

## **KAIRS TODAY JUNE 2008/END OF YEAR**

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. Each issue will also be available on the KAIRS Web site at <http://www.kairs.org>.

Our goal is to keep you informed about legislative, regulatory and national news, and educational issues. Contact Corey Reese, editor, with questions or concerns – [crkairs@yahoo.com](mailto:crkairs@yahoo.com).

*From the Editor:* This is our final *KAIRS Today* of the 2007-08 year. We return again in the fall. We pray for a blessed and refreshing summer for all our members.

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### **ACCREDITATION UPDATE**

*From Nick Compagnone:*

KAIRS Executive Committee Member Holly Goodwin, Assistant Superintendent, Wichita Diocese and Cameron Carlson, Associate Principal, Kapaun Mt. Carmel and I met with Eddie Krenson, Senior Vice President, AdvancED East Region, along with Dr. Nancy Bolz, Director, Kansas - NCA CASI\* and Sharon Bell of KNCA. We are studying other state models that recognize alternative accreditation for private and religious schools. In September we plan to meet again to draw up a proposal that would benefit KAIRS schools.

We would like to present this proposal at the KAIRS annual meeting and then in 09 at the Kansas North Central annual meeting in October, we will have special sessions specifically for the needs of private schools in the state of Kansas. This will give the private schools from around the state the opportunity to enhance professional development as well as network with other schools in regards to accreditation issues.

### **DR NICK TRAVELS TO HEAR POPE BENEDICT SPEAK IN DC**

Nick Compagnone, KAIRS President, wrote a longer version of this article for the Northwestern Register publication. All four Kansas Catholic School Superintendents attended this event, and Dr. Nick generously agreed to share this edited version with KAIRS Today.

## **CHRIST OUR HOPE**

Several months ago, Bishop Coakley (Bishop of Salina) asked me if I would represent the Diocese in a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI and Catholic educators from around the country. Immediately I said, "Yes." The meeting was held at Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. on April 17. College presidents and diocesan educators were invited. In total, there were about 400 invited guests in the Great Room of the Edward Pryzbyla University Center.

Many of those who attended started the day listening to the Pontiff say Mass in Nationals Park where 40,000 attended. Like many Americans, the first words I heard Pope Benedict say at the beginning of Mass was "Peace be with you." Participants at the Catholic University met in the Center at 2 pm for the 5 pm arrival of the Pope. Many in the room were acquainted with one another. Several participants have been in Catholic education for many years. As for many others, this was going to be a different kind of meeting for me; it was unique. I did not bring my laptop on the trip, nor did I communicate or return e-mails to my colleagues. I considered this trip to be a pilgrimage.

We conversed with excitement, anticipating what the Pope would say about Catholic education in the United States. After what seemed to be a short wait, the Secret Service asked everyone to move to the room where we were to meet the Pope. Everyone, including Bishops, Priests, Religious, and School Officials went through the same security checks. We were all given passes to walk to the Center; we passed through a courtyard where thousands of the University's students were waiting to greet the Pope.

As we entered the room, we saw that all of us would be able to view the Pope without difficulty. Each seat was clearly marked with a name of each participant. Participants were mixed throughout the room, with no separation between the clergy, religious and lay people. It made one realize that in God's eyes, everyone was working in His ministry.

An hour before the Pope arrived, we were asked to take our seats. There was a large screen in the room with a picture that was focused on the entrance to the building where the Pope was to arrive. We heard an outburst of students' voices outside the building and at that precise moment, all the doors in the room were closed and secured by the Secret Service. I reflected on the Gospel heard earlier in the day; the disciples were locked in the upper room, waiting for divine inspiration.

Finally, out of one limousine, Pope Benedict appeared. Everyone in the room cheered and applauded; a choir began singing. A few minutes later, the main door of our room opened and dignitaries processed down the aisle, followed by the Pope.

In his reassuring and carefully chosen words, he began his message, "How beautiful are the footsteps of those who bring news. (Rom 10:15-17) With these

words from Isaiah, quoted by Saint Paul, I warmly greet each of you, bearers of wisdom, and the staff, students and families of many varied institutions of learning you represent.”

The Pope noted that Catholic education has helped generations of immigrants rise from poverty into mainstream society. He said this was made possible through countless sacrifices made by religious sisters, brothers, priests and parents. “This sacrifice continues today,” the Pontiff said, according to a transcript of his talk provided by the Catholic University of America

The Pontiff also noted the importance of the educational mission of the Church: “Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way, those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true.”

For generations, schools have been a high priority in the church’s ministry. “This sacrifice continues today,” stated Pope Benedict. “It is an outstanding apostolate of hope, seeking to address the material, intellectual and spiritual needs of over three million children and students. It also provides a highly commendable opportunity for the entire Catholic community to contribute generously to the financial needs of our institutions. No child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which in turn nurtures the soul of a nation.”

