

# KAIRS

KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT AND RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

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## Governor and KAIRS Founders Highlight 40th Anniversary Celebration

In celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS), the newly elected governor and two of the founding members, Robert Eggold and James Thiessen, addressed the attendees of the KAIRS 2011 Annual Meeting.

Governor Sam Brownback, 46th governor of Kansas, spoke at the 2011 annual meeting, marking the first time a seated governor had addressed the organization at the conference. He delivered brief remarks and fielded questions, saying that he placed a high priority on excellent teachers and praised the ability of KAIRS schools to excel while managing tight budgets.

Mr. Eggold, former Superintendent of Schools, Kansas District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and KAIRS (formerly KANS) Chair 1970-89, and Mr. Thiessen, former Superintendent, Berean Academy, KANS/KAIRS Secretary 1970-89, expressed their pleasure that despite the many changes education had undergone in four decades, the organization had continued on the path that they had envisioned.

As reforms once again bring potentially sweeping changes to

education across the U.S., KAIRS remained committed to providing independent and religious schools a united voice as it seeks to have good relationships and meaningful communication with governmental agencies that impact education across the state.

KAIRS represents more than 35,000 students who attend 140 Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist and Independent schools in Kansas. This includes almost 2,400 full-time teachers and more than 22,000 families.

### Alternate Accreditation

Alternative accreditation continues to be an important issue for KAIRS. Dr. Nick Compagnone presented the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) with the KAIRS alternate accreditation resolution early in 2011 and was in communication with Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Diane DeBacker, regarding this matter throughout the year.

National developments in 2011 also brought new accreditation concerns. With the expected phasing out of No Child Left Behind Legislation (2014) and programs such as Race To The Top evolving, the Kansas State De-



KAIRS 40th Anniversary celebration was highlighted by the attendance of honored guests. Front row from left: Karen Norton, Hall of Fame (2006), James Thiessen, KAIRS Founder, Robert Eggold, KAIRS Founder, Charles Jedele, KANS/KAIRS Chair (1994-98), Jean Ross, Hall of Fame (2006). Back row, from left: Dr. Nick Compagnone, KAIRS President (Current), Edward Bierbaum, Hall of Fame (2007), Bill Dieckhoff, former KAIRS Secretary (2005-2008), Shirley Meissner, Distinguished Teacher (2006).

partment of Education (KSDE) began a review of its Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA). One of the positive outcomes of this analysis was Dr. Compagnone being invited to participate in these conversations on the state level.

KAIRS continues to work closely with AdvancED, and specifically with Dr. Nancy Bolz, Director, AdvancED Kansas, in the development of an accreditation model that would be acceptable

for alternate state accreditation. In a meeting late in the year, the state leadership encouraged KAIRS and AdvancED to pursue the co-accreditation model and to work towards developing a final proposal to present to the KSBE. AdvancED has partnerships with the majority of accreditation organizations that work with KAIRS members and could function as an umbrella with those other accreditation bodies. ■

## KAIRS Executive Committee 2011-2012

### President

Dr. Nick Compagnone  
Superintendent of Schools  
Catholic Diocese of Salina

### Vice President

Terry Tilson  
Superintendent  
Berean Academy, Elbing

### Secretary

Michelle Bolin  
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The Independent School,  
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### Treasurer

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Catholic Diocese of Wichita

### Annual Meeting Secretary

Shelli Kadel  
Head of School  
Wichita Friends School

### Member at Large, Lutheran Representative

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# KAIRS 40th Anniversary Celebration



Left: Amber Fiala, (left) Principal, Holy Cross Lutheran (Wichita), presents a celebration cake to Tashia Dieckhoff, first grade teacher at Holy Cross, in honor of her award as KAIRS Distinguished Teacher 2011 for Lutheran Schools.



Above: Dr. Larry Daugherty, Superintendent, Maranatha Academy (left) and Terry Tilson, Superintendent, Berean Academy, KAIRS Vice President (right), welcome Governor Sam Brownback.



