

February 2006
KAIRS Today

This is the monthly electronic newsletter of the Kansas Association of Religious and Independent Schools (KAIRS). KAIRS TODAY is sent as a service to KAIRS members across Kansas.

Our goal is to keep you informed about legislative, regulatory and national news, and educational issues. Please look for this on the 20th of each month. Contact Corey Reese, editor, with questions or concerns – crkairs@yahoo.com.

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KAIRS ANNUAL MEETING 06 – A SYNOPSIS

After several years of dubious weather, our meeting was finally blessed with clear skies. Attendees came from across the state to hear very informative speakers who covered a broad range of topics. Several serious topics such as employee law and risk management were addressed.

This year the convention was successfully moved to the Topeka Ramada Inn and a large number of vendors attended. The support of the vendors each year helps keep down the cost of the meeting. Additionally, the Hall of Fame banquet again blessed all who attended with the presentation of our distinguished teachers, and the addition of two new members to the KAIRS Hall of Fame.

MONDAY

State of KAIRS Address –Karen Norton

KAIRS President, Karen Norton, delivered her final State of KAIRS”

address as president, as her tenure expires in May and she will retired as Head of School for the Independent School of Wichita that same month.

In summarizing the past year, Karen mentioned several important issues that have been addressed. Healthcare was the first. The approval by the ESSDACK (Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas) board of directors of associate membership status availability for KAIRS members may open the door for future access to the ESSDACK health insurance program. Providing a lower-cost healthcare option for employees is a top concern for many KAIRS schools.

Weighting of students by the Kansas State High School Athletics Association (KSHSAA) was another issue of concern. Karen stated that this issue would affect every private high school in the state. Many KAIRS schools would be bumped into higher classification. Gary Musselman has indicated that he is not in favor and has former a committee for further evaluation.

Several private schools (including KAIRS members) are on the committee, including David Swank (Trinity Academy), Tish Nielson (Wichita Collegiate), Gaylin Unruh (Berean Academy) and a representative from Bishop Miege in Overland Park.

Funding of Education is a third concern. The Kansas public schools are receiving large amounts of funds that will serve to add staff members and lower class sizes. The money will also increase teacher salaries. Many KAIRS schools already pay salaries below the level of public schools and this will further increase the disparity.

KAIRS schools are going to have to support one another and be

creative in finding additional ways of funding our schools.

A new Commissioner of Education was elected in 2005. With the election of Bob Corkins has come controversy. There have been many changes in the department of education and KAIRS has been hesitant to align itself as an organization with the new commissioner, but would like to maintain a good working relationship. Discussions continue as to if KAIRS should invite the new commissioner to a KAIRS meeting or possibly have the superintendents meet with him on a separate occasion.

Continuing issues with the commissioner and the Board of Education include recertification of teachers and professional licensure for teachers in schools who do not choose to have state accreditation, but have legitimate alternate accreditation.

Working with the State Board of Education continues to be a priority. In the last two years, Karen indicated that the Board has had a more favorable slant toward private schools. Carol Rupe, a board moderate, has been a friend of KAIRS and has attended our annual meeting with updates. Carol has helped with teacher licensure.

In the next eight to ten years, KAIRS must attend to several important issues:

- Become more politically involved.
- Work closely with the state legislators.
- Work with KSHSAA.
- Understand and monitor federal legislation.

SPEAKERS

Keynote Speaker: Barry Downing

Partnerships in Early Education – The Story of TOP School

Barry Downing, entrepreneur and philanthropist, was the keynote speaker for the 2006 meeting on Monday afternoon. With his classic rags-to-riches life story, Mr. Downing proved to be an intriguing speaker as he shared with the group about one of his latest philanthropic efforts in Wichita, the Opportunity Project (TOP).

TOP is a full-day, year-round, early childhood education center for economically disadvantaged children (birth-to-six years) that Mr. Downing and his wife have helped develop and fund. While constructing an education center in the midst of a poor neighborhood is not a revolutionary concept, their model of funding is both innovative and creative.

He elaborated on the initial research, the mission and the subsequent building of outstanding facilities for this high-quality private center. The multi-million dollar annual funding requirement for constructing and running the center, however, was the focal point of his presentation.