Clergy, religious orders, and laity were urged not to abandon schools, but to renew a commitment to schools, especially in poorer areas. In his departing words, the Pope stated, “To all of you I say: bear witness to hope. Nourish your witness with prayer. Account for the hope that characterizes your lives by living the truth, which you propose to your students. Help them to know and love the One you have encountered, whose truth and goodness you have experienced with joy. With Saint Augustine, let us say: ‘We who speak and you who listen acknowledge ourselves as fellow disciples of a single teacher.’ With these sentiments of communion, I gladly impart to you, your colleagues and students, and to your families, my Apostolic Blessing.”

As the Pontiff left the room, everyone was on their feet with a thunderous ovation. It was truly a message of hope and renewal of commitment to a ministry. Many left the room that day filled with inspiration and perhaps a clearer focus on the educational ministry of the Church.

After a long day, I was leaving the building to cross the street, when a young couple with two toddlers approached me and asked if Pope Benedict was still here. I answered that he had left. They then wanted to know if I had come to see the Pope and my answer was “Yes, and he came to see us.” The young father continued, “What do you do and where are you from?” I explained I was from Kansas and that I was a Catholic school administrator. “Fantastic,” responded the young man, “God bless you for what you do. We hope that someday our children will be able to go to a Catholic school.” I smiled and

thought, “Yes, and so does Pope Benedict.”

## **ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

Each year our organization gathers in February for a two-day meeting where the executive committee strives to provide provocative speakers, educational sessions, time for professional discussions and the Hall of Fame Banquet that honors outstanding teachers and administrators.

This past year, Sister Carol Cimino SSJ, Ed.D, a national consultant for the William H. Sadlier Company, textbook publisher, spoke on three occasions. (See the article below for more details from her sessions.)

Our other outstanding speakers included:

**Marla Elmquest and Lorye Thomas: Smoky Valley Virtual Charter School.**

**Staci Warren, Dr. Nancy Bolz and Dawn Oldenettle: accreditation update.**

**Hal Reynolds and Angie Selk: Pass Key technology assistance for remedial and accelerated students.**

**Tim Hannon: EduConnect.**

**Galen Unruh: KSHAA discussion.**

**Jackie Lakin and Diana Greer: eDesign Learning Lab.**

**Cindy Curran and Jackie Kack: Hands On Science.**

**Mike Gleason and Bill Meagher: Sports as a Ministry.**

## **HALL OF FAME BANQUET**

As always, the banquet was a highlight of the year. Congratulations to our 08 Distinguished Teachers. (Visit [kairs.org](http://kairs.org) for more information about our teachers.)

Christian Schools: Leroy Busenitz, Berean Academy, Elbing  
Diocese of Dodge City: Jody Neuman, St. Dominic Catholic School, Garden City  
Independent Schools: Susan Ensz, Wichita Collegiate School  
Lutheran Schools: Karen Wilgers, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita  
Diocese of Salina: Trudy Cole, St. John’s Catholic School, Hanover  
Diocese of Wichita: Cori Eck Schad, Magdalen School, Wichita

Each year, our vendors provide tremendous assistance for our Annual Meeting. Thank you to the following vendors:

EduConnect, Inc.  
Glencoe McGraw Hill  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Religion Publishers  
Lifetouch  
Parker Uniforms  
Smart Tuition  
SRA McGraw Hill

### **SISTER CAROL CIMINO BRINGS UNIQUE INSIGHTS**

It's not every year that the keynote speaker at the KAIRS Annual Meeting is so insightful and entertaining that you want to hear her give three presentations. Happily, this was the case at last February's Annual Meeting. KAIRS attendees had the pleasure of hearing Sister Carol Cimino speak on multiple occasions.

Her keynote address focused on the challenges that schools are facing in the current educational climate and encouraged administrators to "Boldly Go" and face these issues. In her second and third sessions, she reflected on the current generation of parents, and presented helpful recommendations concerning the (continual) marketing of private religious schools, retaining and recruiting teachers and the importance having a mission for your school,

She brought solid research, practical suggestions and of course, humor to all her presentations. While her background is that of a Catholic nun, and Catholic School Principal, her advice and experience could readily be applied to all schools.

### **Administrators Challenged to Go Boldly Into New Frontier**

To boldly explore new worlds and encounter new life forms – these were the challenging words (straight from Star Trek) delivered by the 2008 Keynote Speaker, Sister Carol Cimino.

"We are about destiny – but trivia gets in the way. So, what is our mission, and how do we carry it out to its highest destiny? What is it like to live in the post-modern world?" she asked. "The members of Generation X are the parents now and this is the era of the World Wide Web. Our students have always used text messaging and the Internet. They are used to instant gratification."

