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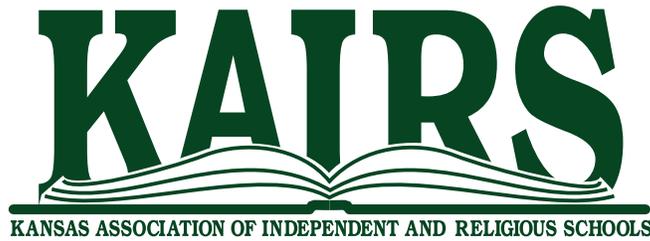
Staff

Corey Nason Reese
Public Relations Director

KAIRS Website: www.kairs.org

Karen Norton
President
Phone: 316-686-0152
karen_norton7531@hotmail.com

Dr. Nick Compagnone
Vice President
Phone: 785-827-4200
nickcom@aol.com



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KAIRS Celebrates Award Winning Year



Each year the KAIRS Distinguished Teachers are honored at the Hall of Fame Banquet. The 2005 Winners display their awards. Clockwise from the left: Terri Vanwey (Lutheran Schools), Rhonda Wurst (Dodge City Diocese), Dr. Don Schawang (Independent Schools), Linda Smith (Christian Schools), Sister Marie Kelley (Salina Diocese), Marcia Dillon (Wichita Diocese).

In January 2005, the Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS) celebrated its thirty-fifth year of working to ensure that children attending religious and independent schools would be treated equitably in educational law, policy and programs.

The founding of the KAIRS Hall of Fame marked that anniversary. Life-long educators will now be permanently recognized for their outstanding efforts.

KAIRS is comprised of more than 156 Christian, Catholic, Independent, Lutheran and Seventh-day Adventist schools. It is

the state's largest organization of non-public schools.

The past year was filled with awards for KAIRS schools and school districts, legislation that will directly affect KAIRS member schools, and innovative new programs to improve the education of nearly 37,000 students.

KAIRS Schools Win Awards

Last fall, The Independent School of Wichita was designated as a *No Child Left Behind* – 2005 Blue Ribbon School. It became the second KAIRS school to win this award, with the first being St. Mary's Catholic School in Salina (1985-86). The Independent School is one of 295 schools (50 private schools) throughout the U.S., and one of seven in Kansas (2 private) to win this award.

Additionally, the National Catholic Educational Association, through its Selected Programs for Improving Catholic

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From the KAIRS President —

This has been an interesting year for education in Kansas. From funding issues, to *No Child Left Behind*, to the appointment of a new Commissioner of Education, KAIRS schools are being impacted in many ways.

During our 2005 meetings, KAIRS schools addressed several important issues. We began with our public policy agenda, which is the uniting force of our organization. Although we each have our own missions, our public policy agenda details those items about which we all agree. We also met with Mike Cook, who told us about the Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas, which may provide new health insurance opportunities for our schools. Finally, we discussed the future of private schools in the Kansas State High School Activities Association with its director Gary Musselman.

This is a year of transition for me. I am completing my term as KAIRS president. Also, after 26 years of service, I am retiring as Head of School at The Independent School of Wichita. With these changes in mind, I am humbled to have been selected as a new member of the KAIRS Hall of Fame.

As I review, it seems to me that improvements in education come in small increments. Just this past year, our school was honored as a 2005 Blue Ribbon School. We were thrilled and hope that our award is just the most recent of many for KAIRS member schools.

Education, as life, is dynamic. I am thankful for the opportunity I have had to be involved with such gifted professionals in the wonderful and challenging field of education.

— Karen Norton

KAIRS Hall of Fame

The KAIRS Hall of Fame recognizes and honors outstanding life-long contributions to religious and independent schools in Kansas. These educators have given extraordinary service to a KAIRS member school (or a series of schools) during their careers as educators.



Karen Norton knew she wanted to be a teacher in the sixth grade. That desire never wavered during her thirty-one years in education. After just five years as a classroom teacher and a newly completed master's degree in education, she was asked by Jean (Mrs. Willard) Garvey if she would consider helping to start a new school in Wichita.