Left: Karen Norton, former Head of The Independent School (TIS) of Wichita (left) and Shirley Meissner, Distinguished Teacher for Independent Schools (2006) celebrate with Marcia Smola, 2nd Grade Teacher for TIS (center), for being selected as KAIRS Distinguished Teacher 2011 for Independent Schools.

Below: Charles Jedele, (left) Bill Dieckhoff, (center) and Edward Bierbaum were all career Lutheran educators at Topeka Lutheran, Holy Cross Lutheran (Wichita) and Linn Lutheran School respectively.



Andy Tompkins and Jeanine Phillips spoke at the 2011 KAIRS Annual Meeting.

## From the KAIRS President

It seems that educational trends are constantly going through transitions. Most states across the nation are “navigating” from NCLB to school improvement goals using growth models. Growth models have more of a focus on individual success and the progress of each student. As a result, we are seeing a shift on how schools are going to be accredited and improving teacher performance. We are also observing trends where states are partnering with the private school sector in supporting students, teachers, and families.



### School Accreditation

In the State of Kansas, KAIRS has been engaged in conversation at various levels in the discussion of accreditation, teacher licensure, and professional development. The goal still remains to have a continued partnership with AdvancED and also pursue a co-accreditation with the Kansas State Department of Education.

### Teacher Licensure

Many of our schools employ teachers that maintain teaching licenses through the State of Kansas. We are keeping an open dialogue with KSDE to ensure that private school teachers who want to maintain their license have an opportunity to continue to do so with a path that meets their needs for teaching in a private school.

### Professional Development

As we venture into the “winds” of transition, it is important that our professional staff is updated and licensed to teach our students in the 21st century. This year we have partnered with KSDE in pooling federal funds for the professional development of teachers, specifically geared to meet the needs of teachers and administrators serving in our schools. Our annual meeting, in part, has been funded with this agreement. In the 2012-2013 school year, we plan to expand professional development opportunities state-wide. We are also exploring ideas where we can support local teachers to be more innovative in the classroom through grants and other opportunities.

### Early Childhood Programs

We are also expanding our scope to early childhood programs. Many of our schools have three- and four-year-old academic programs. Starting in 2012-2013 school year, new accreditation models and regulations will begin nationally linking early childhood programs with K-12 programs. This summer we are planning to have a state-wide conference on the role of early childhood programs in KAIRS schools. This will also be supported through the professional development program.

KAIRS continues to grow in scope. It is important to remember that our mission is to steadfastly support our students as they strive to meet the needs of their own individual values. While the confirmation of our mission comes from our membership, it also is important that we reach out to others in our communities and civic organizations. Together, we will continue to use our resources to navigate the challenging storms that face our educational mission.

— Nick Compagnone, Ph.D, KAIRS President

# KAIRS 40th Year in Review

For the second year in a row, inclement weather interrupted the annual meeting – this time causing the convention to be cut short with the second day’s meetings canceled. The first day of the convention, however, went as scheduled, with a line up of distinguished speakers and highly relevant topics. Andy Tompkins, Ed.D, President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents and former Kansas Commissioner of Education, provided an overview of the status of students at Kansas state universities; Tom Foster, Ph.D, Director of Career, Standards and Assessments Services and Research and Evaluation Services for the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) addressed the progress of common core standards and assessments in Kansas; Jeanine Phillips, Executive Director of the Fundamental Learning Center, Inc., reported on the worrisome state of reading in Kansas; and Nancy Bolz, Ed.D, Director of AdvancED Kansas brought an update on alternative accreditation models for Kansas schools.

Governor of Kansas, Sam Brownback, concluded the day’s sessions with remarks about his concerns for Kansas schools and his appreciation for the work of non-public schools in Kansas.