Despite the tremendous changes in the world – specifically in technology, Sister Cimino noted that our schools haven't changed all that much since the 1800s. "My fear is that we are preparing students for a world that will never exist," she said.

"All future jobs will involve a computer and technology. Our students will be expected to market their own skills, and it will most likely be a job in which their standard of living will not be as high as that of their parents."

This generation interacts in the “new” world where global economics have replaced national boundaries. They are spiritual rather than religious, trust their own experiences over what they are taught, and experience life earlier than their parents and grandparents.

The challenges of teaching this generation of children, Sister Carol said, was to not only prepare them for the workforce, but to provide a range of services for children and families.

As she encouraged administrators to “Boldly Go” and reach this upcoming generation, she acknowledged that they faced a host of challenges. These include rising costs, aging facilities, staff shortages, competition from charter schools and home schooling.

Sister Carol offered a list of thought-provoking questions for administrators to ask themselves:

1. How will we be true to our ideals and values in face of “watered down” values in society?
2. What kinds of students do we want to produce? (The portrait of the kids we graduate is our warranty for our education.)
3. How will we confront our rivals in the business of education?
4. How will we continue to attract students and teachers?
5. How will we make our vital decisions on mission and not money?

While her research highlighted many of the tough aspects of private (and specifically religious education), Sister Carol used the poem, “The Gift of the Magi” to offer encouragement.

“We don’t know how many (magi) or who came, but they figured that Jesus wanted to be found - the mission needed to be accomplished and was going to be accomplished,” she said. “The magi kept at it – in the face of obstacles. They trusted in their vision.

“They read the signs of the times. They showed up.” She concluded, “They returned a different way – we should be people who are transformed. We do this vital thing by giving kids the kind of education that they can’t get anywhere else.”

### **Schools Benefit From Understanding Generation X Parents**

Many of the parents of today’s children are Generation Xers. Sister Carol’s second session addressed the current group of Generation X parents – who they are and what our schools can provide for them.

“This generation of parents is 25 to 40 years old. They want to be involved in their children’s schooling, are the helicopter parents, and are looking for a community to which they can belong,” Sister Carol explained. “Generation Xers are used to solving problems. You would do well in using them to help them solve problems at your schools. Say to them, ‘Let’s sit down and talk about what we can do to solve this situation.’ This will attract them.”

She indicated that Generation Xers also are highly educated (29 percent have undergraduate degrees, as compared to 24 percent on a national average), and used to being leaders. They are media savvy, loyal to organizations, but are also strong individualists. Additionally, they are looking for strong educational achievement from students in our schools.

Transitioning from what this group of parents wanted, to what our schools can (and should) be offering, Sister Carol stressed the importance of providing high quality, up-to-date websites and direct electronic communication. "Parents are shopping for schools via the Internet so use your technology as a source of information. When they come to your Open House, be sure and ask them how they got there, gather their email addresses and send them an email newsletter immediately. Did they see your website? Forty-four percent of all shopping in the U.S. is done on line."

Traditional values and on-going traditions/celebrations are particularly important to this generation of parents. She recommended keeping uniforms for the students, honoring traditions such as the founding of the school or the school's patron saint (if you have one), and even regularly recognizing children's birthdays.

"These parents are looking for traditions at our schools. They were presented with an ideal — the Beaver Cleaver family — by their parents. Think about the nostalgia on Broadway — Jersey Boys, and revivals of the King and I, or Mary Poppins. They are looking for a mythical past. They heard their parents telling them stories about it," she said. "The more you can invite them to participate in the traditions of your school — the better. As private, religious schools, we do this well."

Sister Carol provided a list of practical measures to use to attract Generation X parents:

*Involve parents:*

- in the creation and maintenance of your website.
- as "ambassadors" to various groups, i.e. Hispanics, newly arrived families, parishes without schools.
- on boards and committees directing marketing initiatives.
- in creating a "friendly" front office.

***Sister Carol's Website "Must Haves" for An Effective Website***

- Name, address, phone numbers.
- Driving directions (hyperlink to Mapquest).
- Mission statement.
- Information on academic, extra-curricular programs
- Financial data (but do not post tuition). Many schools are going to 12-month payment plans.
- Before and after-school care information.
- Awards, certification summary, accreditation.

## **Sister Carol Outlines Factors that Contribute to Outstanding Schools**

During her final session, Sister Carol focused on key factors that can contribute to outstanding schools: teachers, an effective mission, and school funding. She began with the challenge of retaining teachers.

“The Kansas City Star (January 17, 2008) said that there is going to be a looming teacher shortage because people were leaving Kansas. If there is a teacher shortage in the public schools, imagine what we are going to face in our private schools. The lesson is this – if they (teachers) are not staying in public schools where they are paying sometimes twice as much as we’re paying, then what is going to draw teachers to our schools? It will be the community and the call to teach,” she said.