In 1980, The Independent School of Wichita began with eight students in a former nursing

home building. Under her leadership, the school has grown to have a pre-K through 12th grade enrollment of more than 700 students in 150,000 square feet of classroom space, located on 14 acres. Last year, it was named as a 2005 Blue Ribbon School.

Throughout her tenure, Mrs. Norton served as Principal of both the primary and secondary schools and later Head of School for The Independent School. She made it a top priority to hire smart, capable teachers, which she feels is the single most important factor for a student's success in the classroom. Her mission was to create an environment where teachers and students alike could thrive.

Her own personal beliefs of the importance of kindness, honesty, and a sense of humor have served her well in building this school. TIS has become a top-ranked, college-preparatory school with substantial extra-curricular programs, all provided at a tuition level that is below most national independent schools.

Mrs. Norton was elected as KAIRS president (2003-06) and treasurer (1996-2003). In the past two decades, she has also served on the North Central State Committee, the KSDE Professional Standards Board and on the KSHSAA Board of Directors.

She received her B.S. (1975) from Kansas State University and a Master of Education degree from Wichita State University (1980). She is married to Don and has two children, both of whom graduated from The Independent School.



Jean Ross has been in education for 50 years. Among her many accomplishments, in 2000, at an age when most people would have been contemplating retirement, she accepted the challenge of saving a failing high school. That year she became president of Salina's Thomas More Prep-Marian High School (TMP-MHS).

Six years later, the school now has a balanced budget, enrollment has increased, and Thomas More Prep-Marian High

School is flourishing. Ms. Ross refers to her school as "God's House," in response to her belief in the power of prayer. When contemplating difficult issues, she routinely invites faculty, students and co-administrators to pray in the chapel for divine wisdom and intervention.

Ms. Ross joined the Sisters of St. Agnes at the age of 15 and remained for 23 years. She began her professional teaching career in 1955 in Catholic elementary and high schools in Wisconsin, where she taught and later moved into administration. In 1980, she returned to her hometown of Hays as a public school principal and later joined the central administrative staff of the Hays public school district. After 11 years of service, she felt it was God's providence to accept the position at TMP-MHS.

Prior to her position as president of Thomas Moore Prep-Marian High School, Ms. Ross was the director of development. She began her tenure with the institution in 1998 and continues to work for no monetary compensation. She has stated that the only compensation she needs is to see that TMP-MHS has made a difference for the students who have attended the school.

Ms. Ross graduated from Marian College in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in 1958 with a B.S. in Elementary Education. She obtained a master's degree in Speech Arts from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1961 and obtained an Education Specialist degree in Education Administration from Fort Hays State University in 1975. ■



KAIRS Hall of Fame Members

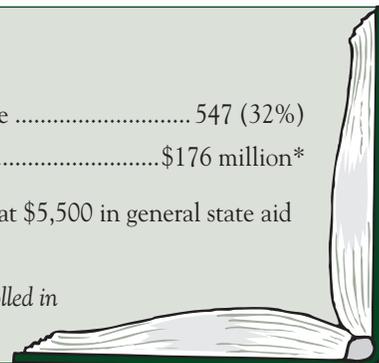
Founders: Robert Eggold, James Thiessen, Vincent DeCoursey
2005 Inductee: Bunny Hill

KAIRS 2006 Statistics

Enrollment of all KAIRS Schools	36,981
Number of Member Schools.....	156
Families Represented	25,033
High School Graduates.....	1,761
Average ACT score	23.1
Full-time Teachers	1,701

Teachers with a Masters Degree	547 (32%)
Savings to Kansas Tax Payers	\$176 million*
(Foregone Sate Aid estimated at \$5,500 in general state aid per pupil.)	

**If all KAIRS children were enrolled in public schools.*



Federal Relief and State Changes Impact KAIRS in 2005

Public Policy debates concerning education that affected KAIRS in 2005 proved to be both turbulent and confusing. At the national level, several important laws were passed that could assist our member schools. On the state level, new personnel and controversial issues resulted in much discussion but minimal action.

IDEA

The federal special education law was renewed by Congress with the regulation that students now are to be served in the district where they attend school. This should help KAIRS schools that serve students from several districts.