In order to finance this project, Mr. Downing committed his family's foundation to a matching grant for half of the needed funds. He wanted 30 percent to come from regional foundations and the final 20 percent to come from businesses, individuals and other family foundations. He was adamant that he did not want the success of the project to hinge on him and his family's foundation alone.

He began to seek out additional partners in order to provide much of the operating budget and also to recruit children to attend the

school. He entered into partnerships with the Kansas BOE At-Risk I Derby (US260), the Child Care Association (Head Start), SRS. In kind gifts came from the Kansas Food Bank, the Butler County Nursing program, Early Head Start, the Discovery Place Preschool, WSU Department of Education and Art Partners.

The early outcomes testing indicates that the children who are attending are at high levels of proficiency in communication, language, early math and scientific thinking. Mr. Downing pointed out that the most important indications of success to him were that the children were performing better than if they were attending somewhere else. Additionally, he wanted to ensure that the families were involved and were pleased with their children's experience.

Due in part to the success of this first center, the Downings are helping to launch another, more comprehensive, center in Northeast Wichita.

Barry Downing is chair and CEO of Corporate Lodging Consultants, Inc. (CLC). Additionally, he and his wife, Paula, head The Barry L. and Paula M. Foundation. CLC was formed to provide hotel lodging administrative services to large U.S. transportation companies. From 1980 to the present, CLC has experienced phenomenal growth. Sales for 2005 were projected at over \$500 million.

Mr. Barry's foundation has donated millions of dollars to various agencies and organizations throughout Wichita. These have included The Opportunity Project (an early childhood education center he and his wife founded), the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology and the Wichita Sedgwick County Zoo. Mr. Barry received a B.S. in electrical engineering from Wichita State University

(1971).

Diane Worth – Employment Law A Helpful Overview for Administrators on Documentation and Harassment

Wichita attorney, Diane Worth, was the first featured speaker on Monday, February 6. She skillfully addressed several difficult employee law issues and how they pertain to private schools. She primarily focused on two areas of concern: documentation and harassment – both for teachers and students.

Stressing the vital importance of documentation from an administrator/employer’s perspective, Ms. Worth began with the premise that an employee’s perception being treated unfairly is what drives that person to contact a lawyer.

If an administrator will document everything – the good and the bad – and place it in the employee’s file, employees will usually have a sense of being treated fairly. This will also provide the employer protection by preventing the appearance of “building a file” from which to dismiss a problematic employee.

More than once, Ms. Worth stressed the importance of writing things down, but also exhorted attendees to be aware that all written material is considered evidence in a court of law. This includes the employee’s file, employer’s emails, personal notes or alternative files. An employee’s file is the property of the school, but she encouraged all schools to have clearly established policies of when an employee may review his or her file.

In regard to unlawful harassment, Ms. Worth noted that a “hostile environment” is the key. Even if the workplace is unpleasant, if the harassment is not “due to their gender, race, color, national origin or religion, there is no actionable claim for harassment.”

As for student harassment, the law is more clear-cut when a school receives federal funds because they are protected by a different set of laws. According to Ms. Worth, “To recover [damages], a student must be able to show that a school official or administrator had actual notice of the harassment and was ‘deliberately indifferent’ to the misconduct. Also they must show that the harassment is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive victims of access to the education opportunities or benefits provided by the school.”

Ms. Worth distributed a handout that provided detailed explanations for these issues, and specifically a helpful list of practical steps to prevent and respond to harassment complaints.

Diane Worth is a shareholder in the firm of Morris, Laing, Evans, Brock & Kennedy, Chartered of Wichita. Her practice concentrates on the employment law where she regularly provides legal advice to both large and small businesses on employment matters. She has represented both employers and employees in federal discrimination matters, wage and hour matters, and wrongful termination claims.

Ms. Worth is past president of the University of Kansas Law School’s Board of Governors, has served as president of the Kansas Bar Association’s Employment Law Section, and is the author of the “Title VII” chapter of the Kansas Bar Association’s Employment Law Handbook. She received her law degree from the University of

Kansas School of Law and her undergraduate degree from Kansas State University.

