

CEC Member Alex Lopes Honored at White House as a Teacher of the Year

Arlington, Va., April 23, 2013—Alex Lopes, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) member and pre-kindergarten special education teacher from Carol City Elementary School in Miami-Dade County, was honored at the White House today with Teachers of the Year from around the United States.

Lopes, who is the Florida Department of Education/Macy’s Teacher of the Year and one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year, joined attendees in a Rose Garden ceremony with President Barack Obama.

“Educators and everyone up here today, they represent the very best of America – committed professionals who give themselves fully to the growth and development of our kids,” said President Obama during his remarks. “And with them at the front of the classroom and leading our schools, I am absolutely confident that our children are going to be prepared to meet the tests of our time and the tests of the future.”

CEC President Christy Chambers, who attended the ceremony, congratulated Lopes and the other teachers honored at the ceremony for their extraordinary work.

“These Teachers of the Year embody the very best of the teaching profession,” Chambers said. “CEC is proud of Alex and the work he does every day to ensure great outcomes for children.”

Lopes was selected as the Florida Teacher of Year from a pool of 180,000 public school teachers throughout the state by a Department of Education-appointed selection committee representing teachers, principals, parents and the business community.

Florida’s top educator is selected on the basis of the superior ability to teach and communicate knowledge of the subject taught, professional development, philosophy of teaching and outstanding school and community service. The most important qualification is the teacher’s ability to inspire a love of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities.

“When I became a finalist, I was given a wonderful opportunity to give a voice to the students I teach,” said Lopes. “What I teach is unique. I’m a male and I teach early childhood in an inclusion setting. I teach at a Title I school so a lot of my students are minority students and English language learners.”

Lopes, who was also named the Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education for Florida, has spent the last school year serving as a goodwill representative for the Florida Department of

Education and teachers throughout the state. As part of his platform, he hopes to encourage educators to be culturally responsive.

“There are a lot of good things going on [in education], but we forget to implement [policy and educational innovation] in a culturally responsive manner, whether it’s gender, language, race or ethnicity,” Lopes said. “We need to fit the culture of the student.”

Lopes went on to say, “Born and raised in Brazil, I came here when I was 26. And I was received in the Oval Office. If that isn’t the American dream, I don’t know what is.”

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*CEC is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC’s mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy. **For more information about CEC, visit www.cec.sped.org.***

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