

HOMETOWN HERO:

# Meghan Murphy

**“Our ASD students would likely experience greater barriers to education within the regular school environment if it were not for Ms. Murphy’s dedication, expertise and advocacy.”**

At Marley Elementary School, Ms. Murphy is a Hometown Hero for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. As a special educator in the primary grades, Ms. Murphy teaches five students diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum. Ms. Murphy regularly advocates for these students in many ways. First, she has been instrumental in the identification process for these students beginning with the students’ first entry into school. Through her presence in the Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms, Ms. Murphy supports classroom teachers by sharing accommodations and modifications to address students’ unique learning needs. Her expertise with ASD has supported our school team in identifying students, and most importantly, in addressing their needs. Of the 3 ASD students who began kindergarten at Marley Elementary, all were identified and provided with IEPs during their kindergarten year. Not only does Ms. Murphy address student needs, she provides job-embedded staff development for the teachers of these students. She helps regular educators to better understand this educational disability and supports their growth in developing appropriate instructional strategies to address their unique needs. Quickly, Ms. Murphy has become the leader of a Professional Learning Community that strives to educate ASD students within the home school community.

In addition to her work at school, Ms. Murphy establishes strong Home/School connections with the families of ASD students. First, she communicates regularly with family members to explain student profiles and how ASD impacts their performance in school. Next, she capably makes connections to students’ challenges at home. Ms. Murphy coordinates picture calendars used at home and school. In addition, she uses social stories to teach students desirable behaviors/responses and helps them to make behavioral connections between both settings. Parents often call or email Ms. Murphy to forewarn her, and our school community, of challenges that their children are experiencing that may influence their performance during the school day. Frequently, Ms. Murphy is seen greeting her student(s) as they arrive to provide proactive interventions to enhance their daily school performance.

Parents and teachers provide accolades for Ms. Murphy’s dedication and expertise. Both articulate frequently that our ASD students would likely experience greater barriers to education within the regular school environment if it were not for Ms. Murphy’s dedication, expertise and advocacy. We are proud of Ms. Murphy’s work within our school community and feel that we are serving greater numbers of ASD students as a result of her work. We hope that the Anne Arundel County Chapter of the Autism Society of America (AACC-ASA) will join us in recognizing her talents and dedication.