

In 2012, Minnesota Division of Early Childhood was proud to nominate Mary Miller for this award. She exemplifies all that is good about early childhood services in Minnesota and her contributions will have long-term effects on services to young children with disabilities and their families. **Mary was awarded the Rose C. Engel award at the International DEC conference held in Minneapolis in October, 2012.**

Mary has served as the Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator for the Minnetonka Schools for 25 years. She has exemplified passion, vision, leadership and dedication in providing services that improve the quality of lives of young children with special needs and their families. She also demonstrates high ethical and professional standards.

She is a leader in her field and was an instrumental voice in helping local school districts to build their own capacity to provide high-quality services for all children. Through her work, she has demonstrated an understanding of the importance of evidenced-based practices and remains up-to-date on those practices through trainings and professional journals.

Mary is sought after by her peers to offer her professional insights and training.

In nominating Mary, Her staff wrote "Mary has created a culture in our program to promote constant learning, innovation, and improvement for all staff through modeling, obtaining and dedicating resources to ensure that staff are utilizing best practice for all children and families."

In another letter, staff wrote "Mary sees the big picture and whether that big picture is the framework she uses to build a significant and strong early childhood special education team or the framework supports the design of a significant and strong educational plan for a specific student, Mary gets positive results."

"Mary is creative when it comes to designing programs. She created new options each year based on the children who are currently in our ECSE program. Instead of hoping that the child is a good fit for the classroom, she creates a classroom that would be a good for the child."

A parent wrote, "I was a very young, overwhelmed and frightened parent with a 2 ½ year old child being evaluated for special education services. Mary was professional, compassionate and caring throughout the process. She helped us understand the confusing world of early childhood special education, language, acronyms and procedures. More than that, she felt like a friend, someone who provided us with honest, useful information and yet at the same time also offered comfort and hope."

Another writer states:

"Mary's influence reaches beyond her school district. She has made a lasting difference by her involvement and leadership with west metro early childhood coordinators and early intervention providers. She is known and respected by professionals throughout the state of Minnesota."