

September 2007
Welcome to *KAIRS Today* 2007-08.

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.

From the Editor: Welcome back to another exciting school year where we hope to see great things happen for all of your schools, and for KAIRS as well. We will be changing our KAIRS Today schedule this year, as we move to five issues instead of 10. Currently, we are planning a September, October and December issue for the fall. They will be published between the 20th and 25th of those months.

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FROM THE KAIRS PRESIDENT

Welcome back after a hot summer. By now, your schools have been in session for over a month and you are well into the swing of another promising year. That's how we feel about the upcoming year for KAIRS. I want to start by extending a sincere thank you to our membership for a terrific first year of my presidency. Last year was filled with excellent speakers at our meetings; we made strides in working toward alternate accreditation; we welcomed a non-public school liaison in Stacy Warren; and we took our technology capability to a new level.

We said goodbye to some of our longtime colleagues. To you, I pray the Lord's blessings on the next stage of your lives and careers. Our lives (and your

students and colleagues) have been enriched by your contributions.

As we look to this upcoming year, we are pleased to welcome our new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Alexa Posny. She has attended some of our meetings in the past and the Executive Committee will meet with her on October 2, following the membership meeting, to become better acquainted.

Additionally, this year we hope to forge new partnerships with the higher education institutions of our state, on one end of the spectrum, and the Pre-Kindergarten and day care organizations on the other end. The upcoming general membership meeting in October will feature two administrators from Kansas universities as we continue a conversation we began at last year's annual meeting. In the upcoming years, KAIRS may have a different look than the past 37 years!

The Executive Committee has also placed a high priority on continuing to work towards alternative accreditation that would be recognized by the state of Kansas. The articles in this month's KAIRS Today summarize the presentations by several accrediting bodies that were presented at last year's annual meeting.

We will be broadcasting all of our general membership meetings via the Internet so be sure and make arrangements to "drop in." We are also arranging to collect our Census information via our website. It will be a good reason for you to visit the KAIRS website.

Please mark this year's important dates on your calendars. They are listed at the end of this issue of KAIRS Today. Looking forward to working with you all.

Yours in KAIRS,
Nick Compagnone, Ph.D., KAIRS President

OCTOBER 2ND MEETING: JOINING WITH KANSAS SCHOOLS OF HIGHER EDUCATION & COACHING AS A MINISTRY

Plan to attend the KAIRS General Membership meeting on Tuesday, October 2 in person in Topeka, or via the Internet. Dr. Philip Kerstetter, President of Kansas Wesleyan University and Dr. Ron Allen, Chairman of the Education Department at Central Christian College, will be guest speakers representing private colleges in Kansas. There will be discussions on how we as KAIRS can partner with private and faith-based colleges in the state of Kansas. The second part of the meeting will explore promoting coaching as a service to our schools, and how coaches serve the mission and ministries of schools. Bill Meagher, Sports Director, Hays Recreation Commission, will make a presentation.

The meeting will be at the Missouri Synod Lutheran headquarters in Topeka, 10 – 1. The meeting will end promptly at 1.

Please email Bill Dieckhoff (Billdieckhoff@holycrosslutheran.net) with your lunch reservations, by Friday, September 28. Email Corey Reese (crkairs@yahoo.com) if you plan to attend via the Internet and would like instructions.

KAIRS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO MEET WITH NEW KANSAS COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

The KAIRS Executive Committee will meet with the new Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Alexa Posny, on October 2 in Topeka, directly after the General Membership Meeting. KAIRS President, Nick Compagnone, said, "In this meeting we hope to reintroduce the mission of KAIRS and discuss education issues pertaining to students attending private schools in the state of Kansas."

VARYING MODELS PRESENT DIFFERENT VIEWS OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation continues to be an important issue for KAIRS schools. In order to have a better understanding of the varying options for accreditation, representatives from four accrediting bodies were invited to the KAIRS Annual Meeting to present the specifics of their programs. Dialog concerning various options for accreditation of KAIRS schools is ongoing. Following is an overview of those presentations.

North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement

The Kansas branch of North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (KNCA) is well known and widely used among schools in Kansas. According to their website, they represent approximately 1,000 elementary, middle, and high schools or school districts in Kansas. Many schools that utilize KNCA have dual accreditation with the state.

