

September 2005

Welcome to 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](mailto:crkairs@yahoo.com).

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SEPTEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING REVIEW

Dr Mike Cook, ESSDACK Executive Director, is Featured Speaker.

The September 13 KAIRS quarterly general membership was held at St. Mary's Catholic parish hall in Salina. The morning portion of the meeting featured Mike Cook, Ed.D, executive director, Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK). Dr. Cook gave an overview of ESSDACK services and structure, explained its health care insurance program and demonstrated a new video conferencing software program his staff has recently developed.

ESSDACK began 24 years ago when six superintendents joined together to work together on staff development. What began with \$500 and one part-

time employee has now grown to 135 employees and a \$20 million budget. ESSDACK's membership consists of 52 entities: 43 public schools, two Catholic dioceses, three special education cooperatives and four ACCK (Associated Colleges of Western Kansas) colleges.

As a non-profit association, ESSDACK provides a host of services to its members including numerous staff development programs with curriculum and content specialists available in technology integration, math, reading, social studies and the like. Other services include software development and sales, copier leasing, on-line courses, grant writing assistance and the list continues. ESSDACK offers full and associate memberships, and training programs that also are available to non-members, but at a higher rate.

\*\*\*During the meeting there was discussion regarding the possibility of KAIRS joining ESSDACK. Dr. Cook proposed to discuss this with his Board of Directors. Please see below regarding the discussion Dr. Cook had with his Board.

Dr. Cook outlined the ESSDACK Health Insurance Group plan. Here is a brief summary:

- The plan is a self-insured group written on fully funded paper so that the privately funded insurance pays benefits until it reaches its threshold and then the insurance carrier (such as Blue Cross) takes over payments.

- From their Statement of Assurances: "The ESSDACK Health Insurance Group is dedicated to making available competitively priced health insurance coverage and encouraging participation in the health insurance program by ESSDACK member districts."

- Health insurance rates for the upcoming year have actually gone down.

Discussions followed as to the availability of the ESSDACK Health Insurance Group to KAIRS members.

Dr. Cook concluded with a demonstration of ESSDACK's newly developed Marratech video conferencing software, which travels over the commercial Internet network. While not as clear as the Polycom network, all that is required is a small camera, ear buds or a microphone, and access to the Internet in order to participating a conference. The download for the client is free and the video can be delivered to any location.

In order to broadcast a videoconference, ESSDACK system users lease a secure "seat," which the association makes available within their system. Each

seat costs \$3000 per year. A school does not have to be a member to purchase a seat. Dr. Cook offered KAIRS the opportunity to try out this system for a month at no charge.

### Business Meeting followed Dr. Cook's presentation.

Twenty-three members and guests attended the meeting in Salina. Following Dr. Cook's presentation, the business meeting was conducted.

-The minutes from last spring were approved.

-Bob Voboril presented an update on various public policy and other pertinent administrative issues. (Please see the Public Policy Section listed below.)

-Shelli Kadel and Nick Compagnone – Convention Co-Chairs – reported on the February 6/7 meeting. Currently, the Ramada Inn is the hotel planned for the event. Discussion followed as to desired speakers and possible conflicts with current dates.

-Any submissions for the KAIRS Hall of Fame are due November 15 to Nick Compagnone.

-Teachers of the Year for 2006 nominations are due on November 1 for ACSI (Warren Holmes) and Independent Schools (Chuck Castle). All winners are due to Shelli Kadel on December 2.

### ESSDACK BOARD APPROVES ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FOR KAIRS MEMBERS

Karen Norton, KAIRS President, provides this update, "I spoke with Mike Cook last week, and I am very pleased to report that Board of Directors for ESSDACK did approve that our groups could become associate members of ESSDACK." She continues, "I would advise each school to talk to Mike individually - those groups that are districts may be able to join as a district, but those who are individual schools (ACSI, Independents, etc) will need to join as an individual schools. This will allow our schools access to numerous professional development opportunities as well as other benefits. We will continue to discuss how KAIRS schools can become full members so that they can take advantage of all of ESSDACK's programs, including health insurance."

### CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DIOCESE OF WICHITA

Each year, the National Catholic Educational Association, through its Selected programs for Improving Catholic Education (SPICE) recognizes select Catholic school programs as exemplary. In this tenth year of SPICE's existence, the association wanted to recognize nine exemplary programs from the last 10 years.

The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Wichita have been recognized by SPICE twice - in 1998 and again in 2000. This year, SPICE selected the

Diocese of Wichita's stewardship program as one of the nine exemplary programs of the last decade. In the Diocese of Wichita's stewardship program, schools are funded as a mission of the entire Catholic parish, and therefore no grade school or high school tuition is charged to parents who are active stewards.

As skyrocketing tuition is leading to declining enrollments in many religious and independent schools around the country, more and more dioceses and churches are studying the Diocese of Wichita's stewardship way of life, where enrollment continues to increase modestly each year. Congratulations to the administrators, teachers, and families of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Wichita for being recognized as one of the best in the United States.