Hurricane Katrina

President Bush's Plan for Hurricane Katrina Relief last fall included \$488 million in emergency compensation to families of private school children. The federal hurricane relief bill contained funds to reimburse KAIRS schools that enrolled evacuated children.

Teacher Licensure

KAIRS schools worked with the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) to understand and apply teacher licensure. Additionally, the dialogue with the State Department continued in order to gain recognition of accrediting agencies endorsed by KAIRS. When this is achieved, teachers in schools accredited by those groups should find their years of experience would apply toward their licensure renewal.

New Commissioner of Education

The KSDE hired a non-educator, Bob Corkins, as Commissioner of Education. Mr. Corkins is sympathetic to many of the concerns

that KAIRS member schools have, but as a group, KAIRS schools have yet to talk with him.

School Funding

Mr. Corkins asked the Board of Education to endorse vouchers in the KDSE's legislative agenda. KAIRS members have concluded that both vouchers and tax credits for parents may have some inherent difficulties, including a fear of additional government regulations. A third concept, tax credits to private and corporate donors who contribute to scholarship organizations, shows promise and has been implemented in Florida, Arizona, and Pennsylvania.

The proposed vouchers would be available only to children who transfer schools, not to those already enrolled in non-public schools. Currently, it appears that the KSDE will not be submitting any voucher legislation this year. ■

Looking Ahead to 2006

While KAIRS is committed to equitable treatment for its members and equitable funding for schools, it has never sought to resolve these concerns through conflict with public education or by taking resources from public education. It now appears, however, that public schools may receive an additional \$500 million in addition to the \$250 million received last fall. This will pose significant challenges for KAIRS member schools when it comes to attracting and keeping quality teachers. More than ever, KAIRS members will need to look to some alternative source of funding to equalize the difference.

KAIRS Award Winning Year

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Education (SPICE) recognized the Diocese of Wichita's stewardship program as one of nine exemplary programs of the last decade. In the Diocese's stewardship program, schools are funded as a mission of the entire Catholic parish, and therefore no grade school or high school tuition is charged to parents who are active stewards.

ESSDACK Board Approves KAIRS Membership

The ESSDACK Board of Directors recently approved associate membership for KAIRS groups. This will provide KAIRS members access to professional

development opportunities and other benefits. Discussions continue regarding KAIRS schools becoming full members so that they can take advantage of all of ESSDACK's programs, including health insurance.

Membership Education

During its quarterly membership meetings each year, informative speakers discuss timely topics. Last year, Mike Cook, Ed.D, executive director, Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK) and Gary Musselman, executive director, Kansas State High School Athletics Association (KSHSAA) addressed KAIRS members.

Dr. Cook highlighted his organization's many services, including staff development and creation of educational

software. He also outlined the ESSDACK Health Insurance Group plan and how it might apply to KAIRS members.

Mr. Musselman elaborated on the KSHSAA and its goal of working together with all schools, large or small. He addressed the issue of states beginning to "weight" private school students, which can impact a school's classification level.

2005 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting in 2005 celebrated KAIRS 35th Anniversary. The creation of the KAIRS Hall of Fame was one of many highlights. The meeting focused on innovative uses of technology in education and included a wireless laptop lab for attendees.

The Keynote speaker, Rae Niles, director of curriculum

and technology for Sedgwick Public Schools, detailed her schools' journey in becoming entirely wireless — with all 10th through 12th grade students being provided with their own personal laptops.

Dr. Nick Compagnone, superintendent of the Diocese of Salina, presented an original idea for a professional development council, based on the model they have adopted in his diocese.

Alexa Posny, Kansas Assistant Commissioner of Education, brought her team members to discuss the ways in which *No Child Left Behind* affects independent and religious schools.

Carol Rupe, Kansas State Board of Education member, was the final speaker and addressed current state funding issues, consolidation of small schools, and the *No Child Left Behind* Act. ■

KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2006

Christian Schools



Judy Franklin has creatively taught first-graders at Kansas City Christian School for the past 17 years. She feels so strongly about her students learning to read that she helped develop the school's phonics-based reading program.