Sharon Bell, assistant director for Kansas North Central Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (KNCA CASI), opened the presentation on accreditation at the February KAIRS Annual Meeting, stating, "Accreditation is an activity – not a status."

Nationally, North Central provides accreditation for schools in 19 states in the central region of the United States – representing more than 8,500 public and private schools. The association has offices in each of the states where it offers accreditation.

NCA works individually with each school to provide a clear-cut process for accreditation, and if needed, for school improvement. A strong incentive for utilizing North Central is its access to a wide array of resources available to its member schools. Some of the NCA's listed resources include: a state office; training, conferences, and workshops; handbooks, brochures, rubrics, and tools

that explain and describe aspects of school improvement; and Ambassadors who are certified through a rigorous training program to provide hands-on support to schools with their improvement efforts. (NCA website, www.ncacasi.org)

In addition to its excellent access to resources, KNCA also prides itself not only on offering its systematic process for school accreditation and school improvement, but also in providing regular team visits, peer review and access to Best Practices.

Ms. Bell indicated that in the past two years, there has been a movement towards unification between the Southern Association, the NCE and SACS.

“In April of 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), came together to form one strong and unified organization dedicated to advancing excellence in education through accreditation, research, and professional services.

This unification creates the world’s largest education community, representing over 23,000 public and private schools and districts in 30 states and 65 countries and serving over 15 million students.” (NCA website)

Ms. Bell concluded, “Our philosophy is that school improvement doesn’t need to be something where you jump through hoops. It is a proven process, sustainable and workable for your individual school. Student achievement is what we want.”

To contact Sharon Bell: call, 800-854-3024, x 6466, or email sbell@ncacasi.org.

The Association of Christian Schools International

ACSI represents more than 5,000 schools internationally. It is divided into 11 regions in the United States, with each having a Regional Accreditation Commission that reviews school visitations and makes decisions regarding accreditation of the participating schools. According to John Craig, regional director of the South-Central Region, ACSI member schools have the option of applying for accreditation with the organization, but it is not mandatory.

ACSI offers two different models: the first is a traditional self study for those schools that are seeking accreditation. The second is the Accreditation by School Progress (ASP), which is designed for those schools that are currently accredited by ACSI, but want to focus on one or more areas of school-wide improvement for re-accreditation.

For schools not yet ready to enter the accreditation process, ACSI offers the program, Steps Toward Achieving Recognition (STAR). This is a formal process

for school improvement, with the goal of potentially moving toward ACSI accreditation.

The ACSI accreditation process is designed primarily for Christian schools that desire to be reviewed by a team of Christian educators that use a Christ-centered model. ACSI provides consultants, a review committee of Christian schoolteachers and administrators that conduct a scheduled on-site visit and a thorough review by a Regional Accreditation Commission.

Mr. Craig indicated that while rigorous, the review procedure was beneficial to the schools that participated and added, "Going through the process only serves to make a school better than it was when it began the process."

To contact John Craig, phone: 972-991-2822, or email, acsisc@acsi.org.

Quality Performance Accreditation

QPA is the program developed by the Kansas Department of Education for Kansas schools to receive accreditation from the state. It is a system where schools are "assigned accreditation status based upon the extent to which the school has met the performance and quality criteria established by the state board." (Kansas Department of Education website, www.ksde.org)

Amy Wagoner, principal, Holy Cross Catholic School of Hutchinson, and Mary Carter, principal, St. Francis of Assisi in Wichita, provided an overview of QPA. They explained that schools that desire accreditation must have a certain percentage of their students performing at, or above, a specified level and must meet its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as is required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Within the QPA assessment process, it is also stipulated that 95 percent of all students, and 95 percent of each student subgroup, must take the state assessments; attendance rates must at least equal the prescribed rate established by the state board; and for high schools, the graduation rate must at least equal the rate prescribed by the state board.

QPA designates a list of 11 quality criteria that is required to be in place at each school. This list, which is spelled out on the Kansas Department of Education website (www.ksde.org), includes such items as a school improvement plan, an external technical assistance team, locally determined assessments that are aligned with those of the state, and teacher requirements.

Each QPA school in Kansas will receive one of four classifications: accredited, accredited on improvement, conditionally accredited, or non-accredited. According to Ms. Wagner and Ms. Carter, if a school fails to meet one or more performance criteria for two years in a row, the school is considered as

Accredited on Improvement. At that point, the state will help develop a plan to correct deficiencies and will assign a State Technical Assistance Team.