Sister Carol also cited a US Department of Education position paper published in 2000 – that studied the sense of vocation in public schools teachers. It said that the research showed that if a teacher did not feel called to teach, he or she was not going to be a good teacher – no matter how much you pay.

“Because of the fact we don’t have money to throw at teachers – we need to capitalize on those things that are satisfying to teachers. We can provide community, commitment, investment in the mission of the institution, and the call to teach. These are what make us different,” she said.

Sister Carol continued, “When a teacher comes to teach at our schools or a teacher goes to teach at the public school, the starting salary isn’t all that different. It’s when they get up there in years that the salary starts to diverge greatly. If we want to keep those veteran, good teachers, we need to look at what rewards we can give them at 10, 15, 20 years. At that point, money is not the most important; they’ve made the commitment to our schools. Look at what things we have that we can give them in order to capitalize on the investment they’ve made in the institution.”

When recruiting qualified teachers, Sister Carol said there were several significant factors that should be strongly considered. “Teachers who really practice their religion – you want them. You want them if they themselves have gone to a religious school because they are going to buy immediately into your mission. If you can keep them beyond the third year, they are going to be invested in your school and they are likely going to stick around. You want those kinds of teachers.”

Sister Carol stressed the mission of a school as one of several areas to which a school needs to pay close attention. She highly recommended clarifying the mission statement. “Have your staff write it in their own words – how do you see the mission statement playing out on a day-to-day basis? Do the same thing with parents. We’re strong in our mission because we know what we’re about. We’re about education, not social engineering.”

“Make sure there is shared investment in the mission. I would suggest that when parents enroll their kids in your school, ask them sign a declaration that they buy into the mission of the school. I ask parents how many of them have their own family mission statement? If you don’t know where you’re going, how are you going to know if you got there?”

She also focused on creating the culture of our schools, and said that many of these things can make a difference in the success of a school. “On what is money spent? Who is honored in your school? What is talked about over the public address system? What is on the walls and what do you see first when you walk into the school? I want to first see what is most important to your school. Students buy into ritual and tradition.”

Sister Carol addressed the sticky issue of finances, encouraging administrators to be accountable in their financial dealings. “Do annual reports and tell your families: this is what you are paying and this is what it costs. Every student in our schools gets a scholarship and where does that money come from? The first step in settling our finances is to be truly transparent.”

She encouraged administrators to think about non-traditional and traditional sources for tuition. Many schools are floating bonds, creating annual funds and talking with all constituencies, including the school board, teachers, parents of alumnae, vendors, benefactors and local civic community organizations for funding.

“Our schools were begun on the ideas of someone. Go back to your original founders’ intentions. Why was your school founded in the first place? I have a hunch it was to evangelize children in the faith, but also to take care of those children that couldn’t make it elsewhere. I think we need to go back to those original intentions.”

### ***Sister Carol’s Private School Statistics***

- Private schools: Catholic schools, 48%; Non-catholic religious schools: 28%; Non-sectarian 24%.
- 1/4 of all private schools have no national religious affiliation.
- The majority of private schools are elementary schools.
- 95% of our schools are co-ed, 2% girls’ schools, 3% boys’ schools.
- 31% fewer than 50 students.
- Average size: 181 students.
- Highest number of private schools: California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas.
- Pupil/teacher ratio: 12/1. Public schools: 17/1.

### **KANSAS INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND KAIRS**

From Dr. Philip Kerstetter, President, Kansas Wesleyan University: There’s nothing new at this time. I made a presentation to the Kansas Independent College Association, and I have forwarded some information about KAIRS to them. I will be doing a follow-up later this summer to determine level of interest.

### **KAIRS CENSUS**

Thanks to all that participated in the inaugural on-line census! There are still a few schools that have not yet entered their information, but we hope to have 100 percent participation by the end of the summer. We will send you the final updated census information at that time. We will then ask for everyone to simply update their information in late fall. Thanks for everyone's patience.

Thanks especially to Matt Bunch at Thomas Moore Prep-Marian for all his technological expertise and creativity. He wrote the census program and does the updates for us.

Our website creator and manager, Leo Johns, also helped tremendously with this project.

### WEBSITE UPDATE

We will be updating our website soon and should have all of our 08 Distinguished Teachers and KAIRS Today issues on line. Dr. Nick's article about his visit to hear the Pope will also be featured.

### IMPORTANT 2008-09 KAIRS DATES

September: General Membership Meeting, featuring AdvancED guests. Date to be determined in June.

October 6-8: Kansas North Central Fall Meeting (Wichita), KAIRS will partner with KNCA during that meeting. Exact details to be determined in June.

February 9, 10: KAIRS Annual Meeting, Topeka

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