"Her dedication to this unique multi-sensory approach to reading, which also involves the dedication of the children and their parents, has resulted in our students consistently performing one to two grade levels above the national standard in the Stanford Achievement Test," explained Karen Whitacre, elementary principal, Kansas City Christian School.

In addition to her commitment to academics, Mrs. Franklin brings a strong Christian faith to the classroom. Her students, and their parents, thrive under her thoughtful and consistent guidance.

Mrs. Franklin earned a master's degree in education from Mid America Nazarene University in Olathe (1994) and a B.A. in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from the University of Nebraska in Kearney (1973).

Diocese of Dodge City



Bonnie Schuette's dedication, professionalism and faith all make her an outstanding Catholic schoolteacher at Sacred Heart Cathedral. For the past 20 years, she has demonstrated a great desire to connect with each and every child.

Mrs. Schuette's devotion to her profession can be seen in the countless hours she has spent working with students after school, helping them to reach their full potential. In addition, she is a leader in the Sacred Heart school improvement plan and is a valuable mentor to younger teachers.

Wayne Winkler, Sacred Heart Cathedral Principal, said, "One of Mrs. Schuette's greatest attribute is her devout faith. She lovingly shares her faith with her students in the classroom by her kind words and loving actions."

Mrs. Schuette received an A.S. degree from Dodge City Community College (1975) and a B.S. from Saint Mary of the Plains College (1975), located in Dodge City.

Independent Schools



Shirley Meissner is an outstanding third-grade teacher at the Independent School (TIS) of Wichita. She brings innovative, integrated ideas to her classroom and has the ability to motivate her students intrinsically.

"Mrs. Meissner is a multi-sensory teacher, using numerous techniques to pique the interest and success of students; her enthusiasm and

creativity set her apart as an outstanding educator," Karen Norton, Head of School for The Independent School, explained. Her memorable projects have included holding class in a large inflated bubble made of plastic and duct tape.

Mrs. Meissner has served as the KAIRS representative for the KSDE Professional Standards Board since 2003. In addition, she currently co-chairs the North Central accreditation committee at TIS.

Mrs. Meissner received her B.S. in Elementary Education from Friends University (1978) and in February 2006, will complete a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) – also from Friends University.

Lutheran Schools



Dave Ochs has been inspiring Holy Cross Lutheran middle school students for the past 25 years in his roles as both a social studies teacher and Athletic Director.

A graduate of Holy Cross himself, Mr. Ochs has spent his entire career at the school. He is a favorite among the students. His extra efforts can be seen in the annual Holy Cross International Food Festival where his students research and prepare international food items for their families and friends.

"Dave Ochs is well respected by his colleagues, parents and students. He is a great influence in encouraging our students to take part in such activities as the Presidential Fitness Award program or to participate in our athletic department," said Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School Principal. "He always has a listening ear for the students."

In 1979, he received a Bachelor of Science degree from Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska.

Diocese of Wichita



Sister Agnes Lero has taught in Catholic schools for the past 52 years. Since 1995, she has been a beloved fifth grade teacher at St. Patrick Catholic School in Chanute. During that time, her students have consistently met the Standard of Excellence in all subjects, as well as the Diocesan Standard of Excellence in religion.

In Chanute, Sister Agnes became the technology coordinator and support person, and recently helped St. Patrick's receive a grant that provided laptops for all of her students.

"Sister Agnes readily embraced the technology revolution because she realized that her students would have more opportunities than ever," explained Frank Kennedy, principal, St. Patrick Catholic School.

Sister Agnes is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Wichita. She received a B.S. from St. Mary of the Plains College in Dodge City (1963) and her M.A. from Cardinal Stritch College, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1970).

Mission

Through its common commitment to quality education, KAIRS serves to unify its member schools while respecting their diversity. KAIRS provides a framework for communication and cooperation among independent and religious schools in the state of Kansas, preschool through secondary. In addition, KAIRS strives to maintain productive relationships with the Kansas State Board of Education, the Kansas Department of Education, the Kansas Board of Regents, the local, state, and federal governments, and other agencies that impact quality education.