Cheryl Rude - Developing Youth Leadership

Dr. Cheryl Rude is the director of Leadership Development at Southwestern College in Winfield. An expert in the field of developing leaders, she presented insightful and motivational information explaining the nuances of what it means to be a leader. In her first session, "Developing Youth Leadership," she used the Integrated Leader Development Model, and examined such areas as what it takes to be a leader and how did you become a leader?

Dividing leadership into three levels, Dr. Rude said that the first level is awareness – at this level a student is uninterested in leadership and look at it as something external. The second level is one where the student jumps into everything, wanted to experience and perhaps lead every activity, but has yet to learn balance. The highest level comes when the exploratory phase is completed and the youth has reach mastery of one thing in particular and is ready to take charge in some manner.

Dr. Rude also addressed the role of adults and listed three different roles they play: Controlling – the image was one of the youth is a pawn with limited activities and specific boundaries; Resource – the image is of Playdough where the youth is molded and shaped; Partners – the image is one of putting together Legos to create something.

In "Education That Transforms," Dr. Rude outlined Southwest's student leadership program. She described the student-lead,

project-based, service oriented activities and the leadership skills targeted. Two of her students described their specific activities and shared their learning on leadership and the positive impact of the program on their lives.

In addition to the overview of leadership, Dr. Rude provided a website that has information about leadership development opportunities through Southwestern College www.sckans.edu/leadership. Southwestern also hosts an annual weeklong leadership camp, recommended for rising sophomores and juniors. The 2006 camp will be June 12-16 in Winfield. Check the website listed above for more information.

If you are interested in additional resources from Dr. Rude, please email Corey Reese at crkairs@yahoo.com and she will forward you the downloadable resource list.

Cheryl Rude is the Director of Leadership Development at Southwestern College in Winfield. She is an assistant professor of leadership and where she has been teaching since 1991. Her responsibilities at Southwestern cover a wide range and include recruiting for and managing the leadership team; teaching classes in leadership, psychology, and religion; and serving as a member of the Future Task Force.

Dr. Rude earned a doctorate of philosophy in leadership studies from The Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2005. She also holds a master's degree in Counseling and School Psychology from Wichita State University (1987) and a B.S. in Business Administration for the University of Kansas (1981).

Curt Riggs – Risk Management

Curt Riggs, a Risk Consultant with IMA of Kansas, provided a detailed presentation of many areas of safety concern for school administrators. He exhorted attendees to be vigilant in avoiding exposure to risk through a variety of safety measures. This involved reviewing the components of a “safety culture,” including written safety programs, a working safety committee, supervisor safety training, accountability, self-inspections and accident investigations.

One of the areas of most concern is the playground -- due in part to the high number of injuries sustained by children at recess and play. Mr. Riggs recommended monthly inspections to insure properly working equipment, correct surface, age appropriateness and proper supervision. He also covered hazardous chemicals on site and transportation risks.

His overall safety recommendations included establishing compliance and proactive processes that include all levels of the organization (school), establishing expectations and being proactive. He concluded, “Failure is not a person, it is an event.”

Curt Riggs, a Risk Consultant with IMA of Kansas, has been involved for over 20 years in the safety and loss control field. He has experience in both private corporate entities and the insurance business with a diverse background in various industries including manufacturing, service, health, transportation, and education. Mr. Riggs is a Certified Safety Professional, a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager, and holds a Masters in Environmental Science.

Diane Page – “Roots and Shoots”

Diane Page and Dene Nelson completed the Monday speaker sessions with their highly entertaining presentation of Jane Goodall’s worldwide, grassroots youth program, entitled “Roots and Shoots.” The program was started in 1977 by Dr. Goodall, who is famous for her work with the chimpanzees in the Gombe National Reserve in Tanzania. It has the three goals of teaching young people to care for and conserve the environment, animals and the human community.

A Roots and Shoots chapter can be started anywhere and among all ages. The cost is \$35 per chapter and involves a wide range of fun and worthwhile activities for participants. Ms. Nelson’s Discovery Place Preschool has a chapter at her school and was active in a recent project at the Sedgwick County Zoo.

