



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ANNOUNCING THE 2017 NATIONAL STUDENT TEACHER OF THE YEAR, CERELIA DIAZ

(INDIANAPOLIS)—Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) and the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) are honored to announce that Cerelia Diaz of Harlingen, Texas, is the recipient of the 2017 KDP/ATE National Student Teacher of the Year Award.

A 2017 graduate of Texas A&M University–Kingsville, Diaz is now certified as a Bilingual Generalist for early childhood through sixth grade classrooms. Her time spent student teaching in the spring 2017 semester at Wilson Elementary School in the Harlingen School District laid the groundwork for receiving this prestigious award. As part of the application process, Diaz submitted the lesson “Figurative Language—Idioms,” which she taught to a fifth-grade class.

Diaz has a passion for creativity in instructing students, which involves making a personal connection with each child in the classroom. “Understanding the diverse learning interests of my students and expressing a genuine concern and caring for each student is the first priority,” Diaz affirmed. She wants students to “take ownership of the learning that is taking place, developing their own personal strength of creative and critical thinking skills.”

Mary Atkinson was Diaz’s student teaching field supervisor: “As an educator for 40 years, it’s been exciting working with Cerelia Diaz, who’s so passionate about being a teacher! Cerelia makes learning fun and relevant by offering her students numerous opportunities to interact and collaborate. Her lesson plans are consistently centered on making connections to her students’ lives and interests.”

When asked to describe one of the issues facing the field of education today, Diaz stated, “The lack of passion that plays a vital role in the way educators are instructing our children is no longer the priority in seeking out teaching as a profession.” She added, “The teacher’s time management is spent, in an overwhelming effort, in test preparation of right-answer multiple choice approaches. These teaching approaches place limitations on teaching students to think critically or problem solve issues.”

Atkinson saw Diaz’s passion and innovation in observing her in the classroom. “Her classroom comes alive as she strives to understand her students’ social and emotional needs and individual learning styles. Innovation and research-based best practices—including technology integration—are a huge part of her repertoire of teaching strategies.”

Dr. Paul Paese, Dean and Professor in the School of Education at the University of St. Thomas, and member of the review panel for this award, shared, “I was very impressed with Cerelia’s teaching. Her lesson was well-organized, [had] integrated technology, and saw high student engagement and enthusiasm.”

Personally, Diaz takes interest in folkloric dancing, reading, and researching new ideas to improve her craft. She volunteers with an afterschool youth program that provides mentoring for children from low-socioeconomic status households and also works with organizations such as The Salvation Army and Drive for Your School.

“I am extremely honored and greatly appreciative of having been chosen as the 2017 KDP/ATE National Student Teacher of the Year. To be awarded this accomplishment by educators in our profession of the highest caliber, and among many deserving applicants, is heartfelt. I am humbled to represent my university, district, school, and family.”

Since the award’s establishment in 1994, KDP and ATE have named a very select few from around the United States as

National Student Teacher/Intern of the Year. The award recognizes one student teacher/intern annually who has demonstrated the ability to plan and develop classroom management skills and instructional strategies that support all students; establish interpersonal relationships with students, parents, faculty, and staff; and reflect powerfully on their student teaching experience. Award winners are acknowledged with a \$1,500 scholarship award.

Encouraged by the number of applications for this award, KDP Executive Director, Faye Snodgrass, reflects, "As we continue to hear positive comments about the quality and commitment of the American teacher, I can say that our noble profession is in good hands. Participating in this year's review of a record number of National Student Teacher of the Year applications revealed the high standards and effectiveness of those who will soon lead their own classrooms. It was a genuine pleasure to see student teachers using best pedagogies, delivering engaging lessons, and reflecting on their practice."

About Kappa Delta Pi

Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education, is a 501 (c) (3) organization established in 1911 to recognize and promote excellence in education, provide a reasoned voice for significant issues, and link learning communities of educators. Through its programs, services, and strategic partnerships, KDP supports the professional growth and teaching practices of educators throughout all phases and levels of their careers. The organization currently has more than 600 chapters and an active membership of nearly 40,000 worldwide.

About the Association of Teacher Educators

The Association of Teacher Educators was founded in 1920 and is the only national, individual membership organization devoted solely to the improvement of teacher education for both school and campus-based teacher educators. ATE members represent over 650 colleges and universities, 500 major school systems, and the majority of the state departments of education.