

KAIRS Executive Committee 2007-2008

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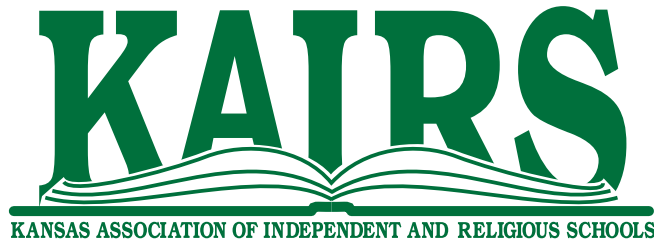
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February 2008, Vol. 6

KAIRS Addresses Timely Issues

Several exciting and challenging topics including alternative accreditation models came to the forefront in the thirty-seventh year of the Kansas Association for Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS). KAIRS continues to serve as the largest organization of non-public schools in the state of Kansas, representing more than 37,000 students and 150 schools ('05-'06).

KAIRS is comprised of Christian, Catholic, Independent, Missouri-Synod Lutheran and Seventh-day Adventist schools. Since 1970, the organization has strived to unify its member schools while respecting their diversity.

Accreditation discussions were prominent in 2007, as KAIRS has researched the possibility of creating an umbrella accrediting body for all non-public schools, much like those of other states. Currently, many KAIRS member schools are required to be accredited by both the state of Kansas and the accrediting organization of their own school system. These



Edward Bierbaum, life-long Lutheran educator (right) and James Bradshaw Executive Director for Educational Services for the Kansas District, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, celebrate Ed's 2007 induction into the KAIRS Hall of Fame.

processes are time-consuming and have a great deal of overlap.

An umbrella organization would allow those schools who are interested, to gain accreditation from a body that would be recognized by the state, while allowing KAIRS members to remain true to their individual missions.

Expanding KAIRS Membership

Another interesting development this past year has been the discussion of broadening KAIRS membership to include the private and religious colleges and universities of Kansas. Conversations with
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From the KAIRS President —

This past year has been a busy and fruitful one for KAIRS members. Two topics have dominated many of our discussions: a unified accreditation process for KAIRS members, and the possibility of the religious and independent colleges and universities in Kansas becoming members of KAIRS.

Accreditation is a vitally important issue for our non-public schools, and while the current situation offers several options, our membership would benefit greatly from having an accreditation program that would be recognized as a valid alternative to the state's program. Currently, many of our schools are required to be accredited by both their own organization's body and the state of Kansas. Alternative accreditation is a lengthy and time-consuming project, but one we feel is worth the effort in the long run. This model has been successful in many other states

Additionally, the formal joining of KAIRS with our counterparts in higher education seems to be a natural fit. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Philip Kerstetter, President of Kansas Wesleyan University, who has taken the lead on this issue with the colleges, discussions as to the nature of how they would best fit with our organization are currently taking place. Such a relationship can lead to joint ventures in supporting the mission of our schools. Such ventures could include support for teacher retention and recruitment, curriculum development and research.

We hope to have a great deal of positive information to report at this time next year.

— Nick Compagnone, PhD

KAIRS Hall of Fame

The KAIRS Hall of Fame was created in 2005 to recognize and honor 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.



Vincent DeCoursey (1917-1991)



Robert (Bob) Eggold



James Thiessen

KAIRS Hall of Fame Members

Founders: Vincent DeCoursey
Robert Eggold
James Thiessen

2005: Bunny Hill

2006: Karen Norton
Jean Ross

2007: Edward Bierbaum



Bunny Hill



Karen Norton



Jean Ross



Edward Bierbaum

Timely Issues

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college representatives have included the mutual advantages of working with student teachers, and potential joint projects, including research.

Honoring Outstanding KAIRS Teachers and Administrators

KAIRS recognizes outstanding teachers who work tirelessly in Kansas non-public schools. Since 2003, 29 teachers from the six divisions of KAIRS have been honored as Distinguished Teachers. They are celebrated at the Hall of Fame banquet each year at the KAIRS Annual Meeting, and are featured on the website, www.kairs.org.

The Hall of Fame gained another member in 2007, with the induction of Lutheran educator, Ed Bierbaum. It was created in

2005 to honor the long-term, outstanding service of administrators that have served in KAIRS schools. The Hall of Fame is also featured on the website, www.kairs.org.

Membership Education

KAIRS general membership meetings are held three times a year (in addition to the Annual Meeting) to accomplish two primary goals: educate our membership on timely topics, and to advance the on-going mission of KAIRS.

