

I recently had the honor of awarding a congressional certificate of congratulations to five teachers in Lincoln who have upheld Nebraska's highest traditions of educational excellence by enhancing our children's education through digital technology. These teachers were prominently recognized with national teaching awards for their work in introducing new learning tools into their classrooms. They also received \$3,000 school technology grants for each of their schools.

Debra Sharp, Elizabeth Sherbeck, and Colleen McBride from Pound Middle School helped their seventh grade English class recreate the poverty and struggle during the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. For their project, "You're on the Air," 100 students gained the perspective of a 14-year old child of struggling farmers in Oklahoma as they read the Newbery Medal-winning novel, "Out of the Dust" by Karen Hesse. They also read letters to Eleanor Roosevelt written by children during the Great Depression. After researching and writing their own family stories, the seventh-graders began production on their own 1930s-style radio show, using some of the latest technology. They performed their radio program for 250 parents, faculty, students, and senior citizens, and I'm told it was a great success.

Cathy Swartz and Carol Whitehead from St. Patrick School helped their first- and third-grade students explore the rules and responsibilities of business ownership and understand societal manners in their project, "The 'Right' Thing to do for our Community." They gained first-hand experience by taking a walking tour of the Lincoln Havelock Business District and interviewing local business owners. The students then researched some of the local businesses as well as businesses in communities across the globe, and learned about responsible company ownership. They then built 3-D models of the businesses in the communities they researched.

While technology alone is not meant to replace traditional methods of advancing critical thinking and communication skills, it can enhance the educational experience and aid in preparing our nation's youth to succeed in an increasingly inter-connected digital world. Some new technological mediums, such as the Library of Congress' free online World Digital Library (which I highly recommend to you), are also providing our children with unprecedented access to primary source educational material from all over the globe, and developing bonds of international understanding spanning thousands of miles. These are the skills and knowledge that will propel our nation's youth to embrace new opportunities and secure their roles as business and civic leaders of tomorrow.

Congratulations to these Nebraska teachers.