroom that receive special education services and are on IEPs as the special education teacher's student but as hers. She 'owns' her students; all of them. Tara consistently is able to tailor her instruction and modify her curriculum to meet all student needs and her practice is characterized by inclusive yet rigorous teaching. She is invested in each of her student's as individuals, learners, and future contributors to society. Tara instills a love for learning in all her students by consistently providing creative and powerful learning experiences. Additionally, her classroom climate is invigorating, inclusive, safe, yet rigorous, with high standards and expectations for all.

Upon entering her room, the tenor and excitement for learning in the air is palpable for all her students regardless of their varying levels or needs. Finally, Tara is also an exceptional collaborator with her fellow colleagues and always supportive, helpful, respectful and present.

Tara is an incredible asset to BUES and her inclusive practices, ongoing commitment and investment in all students, and creative and collaborative classroom are apparent and far reaching. She is a true gift to her students, their families, colleagues, and community.

#### **Nomination Statement – Martin Nichols**

Martin Nichols is a special education bus monitor for many of our preschool students. He is an amazing person that has an innate ability to make connections with some of our most needy and vulnerable students.

Preschool is often a student's (and parent's) first experience with public school transportation. Martin helps to make this situation as comfortable and pain free as possible for all involved. He knows and happily greets each student by name as they enter the bus. Martin is aware of what characters, television shows, toys, etc. that each child loves and will include them in his conversations with the children. This may not sound like much but there are no words to describe how meaningful Martin's knowledge and connection is to each individual child.

Martin provides support to children ages 3-5 years old, many are non-verbal and have no immediate means of interacting with others to make their wants and needs known. At pick up and drop off, Martin actively seeks out information from the students' parents and special education support staff to acquaint himself with each child and his/her needs and preferences. He also uses his gift of observation and patience to understand what makes each child happy and what may be upsetting. All of this student understanding is used to enhance the bus rides of all the preschoolers who are lucky enough to ride on his route.

Martin can be seen singing and acting out songs each day on the bus. He will wipe away tears and runny noses without a thought. He will engage and support the most nervous of students. Due to Martin's kindness these same student's no longer resort to tears, anxiety and behaviors but instead look forward to the bus ride and yell out "Martin!" before the bus doors open for them to board. Martin will assist a 5 year old with her purses and pocketbooks so weighted down with treasures that it is difficult for her to climb the bus stairs. Martin will talk about Jiminy Cricket with a little boy who is fretting the ride and loves the talking cricket. Martin will sing of fish and bumble bees each and everyday with the same level of joy and enthusiasm as he did on the first day of school.

Throughout this school year the staff at the ECELC who have had the pleasure of seeing Martin singing, engaging, supporting, or consoling a child often walk away with tears in their eyes, declaring aloud-

"Martin is amazing!"

"Martin needs to be cloned!"

"Every bus should have a Martin"

This nomination for the Wind Beneath my Wings Award is submitted on behalf of all the preschoolers that Martin has positively impacted this year!