## 40th Anniversary Hall of Fame Banquet

To celebrate the 40th year anniversary of KAIRS, a number of former leaders were in attendance as the 2011 Distinguished Teachers were honored and two KANS/KAIRS founders reflected on the first 20 years of the organization when they were in leadership roles.

In addition to Founders Eggold and Thiessen, two past chairs/

presidents attended: Charles Jedele, former Topeka Lutheran School Principal and KANS/KAIRS Chair (1994-98) and Karen Norton, former Head of School at The Independent School of Wichita, KAIRS President (2003-05) and KAIRS Hall of Fame Member (2006).

Other Hall of Fame members, previous Distinguished Teachers and former KAIRS Executive Committee members came for the evening. These included Hall of Fame members Jean Ross, former President, Thomas Moore Prep-Marian High School (2006), Edward Bierbaum, former Principal, Linn Lutheran School (2007), and Keith Jopp, former Principal, St. Paul Lutheran School, Cheney (2010). Former KAIRS secretary, Bill Dieckhoff, former Principal, Holy Cross Lutheran School, and Shirley Meissner, Distinguished Teacher for Independent Schools (2006) and currently Second Grade Teacher, Wichita Collegiate School, were also present.



Founders Robert Eggold (l) and James Thiessen reflected on the first 20 years of the KANS/KAIRS organization.

## KAIRS Membership News

### Emporia Christian School Joins KAIRS

Emporia Christian School joined KAIRS in 2011. Under the direction of Principal Jim Sanborn, this non-denominational Christian School’s enrollment encompasses preschool through eighth grade students and is celebrating its 20th year in 2012.

### New Dodge City Superintendent

KAIRS extended its welcome to Randall (Randy) Steinle as the new Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Dodge City. Most recently, Randy served for nine years as the Superintendent of Schools in Lakin. He also has more than 30 years experience in education as a teacher and a coach. Randy holds a master’s degree in physical education and education from Kearney State College in Nebraska.

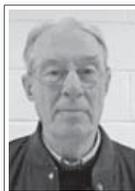
In addition to his position with the Diocese of Dodge City, Randy is an adjustor for Farmers Mutual Hail. He and his wife, Sharon, have three adult children. ■

## KAIRS Hall of Fame

The KAIRS website ([www.kairs.org](http://www.kairs.org)) is also the location of the KAIRS Hall of Fame, where KAIRS honors its outstanding educators who have made 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 career as educators. ■



Vincent DeCoursey



Robert Eggold



James Thiessen

### KAIRS Hall of Fame Members

#### Founders:

Vincent DeCoursey (1917-1991)

Robert Eggold

James Thiessen

#### 2005:

Bunny Hill

#### 2006:

Karen Norton

Jean Ross

#### 2007:

Edward Bierbaum

#### 2010:

Keith Jopp

Suze Anne Norton



Bunny Hill



Karen Norton



Jean Ross



Edward Bierbaum



Keith Jopp



Suze Anne Norton

## KAIRS 2011 Distinguished Teachers



KAIRS recognized the 2011 Distinguished Teachers during the Annual Meeting’s Hall of Fame Banquet. Winners were (from left): Jerald McClenahan, Christian Schools, Fred Huser, representing Paula Huser, Diocese of Salina in memoriam, Tashia Dieckhoff, Lutheran Schools, Lisa Payne, Diocese of Wichita, Marcia Smola, Independent Schools, Keith Cole and Emily Walker, representing Rhonda Cole, Diocese of Salina, in memoriam. Not pictured: Lois Hammer, Diocese of Dodge City.

# KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2012

## Christian Schools



**Stephanie Peck** has been a devoted first grade teacher at Maranatha Academy for 20 years. Her dedication has impacted hundreds of children's lives and she is widely known as a loving, patient and kind teacher who spends extra time assisting students. Mrs. Peck is an expert at teaching first graders how to write and to enjoy it, to learn math through hands-on centers and to remember spelling rules by singing catchy rhymes.

