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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Donald D. Owen Selected for National Connected Superintendents Summit Wednesday at White House

Urbana – Dr. Donald D. Owen, superintendent of the Urbana School District #116, has been invited by the U.S. Department of Education as one of 100 top school leaders from across America to participate in the first-ever [National Connected Superintendents Summit](#) Wednesday, November 19 at the White House.

Dr. Owen remarked, “It is an honor to be invited to the Connected Superintendents’ Summit. I look forward to learning from my colleagues as we discuss transforming education to help all our students become ‘Future Ready.’”

Superintendent Owen is among exemplary local school chiefs who will be recognized for their leadership in helping transition their districts to digital learning. This unique conference will bring together officials from throughout America to share with one another and the Education Department promising approaches to using technology in classes.

“Technology in the classroom is a vital piece of the district's overall strategic plan,” said Paul Poulosky, USD #116 Board of Education member. “It enables teaching the 21st century skills our students need while simultaneously increasing collaboration, strengthening student engagement, increasing accessibility to education, and lowering costs.”

“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.”

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.

“When technology is thoughtfully planned and implemented, it provides a rich classroom experience for both students and teachers,” said Kevin Erlinger, technology coordinator at Urbana Middle School. “Leadership in providing vision is key for this to happen. Dr. Owen is a driving force in technology leadership in our district.”

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.

For more on the work of the Department’s Office of Educational Technology, including resources for students, parents and educators, click [here](#).

Urbana High School is celebrating their 100th anniversary through-out the 2014-15 school year. The Joseph Royer designed building opened doors to it's first students on Monday, November 24, 1914. Urbana School District #116 is a unit district located in east central Illinois. Our outstanding schools in an outstanding community comprise of an early childhood school, six neighborhood elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and an adult education center. To discover more about our award winning schools and students, please visit www.usd116.org. You can find us on Facebook at Urbana School District #116 or follow us on Twitter: @Urbana116.

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Outstanding schools in an outstanding community!

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