### **PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE**

From Bob Voboril During the September Meeting:

-The Special Education law was passed by Congress with the regulation that students now are supposed to be served in the district where they attend school. Be alert when you sign a form that indicates the amount of funds for special education for your students. This form contains only the minimum amount of federal dollars that the school district must expend on your school. The Kansas state law goes beyond the federal law and requires that every one of our children have an individual entitlement to services regardless of whether or not the federal minimum has been exceeded.

-In regard to Flex Benefits, the law has changed and you now have until March 15 to spend your flex funds.

-The law pertaining to students carrying EpiPens and inhalers has changed. Students in Kansas may carry these, with parental approval and a physician's permission. Additionally, you'll want to be sure that your immunization records are current because the laws have been updated as well.

-For our Catholic members, the Church strongly recommends that students be required to have the Rubella vaccine due to the potential danger posed to unborn children. For that reason, the Catholic Church does not recognize Kansas's religious exemption from immunization requirements.

-In Kansas, families could formerly be exempt from vaccinations for three reasons: physician exemption, religious exemption, and personal exemption. This law was changed 10 years ago, and the personal exemption was eliminated. Please check your records to make sure your families are up-to-date.

-In addition to an IEP, some of your students will now have an ISP (Individual

Service Plan) when they do not receive direct services.

-As a result of No Child Left Behind, all teachers at accredited schools will be need to be Highly Qualified. This includes at least one Fine Arts and one Physical Education teacher at the middle school level.

## HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF

(From Bob Voboril)

President Bush's Plan for Hurricane Katrina Relief includes \$488 million in emergency compensation to families of private school children.

President Bush recently addressed the nation and the victims of Hurricane Katrina on relief efforts and a national plan for recovery. The White House released a fact sheet that included a proposal to provide compensation to displaced families for enrollment in private, including parochial, schools. (See link to White House fact sheet, below.)

Secretary Margaret Spellings also released a fact sheet outlining the U.S. Department of Education's plan for "New Support for Families and Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina." The fact sheet provides additional information on the proposal for compensation to these displaced families. (See link to Department of Education fact sheet, below.)

The fact sheet states:

Communities in Louisiana significantly impacted by the hurricane had an above average number of children enrolled in private schools – 61,000 students of the over 187,000 total, in four severely impacted parishes. These significantly impacted Louisiana communities averaged 32% of students attending private K-12 schools – much higher than the 11% national average of private school students.

*In recognition of the fact that many families who have been displaced by the hurricane have already chosen to enroll their children in private schools, the Department of Education is proposing up to \$488 million to compensate families for the costs associated with attending these private schools. This emergency compensation would be in an amount up to 90% of the state's average per pupil expenditure through the 2005-06 school year, with a maximum annual payment of \$7,500 per child. These funds will also be subject to appropriate financial accountability measures.*

To view the U.S. Department of Education fact sheet on hurricane relief, visit <http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/0916-factsheet.pdf>.

To view the White House fact sheet on hurricane relief, visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050915-7.html>.

### KAIRS DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS 2006

The Distinguished Teachers Awards have become one of the highlights of our year. You should be receiving your submission forms shortly. We feature the Distinguished Teachers in our Annual Report and on the KAIRS Web page.

All nominees are due to Shelli Kadel by December 2. Nominations are due on November 1 for ACSI (Warren Holmes) and Independent Schools (Chuck Castle).

When submitting a photo of your winner, please take an excellent, digital close-up from the neck up, with a neutral background. Either color or black-and-white are fine, and please send it as a jpeg file to Corey Reese at [crkairs@yahoo.com](mailto:crkairs@yahoo.com).

### TEACHER TAX CREDIT

As we begin a new school year, it is an appropriate time for KAIRS administrators to remind their teachers of an important tax benefit in the federal tax code. Teachers may claim a tax credit of up to \$250 for out-of-pocket expenses spent for supplies and materials for their classroom. This benefit does expire December 31, 2005; so if any teacher has not spent at least \$250 from their own pocket and plans to do so for the second semester, they would have to spend the money in 2005 to claim the benefit.

### DUES DUE!

Just a reminder that if you haven't yet paid your KAIRS dues, please send them to David Swank – KAIRS Treasurer. Thanks!

### KAIRS CENSUS FORMS

Each year, KAIRS conducts a census of its membership and compiles it in a printed profile. This is extremely helpful information for our organization. The census forms will be sent out in the upcoming weeks. We are checking in to sending them electronically or posting them on our website as a download. Please look for them and then return them to Bob Voboril as soon as possible.

### IMPORTANT 2005-06 KAIRS DATES

Nov 1: KAIRS Executive Committee Meeting, The Independent School, 9 am.  
Nov. 8: General Membership Meeting, Topeka, 10 am  
Nov 15: Hall of Fame Nominations Due  
Dec 2: Distinguished Teachers 2006 Nominations Due to Shelli Kadel  
Feb 6-7: Annual Meeting, Topeka

### 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

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