Roots and Shoots is located on the web at www.rootsandshoots.com.

Diane Page is currently devoting her time to developing the Jane Goodall youth humanitarian program in Kansas. For 20 years she was sales/marketing director for a Dallas travel company. In 1999, she moved to Wichita with her husband and worked with Rainbows Untied (a nonprofit preschool program for special needs and typical children) as a community educator and grant coordinator. She recently retired from Rainbows.

She graduated from the University of Texas where she received her degree in Elementary Education and later attended the University of North Texas for early childhood studies. She has Montessori certification from St. Nicholas in London and has taught in both

public and private schools.

Dene Nelson is the Director of Discovery Place Preschool, which has been on The Independent School campus since 1985. The preschool has a uniquely creative approach to teaching young children, which has been studied by many as an outstanding approach to preschool education. Ms. Nelson has been on the Advisory Board for The Opportunity Project (the preschool founded by Barry Downing). Recently, she has become involved with Roots and Shoots, an organization.

HALL OF FAME BANQUET

2006 Hall of Fame Inductees

At the Hall of Fame Banquet, Monday February 6, KAIRS inducted two new members into the KAIRS Hall of Fame. The 2006 Class is comprised of Karen Norton, Head of School, Independent School of Wichita and Jean Ross, President, Thomas More Prep–Marian High School. Congratulations to these outstanding educators.

The Hall of Fame resides at the KAIRS website: www.kairs.org.

KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2006

Five outstanding educators also were honored at the banquet. The winners will also be featured in the KAIRS 2005 Annual Report and on our website, www.kairs.org.

Christian Schools: Judy Franklin, Kansas City Christian, Prairie Village;

Diocese of Dodge City: Bonnie Schuette, Sacred Heart Cathedral,
Dodge City;

Independent Schools: Shirley Meissner, The Independent School of
Wichita;

Lutheran Schools: Dave Ochs, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita;

Diocese of Wichita: Sister Agnes Lero, St. Patrick Catholic School,
Chanute.

TUESDAY

PUBLIC POLICY

Just after breakfast on Tuesday morning, the various school divisions met together for round-table discussions. During this session, Bob Voboril, KAIRS Public Policy Coordinator, provided a public policy update and issued a thoughtful challenge that focused on several pertinent issues.

Increase in Funds to Kansas Public Schools

Last year, the state gave \$250 million additional funds to Kansas's public schools, much of which went to increasing the salaries of teachers. Bob indicated that this has served to further increase the salary disparity between teachers in public and non-public schools. Private schools will soon be an additional seven to ten percent behind in salary levels. Kansas schools are scheduled to receive an additional \$500 million no later than the next three years, which will allow public school salaries to increase another 10 to 15 percent.

Bob continued, "How do we as an organization address these issues and continue to raise funds in order to remain in stride with the

public schools?”

KAIRS Public Policy Accomplishments

Bob reviewed the public policy accomplishments of the past several years:

KAIRS has a good working relationship with the Kansas Board of Regents; our schools have access to federal funds; the Special Education issues have been resolved with our students receiving assistance in the geographic location where they attend school; we have addressed the Kansas State Board of Education on licensure.

Challenges for the Future

He challenged the group to consider the following issues:

1. What is the state’s obligation to our schools when it comes to educating our children?
2. While it may appear that a majority of members of the State Board of Education might be favorable to us, do we want to get caught in the middle of the animosity between the new commissioner and public education?
3. With the continually increasing need for funds, what form would best serve our member schools? Do we endorse vouchers, tax credits or scholarship tax credits – as has been done in Pennsylvania or Arizona?
4. Our focus must be on what is best for children in general and for educating the poor children of our state.

The attendees discussed these issues and responded to Bob’s challenge. Upon reflection, Bob put forth the following 8 points to be considered for KAIRS strategic planning. The April General Membership meeting will focus on this set of strategic points.

