



Spells Selected for National Connected Superintendents Summit at White House

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Alton, IL - Dr. Kenneth Spells, superintendent of the Alton School District was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as one of 117 top school leaders from across America to participate in the first-ever [National Connected Superintendents Summit](#) hosted on Wednesday, Nov. 19 at the White House.

Spells is among exemplary local school chiefs who were recognized for their leadership in helping transition their districts to digital learning. This unique conference brought together officials from throughout America to share with one other and the Education Department promising approaches to using technology in classes.

“This was a rare and unique opportunity to represent Alton and other Illinois school districts in discussing how technology must be ever-present in the education of our students,” noted Spells. “In Alton, our board of education and staff made significant additions and enhancements to our technology infrastructure over the past two years and we know student engagement levels are increasing as a result.”

The White House summit will be followed by a series of 12-15 regional summits that will focus on the digital progress both made and possible by local school districts. The events will also include the unveiling of digital tools that facilitate incorporation of technology into short-term and long-range education planning.

“School districts across the country are helping teachers harness the power of technology to create personal learning environments for all students,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “We want to make sure every child – whether he or she is in the inner-city, in a rural community or on a Native American reservation – has access to knowledge and the chance to learn 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

To help spotlight the value of technology in schools, the Education Department is sponsoring a Future Ready Initiative aimed at showcasing outstanding school leadership and strategies.

“The Future Ready Initiative highlights the critical role of district leaders in setting a vision and creating the environment where educators and students access the tools, content, and expertise necessary for thriving in a connected world,” said [Richard Culatta](#), director of the Department’s Office of Educational Technology.

Future Ready superintendents demonstrate effective use of technology in some of the following ways:

- Fostering and leading a culture of collaboration and digital citizenship;
- Transitioning schools and families to high-speed connectivity;
- Empowering educators with professional learning opportunities;
- Accelerating progress toward universal access to quality devices;
- Providing access to quality digital content;
- Creating access, equity, and excellence – particularly in rural, remote, and low-income districts;
- Offering digital tools to students and families to help them prepare for success in college;
- Sharing best practices and mentoring other districts in the transition to digital learning.

“Technology has the potential to transform education in America, allowing students to learn more, to do so at their own pace, and to develop the knowledge and skills employers demand,” Culatta said. “And yet, fewer than 30 percent of classrooms have the broadband internet to support today’s education technology needs.”

In June 2013, President Obama announced the [ConnectED Initiative](#), starting with a goal of connecting 99 percent of students to next-generation connectivity within five years. Model schools and districts across the country are using technology to create personalized learning environments; technology will play an increasingly crucial role in the future.