If this continues for a third year, the school has the option of appealing in order to demonstrate local improvement. After five years, a school can appeal, but if the appeal were not granted, the school would lose its accreditation.

Ms. Wagner and Ms. Carter encouraged the group, however, and indicated that if your school's performance and criteria were in balance, in most cases, your schools would receive accreditation.

For more information, you can contact Amy Wagoner at awagoner@holycross-hutch.com or Mary Carter at mcarter@stfranciswichita.com.

National Lutheran School Accreditation

The NLSA was established in 1986 and accredits exclusively schools of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. It is a voluntary process designed to assist schools in evaluating the quality of their academics and programs for their students as well as the (more important to the association) spiritual aspect of the school.

The Association serves more than 300,000 students with 602 schools accredited and 723 in process. Ed Bierbaum, principal of Linn Lutheran School, (now retired) who has been intricately involved with the NLSA, presented a summary of the accreditation process to attending KAIRS members. He indicated that the process had served to improve the overall quality of Lutheran schools, and that the accrediting program is continuing to grow.

The NLSA utilizes the "Standards for Lutheran Schools," which are comparable to other accrediting agencies. Within the process, two options are available to schools for accreditation and re-accreditation: Standards Based, and Ongoing Improvement. These self-assessment processes allow for differences within schools for early childhood, elementary and secondary schools. Schools applying for their initial accreditation status must use the Standards Based process. The Standards Based process allows a school to evaluate itself based on national standards for accreditation. The Ongoing Improvement (OI) process requires that a school adhere to standards and develop an extensive school improvement plan. The OI process is a choice for schools entering any re-accreditation phase.

A school begins by applying to participate in the accreditation procedure; it determines the necessary steps upon which it must embark; conducts a self-study with a consultant; hosts a visiting accreditation team, and submits the study to the NLSA Accreditation Commission.

Currently, the process covers a seven-year period, but according to Mr.

Bierbaum, the National Commission was scheduled to review this timeline last summer, and discuss reducing the period to five years. The National Commission consists of representatives from participating districts of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church - Canada.

NLSA has been one of the successful models for co-accrediting relationships with other accrediting bodies, and has reciprocity with such secular regional accrediting agencies as North Central.

For additional information, contact Terry Schmidt, executive director, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Terry.Schmidt@lcms.org.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING MEETS CHANGING NEEDS FOR EDUCATING STUDENTS

-presented by Bob D'Andrea at the KAIRS Annual Meeting

As technology continues to improve and has the potential of providing an overwhelming amount of factual data, schools are challenged with assisting students to process and utilize this information in a way that will best prepare them for their futures. To compound the problem, experts predict that more than half of the jobs available today may be done in a radically different fashion before the kindergarteners of today have graduated.

Are our schools using an outdated method of educating students? In his thought-provoking presentation at the KAIRS Annual Meeting, Bob D'Andrea, Technology Coordinator, Salina Catholic Schools, suggested that this could be the case. In what he referred to as "industrial age learning" versus "information age" learning, he made the case that it is time to look toward a new model of instruction for today's students.

"Industrial age models of learning are no longer appropriate for the needs and resources of the information age. In the old style, teachers are information providers; while in the new style, teachers are learning facilitators," he explained. "Traditional learning emphasizes individual/competitive efforts; whereas modern learning prefers cooperative/collaborative efforts."

Contrasting the two models, Mr. D'Andrea listed some of the following as key elements of industrial age learning: memorization and repetition, linear and concrete intellectual development, isolated teaching environments, technology as an isolated tool, parental involvement and autonomy of the community.

He contrasted that with a different set of fundamentals for information learning (or problem based learning - PBL): thinking, creativity, and intuition, process learning of quality content, interdisciplinary learning, collaborative teaching environments, technology as an integral tool, flexible use of facilities, and extensive parental partnerships.

Mr. D'Andrea explained that PBL has several distinct characteristics that may be identified and utilized in designing this type of curriculum. The first is that a problem drives the curriculum by assisting in development of the skills themselves – rather than simply testing the skills. Students work in cooperative groups, with teachers being coaches and facilitators. Often there is more than one solution to the problem, with only guidelines provided.