KAIRS CORE FUNDING PRINCIPLES

1. The first responsibility for funding non–public schools lies with the organization which operates the school; not the federal or the state government.
2. We are not willing to alter our mission or our admission requirements in order to gain financial assistance.
3. The new system of massive court–ordered financial assistance to public education threatens the balance of school funding so drastically that some of our schools may not be able to compete fairly for teachers, students, resources, or (especially) for families of modest means.
4. Funding for education should follow the child just as it does at the post–secondary education level and in most other countries.
5. Each KAIRS school needs to tell its story better to its constituents and to those who make funding decisions.
6. Our schools need to work toward endowments and other third–source funding to reduce per–pupil tuition so that they can serve a broader base of students.
7. The State of Kansas needs to use tax policy to recognize and encourage financial contributions to education by individuals and corporations.
8. State regulations are burdensome and unfair when they are unfunded and not directly related to accreditation outcomes.

RESOLUTION: that KAIRS develop a strategic plan to implement

these core principles.

ADOPTED: February 7, 2006

**KANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION UPDATE –CAROL RUPE,
BOARD MEMBER – DISTRICT 8**

Carol Rupe, Kansas State Board of Education member, spoke with attendees early Tuesday morning. Ms. Rupe, a member from Wichita, has been a consistent friend to KAIRS and has taken the time to attend the last three Annual Meetings and give an update of Board workings. This year, she brought news of an agitated and divided Board – in part due to the controversial hiring of the new Commissioner of Education, Bob Corkins.

Ms. Rupe also brought good news in that certified teachers in KAIRS schools can renew their Kansas certification – providing that the school is accredited by ISAS, ISACS, ACSI, NLA or North Central.

Additionally, she indicated that although no one person has been designated as a non–public school liaison in the Department of Education, Ms. Rupe said that Diane DeBacker would be a contact within the department who would know where to direct concerns or questions. Her phone number is 785–296–1978.

Finally, the KSDE , under Mr. Corkin’s direction, had reorganized the department with Dale Dennis and Alexa Posny being both named as Deputy Commissioners.

2006 KAIRS Annual Business Meeting Minutes

On Tuesday morning, February 7th, President Karen Norton called the meeting to order. This was the KAIRS Annual Meeting held at the Ramada Inn in Topeka, Kansas.

The minutes of the 2005 meeting were approved as presented.

The treasurer's report was presented and MSP to accept.

Karen presented the proposed dues increase for 2006–2007. It was noted that there had been no increase in the dues schedule for a number of years and that expenses continue to increase. The assembly adopted proposal number one, which was based on a 50% increase.

Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy applied for membership in KAIRS. MSP to accept them as full members in the organization of KAIRS.

Karen encouraged school and individuals to present any ideas for the April quarterly meeting.

Bob Voboril addressed the assembly and identified a number of needs regarding KAIRS organization. The Officers of KAIRS were asked to develop a plan to address these needs.

A slate of candidates was presented for elections. MSP to accept the slate of officers as presented. This resulted in the following:

Nick Compagnone –President

Pamela Nummela – Vice-president

Bill Dieckhoff – Secretary

David Swank – Treasurer

Shelli Kadel – Convention Secretary

Corey Reese gave her annual report to the assembly. She reported that the website is up and running and receiving good reviews. The Hall of Fame is housed on the web site as well as the Distinguished Teachers. The site also includes KAIRS public policy, general information and a link to member schools that have requested this.

Corey continues to include a monthly KAIRS electronic newsletter and an Annual Report.

Karen Norton adjourned the meeting and Ed Bierbaum gave the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Dieckhoff
Secretary

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2006 Annual Report will be available to all members at the February Annual Meeting. Copies are available to those who did not attend the meeting.

IMPORTANT 2005–06 KAIRS DATES

April 4: KAIRS Executive Committee Meeting, The Independent School, 9 a.m.

April 12: General Membership Meeting, Topeka, 10 a.m.

KAIRS 2005–06 OFFICERS

President: Karen Norton, The Independent School, Wichita

Vice President: Nick Compagnone, Salina Catholic Diocese

Secretary: Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita

Treasurer: David Swank, Trinity Academy, Wichita

Annual Meeting Co-Secretaries: Shelli Kadel, Wichita Friends School
& Nick Compagnone, Salina Catholic Diocese