



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DuQuoin's Dr. Gary Kelly named Illinois Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Gary Kelly, superintendent of DuQuoin Community Unit School District #300, has been named 2019 Illinois Superintendent of the Year by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA).

The award was presented Sunday (November 18) during the Joint Annual Conference in Chicago co-sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) and IASA. Nominees are judged on the following criteria: leadership for learning, communication, professionalism and community involvement.

"I am very humbled and appreciative in receiving this award," said Kelly, who has been an educator for 33 years, including the past 22 as superintendent in DuQuoin. "This award is about the work of people in my school district, specifically our administrators, faculty and staff that work hard every day to provide the best for our students."

Kelly also credited great students in DuQuoin and his family for any success he's had in the district.

"It is about having great students in our school district," he said. "Our Board of Education, community and parents have supported the vision and mission of our school district to provide the best education possible for our students. We have a "school-community" that supports a culture for students to be successful."

DuQuoin CUSD #300 Board member Larry Valier added Kelly's vision, leadership and caring attitude allowed the district to flourish from a facility, programmatic and financial standpoint.

“Dr. Kelly is a student-focused leader who cares about our students and demonstrates that attitude at all times,” Valier said. “Our district’s motto of “Working Together for All Students” is a derivative of his leadership style and determination to serve all students.”

Those who nominated Kelly noted several major accomplishments in his 22-year tenure as superintendent of DuQuoin, including:

- Managed the district’s budget through tough financial times without cutting academic or extra-curricular programs or sending reduction-in-force notices to staff.
- Passed two building referendums and two sales tax referendums to build and finance facility improvements.
- Implemented blended classrooms at the elementary level that place students identified as at-risk for learning in rooms with a teacher and instructional aide who modify instruction to fit student needs.
- Revamped the district’s evaluation tools for both teachers and principals.
- Helped to establish a District Educational Foundation to provide financial support in the form of classroom grants to support student learning, providing over 600 scholarships to graduating seniors to support their further academic endeavors and the development of the High Schools’ joint county-wide CEO program.
- Implemented focus group meetings with parents, community members and students to discuss and share various aspects of school improvement and programs.
- Oversaw the development and continued revision of the district’s strategic plan.

DuQuoin CUSD #300 has a student population of 1,500 students.

Dr. Brent Clark, executive director of IASA, described Kelly as a “tenacious” leader for his students, staff and community.

“He has never given up and has always kept fighting for improvements within his district. He is highly respected for his stewardship, knowledge and expertise,” Clark said about Kelly. “He truly is an exceptional school leader and role model who is well deserving of this honor.”

In his 33 years as an educator, Kelly has served as a teacher, coach, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent. He is a past president of IASA, DuQuoin Chamber of Commerce, DuQuoin Lion's Club and has served on numerous other boards.

He also is a member of the American Association of School Administrators and served on the AASA Executive Committee and as Governing Board Member. He is a two-time recipient of the IASA Egyptian Region Superintendent of the Year award. Dr. Kelly is also a Clinical Assistant Professor within the Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

He received his bachelor of science degree from the University of Illinois in Champaign and his master's and doctorate degrees from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He and his wife, Deana, have two grown children.