To help clarify problem-based learning, Mr. D'Andrea quoted Barbara Duch, associate director of the Mathematics & Science Education Resource Center, University of Delaware, and a widely published advocate for PBL since 1990, "How can I get my students to think?' is a question asked by many faculty, regardless of their disciplines. Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional method that challenges students to 'learn to learn,' working cooperatively in groups to seek solutions to real world problems. These problems are used to engage students' curiosity and initiate learning the subject matter. PBL prepares students to think critically and analytically, and to find and use appropriate learning resources."

"The information challenge of the '90s, driven by market demand, will be to liberate knowledge from data, empowering human skills and enabling productive action," Mr. D'Andrea said. "How can educators possibly train children for jobs not yet even imagined? By creating schools dedicated to developing life long learners capable of living, thinking and working successfully in a dynamic and unpredictable future."

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE FROM CAPE (COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION)

Loan Forgiveness for Teachers in Private Schools

Note from Nick Compagnone, KAIRS President: Loan forgiveness for college expenses will include teachers in private schools. This is a break through as the bill was stalled in the Senate with language not including private schools. See following article.

The House and Senate conference report on HR 2669 will include loan forgiveness for teachers in private schools. House and Senate Democrats recently released the text of the compromise bill, which modifies the definition of "public service" in Sec. 401 (Loan Forgiveness for Public Service) to include full-time employment "at an organization that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code." The bill also includes in the definition of "public service" full-time employment in "school-based library sciences and other school-based services." The expanded 501(c)(3) language covers employment in every nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.

Section 401 of the bill amends 20 USC 1087e, the Federal Direct Loan Program, by adding a college-loan cancellation provision for persons employed 10 years in a public service position. CAPE and its member organizations had objected to the definition of “public service” in the Senate version of the bill, which would have limited loan forgiveness to employees in publicly controlled institutions. A lot of work went into this issue by a number of our member organizations, and special thanks is due Ron Reynolds, the state CAPE leader in California, and Berna Mann, the state CAPE leader in Massachusetts, who both led grassroots efforts focused on Rep. George Miller (D-CA) and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA).

The bill provides what its sponsors call the “single largest investment in college financial aid since the GI Bill of 1944.” A legislative summary and the full text of the bill are available at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/>

TEACH Grants

Another provision in the bill that would affect teachers in some private schools is Section 104, TEACH Grants. This program provides upfront annual tuition assistance to eligible undergraduate and graduate students who pursue a career as teachers in certain public or private schools. Benefits include: (1) annual grants of \$4,000 (for a four-year total of \$16,000) to eligible undergraduate students who are studying to become teachers, and (2) up to \$8,000 for students studying to attain a graduate degree in teaching.

Recipients of the grants must agree to serve as a full-time teacher for at least four years in a public or nonprofit private elementary or secondary school located in a school district that receives Title I funds, as long as the school’s enrollment of students in poverty exceeds 30 percent (i.e., a school described in Sec 465(a)(2)(A) of the HEA (20 USC Sec. 1087ee(a)(2)).

Recipients must teach mathematics, science, a foreign language, bilingual education, or special education, or must be a reading specialist or serve in a field designated by a government agency as “high-need.”

Recipients must also comply with the requirements for being a “highly qualified teacher” as defined in Sec. 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

And to ensure that the grants go to recruit top-notch students, recipients must earn at least a 3.25 GPA or must score above the 75th percentile on a standard undergraduate or graduate admissions test.

Again, details on the bill are available at: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/>

Regards. Joe Tighe, CAPE President

IMPORTANT 2007-08 KAIRS DATES

General Meetings

October 2, Tuesday - 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Topeka

November 13 - 10 a.m.

April 8, 2008 - 10 a.m.

Annual Meeting

February 11 & 12, 2008, Topeka

Distinguished Teacher Nomination Dates

Catholics – Contact Dioceses superintendents

Lutherans – Submit nominations to Lutheran designee by November 2

ACSI Schools & Independent School (includes Seventh-day Adventists)–

Nominations to Shelli – November 2

December 3 – All submissions due to KAIRS/Shelli

Hall of Fame Nominations

December 1 – to Nick Compagnone

KAIRS 2007-08 OFFICERS

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nickcom@aol.com

Vice President: currently vacant

Secretary: Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita

Billdieckhoff@holycrosslutheran.net

Treasurer: David Swank, Trinity Academy, Wichita

swankd@trinityacademy.org

Annual Meeting Secretary: Shelli Kadel, Wichita Friends School

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