

Teacher of the Year, Lima Boyle Heads to DC

Julie Lima Boyle traveled to Washington, DC with 52 fellow educators for a week-long conference.

By [Lauren Costa](#) | May 10, 2012



As part of her [November selection as Rhode Island Teacher of the Year](#), Coventry High School english teacher and Department Chair, Julie Lima Boyle was recently able to travel to our nation's capital for the 2012 National Teacher and State Teachers of the Year Washington Recognition conference.

The week-long event was held from Apr. 20-27 and consisted of various ceremonies, receptions, trainings and opportunities for Lima Boyle to meet and mingle with 52 fellow teachers from across the country as well as dignitaries like Dr. Jill Biden and President Barack Obama.

During the week, the educators traveled through the capital on a Target-sponsored bus for a tour of Washington, DC, as well as stops at the Newseum for an opening reception on Sunday, a Smithsonian Ambassadors Session at Smithsonian Castle and a reception at Vice President Joe Biden's residence on Monday, the White House on Tuesday, a Black-Tie Gala Reception and Dinner at the U.S. Institution of Peace on Wednesday and the U.S. Department of Education on Thursday.

"The entire trip was amazing," Lima Boyle said. "It was a pretty decent blend of celebratory activities and work that was truly a chance and moment of a lifetime."

When asked what the highlight of the trip was for her, Lima-Boyle wasted no time in describing her interaction with President Obama at the White House Ceremony honoring the Teachers of the Year.

"The whole process was very formal. We were lined up by height, so I was one of the last to go up and I could hear him well before I could see him," she said. "When I was announced, I remember knowing that there were other people in the room - photographers, staffers, Secret Service - but all I remember was him."

She joked about her surprise when the President put his arm around her for a photograph.

"We were told not to hand him anything, not to touch him - very strict orders, so I'm sure the photographer saw the look of shock on my face when Obama put his arm around me. It was for the picture so I had to put my arm around him, too. I was at a loss for words. Just, woah," she said with a laugh.

Lima Boyle and President Obama then discussed the importance of literacy and how much it means to be able to read and write well. He then asked her if there was anything that he should know about the education profession.

"I told him that many teachers in my state and around the country feel like a bruised lot right now," she said. "I said that we need a champion in the White House and in every level of education. We need champions in our schools and communities that will elevate teachers and not blame, condemn and hold us responsible for everything that goes wrong. We want to be responsible and accountable, but as a group we are all feeling a bit bruised right now."

The President then mentioned that he had frequently been hearing similar comments from other educators in recent years and was hopeful that the [U.S. Department of Education's RESPECT program](#) will help educators by addressing the issues of teacher preparation and how the the profession is viewed and compensated in America.

"Meeting the President at the White House and getting to look out at the Jefferson Memorial were views and experiences I thought I would never have," Lima Boyle said. "The fact that my husband was able to come on this trip with me was also truly special."

Another part of the conference was the [SMART Technologies](#) training, where the teachers were grouped by their student grade levels and teaching subjects to learn how to get the most from the Smart Board or wireless response clickers that they received as part of the Teacher of the Year award.

"It was so rewarding to meet everyone and hear about the different viewpoints and experiences that

we've all had," said Lima Boyle. "It was a really interesting aspect of the conference to find out the many, many things that we have in common, even from different regions across the country. The friendships I've been forming from this experience are terrific and I do think there is definitely a sense of camaraderie within the Teacher of the Year Class of 2012, as we've been called."

"I was pretty overwhelmed and emotional during different parts of the conference when I thought about how I was the representative of all the great teachers I know and how I really felt the presence of that responsibility," she went on to say. "I felt really blessed to be the lucky one standing there, being able to bring a message to Washington from educators around the state. It was an honor."

The 53 Teachers of the Year will take part in a national education summit in Atlanta in early July, with presenters including Sandra Day O'Connor. The group will also attend International Space Camp later that same month.