

HOMETOWN HERO:

Edward Feinberg

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Dr. Feinberg has been the program manager of the Anne Arundel County Infants and Toddlers program since 1979. In 2004, he also became coordinator of Preschool Special Education Services in Anne Arundel County. Dr. Feinberg was the founding board president of The Coordinating Center and an original member of the State Interagency Coordinating Council. He has served on numerous state and local committees and task forces for children with disabilities. He has also written more than 20 articles in professional journals and been an adjunct professor at George Washington University and Georgetown.

That is Ed’s “dry” bio. What those titles mean is that Ed works tremendously hard every day for children with autism in Anne Arundel County. Ed’s impact on the birth-to-five community cannot be overstated. He has seen referrals in Infants and Toddlers increase almost 170% in 15 years, many of them children on the autism spectrum. Infants and Toddlers offers a classroom program to children on the spectrum, and they have flourished in that program. Ed has also hired teachers, staff, and therapists knowledgeable about autism and he encourages them to learn new approaches and therapies. In ECI, under Ed’s leadership, and in conjunction with the Office of Early Childhood, AACPS has begun what is called the “swinging door.” This model offers the opportunity for inclusion for four-year-olds in pre-k with typically developing peers. I have seen Ed strive to provide the best possible environment and resources for his teachers, therapists, and staff. As one of Ed’s educators recently told me, “He really encourages us all to strive for excellence, to stay informed, and to be attuned to individual child and family concerns/needs.”

Ed is also an enthusiastic partner for parents to work with. He was incredibly supportive of the parent-teacher group for parents in special education birth-to-five. When parents have been troubled by something, he has frequently encouraged me to have the parent call him directly. Many times the parent calls me back amazed that Ed took time to work with them and the situation has been resolved. He really listens and wants to help in whatever ways he can. Despite his extremely busy schedule, he tries to be available and accessible. Ed is the only program director I have ever met who answers calls from the general public directly, and I have seen him take on the “grunt” work without complaint.

It can’t be easy to work in the bureaucracy that Ed does, especially in difficult budgetary times. But, Ed does a wonderful job of working with all the stakeholders and doing what is best for the kids. Anne Arundel County is lucky to have a dedicated professional like Ed Feinberg running Infants and Toddlers and preschool services. His contributions have enhanced the education of my child and I know many of yours as well.