Laura Burch, Maranatha Lower School Principal, said that Mrs. Beck's creativity includes celebrating Thanksgiving with a Colonial Days festival and also creating a Nativity program that travels to nursing homes. "Mrs. Peck is always quick with an encouraging word or an act of kindness. She imparts this joy daily into the lives of her students. The parents and school staff are also the recipients of that joy and care."

Mrs. Peck received her B.S. in elementary education and early childhood education from Evangel University (Springfield, Missouri) in 1989.

## Independent Schools



**Martha Leaf** is an outstanding veteran teacher of 20 years, with the past 10 years teaching at Wichita Collegiate School. Ms. Leaf recently moved to the middle school where she is teaching fifth grade American History. Previously, she had been a team leader and second grade teacher – where she developed a curriculum unit in American History.

In her new position, Mrs. Leaf is already engaging her students as they create quiz shows and reenact historical scenes.

Ms. Leaf has been a presenter at national conferences, but according to Ann Rai, Head of Middle School, her nurturing presence with students is even more impressive. "Martha Leaf is well loved by students and parents, and is helping to revise our 5th Grade American History Curriculum," she said. "When you enter her classroom, you see students sitting on the edge of their seats, they are so engaged."

Ms. Leaf received her Bachelor of Science degree from Valparaiso University (Valparaiso, Indiana) in 1985.

## Lutheran Schools



**Rayanne Gartner** has lovingly served as preschool director and teacher at Zion Lutheran School in Independence since 2004. She was also a teacher's aide at the school, 1997-2004. Her commitment to each student and their foundational learning, the scripture-based curriculum that she has written that incorporates home and school, and her exceptional classroom management have led parents to continually refer to Mrs. Gartner as "the best preschool

director and teacher in Independence."

Mrs. Gartner's teaching philosophy reflects her commitment to nurturing the faith and the behavioral and academic skills needed for success in life – and in kindergarten. "Mrs. Gartner has a thorough understanding of early childhood education and the importance of play," Dawn Oldenettel, Principal, Zion Lutheran, said. "She structures her classroom schedule to reflect this philosophy and provides many enriching opportunities as well as providing time for her students to experiment and learn by doing."

Mrs. Gartner received her bachelor's degree in education in 1986 from Pittsburg State University.

## Diocese of Salina



**Amanda Cook** has the distinction being a dedicated third and fourth grade teacher at St. John's Catholic School in Hanover since 1999, and she is also an alumnus of St. John's. She currently teaches third grade science and religion, serves as an Eucharistic minister at school masses and has stepped in as a sports coach when needed.

Mrs. Cook is the Professional Development Council Chair, assists with Power School technology and wrote a grant that earned a Smart Board for St. John's. Tim Rundle, St. John's Principal, said, "She is the epitome of a person who comes home to give back to the community she grew up in. She is always willing to help out with whatever is needed within the school and the community and practices her faith each day in the way she lives her life."

In 1999 Mrs. Cook attained her B.S. in education from Benedictine College. She also earned an associate degree from Southeast Community College in 1997.

## Diocese of Wichita



**Chris Van Sichel** is the chairman of the Kapaun Mt. Carmel Catholic High School mathematics department and has been instructing students there since 1990. He was the first teacher in the Diocese of Wichita to teach both Calculus 2 and 3. Mr. Van Sichel has taught in public and Catholic schools in Topeka and Kansas City and is in his 33rd year

of teaching secondary math.

"While Chris obviously is a skilled mathematician, he is also a patient teacher who is always available to his students and finds different strategies to help them succeed," said David Kehres, Principal, Kapaun Mt. Carmel. "The improvement required in mathematics under No Child Left Behind from year to year is daunting, but under Chris's leadership, KMC has met the state Standard of Excellence every year."

Mr. Van Sichel earned a B.S. in mathematics in 1977 from the University of Kansas and a master's degree in mathematics from Wichita State University in 1993.

## 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 college. 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.