In 2007, KAIRS hosted several speakers. The April meeting featured Andy Tompkins, Ed.D, associate professor in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Kansas School of Education and former Kansas Commissioner of Education, presented valuable information on the topic of strategic planning.

The October meeting in-

cluded three guests. Dr. Phil Kerstetter, President of Wesleyan College, and Dr. Dwight Reimer, President of Central Christian College participated in an exploratory dialogue about Kansas religious colleges joining KAIRS.

The third guest, Bill Meagher, sports director at Hayes Recreation Commission highlighted the importance of viewing coaching as a ministry.

2007 Annual Meeting

Each year, the KAIRS Annual Meeting features engaging speakers who bring relevant topics to the forefront. In 2007, keynote speaker, Dr. Philip Kerstetter highlighted the positive elements of faith-based secondary education institutions. He also addressed the challenge of a looming teacher shortage.

Dr. Mary Cohen, the Secretary of Education's Regional

Representative for Region VII, and Staci Warren, Coordinator of Educational Alternatives for KSDE, discussed worthwhile federal programs that KAIRS members might want to consider.

Representatives from several accrediting organizations (Kansas branch of North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement – KNCA, the Association of Christian Schools International – ACSI, Quality Performance Accreditation – QPA, National Lutheran School Accreditation – NLSA) highlighted the specifics of their programs for KAIRS members.

Bob D'Andrea, Technology Coordinator for Salina Catholic Schools, and previously a long-term educator in New Jersey, discussed Problem-based Learning as a more effective method of meeting the changing demands of education. ■

Executive Committee Meets with New Education Commissioner

In 2007, Dr. Alexa Posny became the new Kansas Commissioner of Education. Members of the KAIRS Executive

Committee met with Dr. Posny in Topeka last fall. The meeting was favorable, allowing KAIRS members to present several

items of interest and concern, such as teacher licensing. She also indicated that she would like to see Staci Warren contin-

ue in her position as Coordinator of Educational Alternatives (and KAIRS liaison) for the KSDE. ■

KAIRS Accreditation Resolution

At the 2008 Annual Meeting, the following resolution will be presented to the membership for consideration.

The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by an institution meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies, which are private educational associations of regional or national scope, develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. Institutions and/or programs that request an agency's evaluation and that meet an agency's criteria are then "accredited" by that agency.

Religious schools may seek secular national or state accreditation. Many religious schools, however, turn to other regional accreditation bodies to accommodate the religious mission of the school. Some of these accrediting groups specialize in accrediting theological and/or religious schools. For many religious schools there is a mission that fosters teaching from a theological viewpoint.

Despite the widely recognized benefits and accountability of accreditation, some institutions choose, for various reasons, not to participate in an accreditation process.

Some religious schools claim that accreditation could interfere with their mission or philosophy, even though organizations do exist specifically to accredit religious institutions without compromising

their doctrinal statements. Some states, such as California, allow exemption from accreditation for religious schools. Other states such as Texas, Florida and Michigan recognize other accrediting agencies for religious schools.

KAIRS recognizes the autonomy of private and religious schools in the State of Kansas. KAIRS also recognizes the merits of the accreditation process as a way of monitoring the quality of education.

It is a goal of KAIRS to establish a network of accrediting agencies that can oversee a unified effort of accreditation of private and religious schools. A unified accreditation process would not only protect the integrity of the school's mission but also validate the levels of quality in academics and teacher preparation. The network would also provide shared resources in supporting the individual school's accreditation process. Some of these resources include providing technical assistance to schools and providing resources in formulating school improvement plans.

It is also a goal of KAIRS to work with KSDE in seeking recognition by the State of Kansas for alternative accreditation models that validate quality the level of education provided by the private and religious schools. A unified accreditation network would also provide a more coherent dialogue with the Kansas State department of Education in regard to accreditation of private schools in the State of Kansas. This would also eliminate duplication of tasks and mandates that do not pertain to private schools.

KAIRS 2007 in Review...



The 2007 KAIRS Distinguished Teachers included (front row, L - R,) Gale Farmer, Independent Schools; Laura Reif Foss, Diocese of Salina; Dennis Burd, Christian Schools. (back row, L- R) Inga Atkinson, Diocese of Dodge City; Roxanne Goehring, Diocese of Wichita; Donna Longhauser, Lutheran Schools.



Shelli Kadel, Head of School, Wichita Friends School, coordinates much of the meeting as the KAIRS Annual Meeting Secretary.



Dr. Nick Compagnone (left) is the current president of KAIRS. He is the Superintendent of the Diocese of Salina.



Dr. Philip Kerstetter, President of Kansas Wesleyan University and Bob D'Andrea, Technology Coordinator for Salina Schools, were featured speakers in 2007.

KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2008

Christian Schools



Leroy Busenitz has dedicated his life to the ministry of Christian Education at Berean Academy (Elbing) for the past 34 years. “Mr. B,” as his students call him, is a secondary math teacher and sponsor of Berean’s Student Christian Action organization. A Berean alumnus, he said his calling to teach began during his years at the school.

“He is no doubt one of the most dedicated and disciplined individuals that I know. Like a great coach, who is good at teaching fundamentals to his athletes, Mr. Busenitz is great at teaching the fundamentals of life to his students,” explained Terry Tilson, Berean Academy Superintendent.

Mr. Busenitz attended Grace Bible Institute from 1964 to 1966. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Emporia State in 1974, and completed his master’s degree at Kansas State in 1974.

Diocese of Dodge City



Jody Neuman put her full heart into teaching computer instruction and physical education at St. Dominic Catholic School in Garden City. She has been instrumental in the success of her student’s state assessments, and continually updates her skills to stay abreast of the latest technology.

“Jody’s expectations are high. Her commitment to get students to succeed — in whatever they are doing — is even higher. Saying Jody teaches her two subjects seems inadequate for all she does for and at our school. She is a true example of being a servant of God,” Trina Delgado, Principal of Catholic Schools of Garden City, said.

Having taught math and physical education in the early years of her career, Mrs. Neuman began her tenure with St. Dominic in 1989. She holds a B.S. in Physical Education from Fort Hays State (1974).

Independent Schools



Susan Ensz is passionate about nurturing her young students to become motivated, self-directed learners that truly experience the joy of discovery. She has joyfully spent her 27-year career with young learners, and has served as a pre-school and Kindergarten teacher in the Early Childhood Division at Wichita Collegiate School for 15 of those years.

Her director, Becky O’Hearn said, “Ms. Ensz is a consummate advocate for preserving the developmental process, and meeting the needs of young children. Through her professionalism, warmth, and grace, she draws students and parents alike into her ‘circle of acceptance.’”

Ms. Ensz began teaching in 1977. She taught Kindergarten in the Kansas public school system, and began teaching at Wichita Collegiate School in 1989. Ms. Ensz received her bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Wichita State in 1973.

Lutheran Schools



Karen Wilgers has served as a Resource Teacher for Holy Cross Lutheran School (Wichita) since 1981. She is responsible for the Accelerated Reader Program for grades 2-5, and numerous children have grown to love reading through her efforts. She is also the faculty representative to the school’s governing board.

“Into her 30th year of teaching, Karen continues to serve the Lord through her education ministry. Her warm and welcoming smile has been a draw for all students who are always desirous of her attention,” said Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School Principal.

Mrs. Wilgers obtained her bachelor’s degree from Kansas State in 1972 and her master’s degree from Wichita State in 1980. In 2003, she became a commissioned minister of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod through Concordia University’s colloquy program.

Diocese of Salina



Trudy Cole is a dedicated and loving first grade teacher, who not only also teaches fourth grade math, and writes the annual Christmas program for the St. John’s Catholic School (Hanover) students, but goes home to help run her family’s farm. Her Catholic faith is a personal priority, and one she shares joyfully with her students.

“Trudy keeps the students in mind daily when she approaches her job, and is very perceptive to the individual needs of her students and the entire student body. She is also the consummate staff member and a great supporter of her fellow staff members,” said Tim Rundle, St. John’s Principal.

Mrs. Cole began teaching at St. John’s in 1995, and is the co-chair of the building leadership team for St. John’s NCA Accreditation. She graduated Cum Laude from Kansas State in 1995.

Diocese of Wichita



Cori Eck Schad is a career first grade teacher whose top priorities are to nurture the budding Catholic faith of her students, and to encourage them to meet her high educational standards.

“Mrs. Schad incorporates innovative methods in her classroom, and knows her children individually. She demands the best of her students by giving her best, and that is why her students love her, her parents trust her, and her colleagues respect her,” said Janice Palmer, Magdalen School Principal.

Mrs. Schad is in her thirteenth year of teaching first grade. She holds two undergraduate degrees: a B.S. from Kansas State in Therapeutic Recreation (1991), and a B.A. in Elementary Education from Wichita State (1995). In May 2008, Ms. Schad will complete her master’s degree as a reading specialist from Wichita State.

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 State Department of Education, the Kansas Board of Regents, the local, state, and federal governments, and other agencies that impact quality education.