A. Implementation of Arkansas Legislation During 2016-2017 School Year

**Act 1178**

On April 7, 2015, Act 1178 was approved during the Regular Session of the 90th General Assembly of Arkansas. This Act, known as The Succeed Scholarship Program, was established and intended to provide a scholarship to a private school of choice for students with disabilities that have an individualized education program (IEP) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Once passed, the Arkansas Department of Education was charged with establishing rules to implement the scholarship program. The legislature, in its 2016 Fiscal Session, approved an appropriation totaling up to $800,000 for the program beginning in the 2016-2017 school year with a 100 student limit. Currently, twenty schools have been approved to participate in the program with twenty-three students receiving scholarships.

B. Bills in the current 2017 Legislation

*The Regular Session of the 91st General Assembly convened on Monday, January 9, 2017. Over seventy bills have been introduced during this session of the Arkansas General Assembly that have direct ties to education, teachers, and students. The following bills are of special interest to Arkansas private schools as they impact the educational choices and opportunities of Arkansas families.*

**Senate Bill 112**

This bill would allow a state income tax deduction for qualifying education expenses for children in public schools, private schools, and home schools. Qualifying expenses would include tuition, uniforms, fees, curricula, textbooks, and school supplies. The deduction allowed would be equal to 50% of the qualifying expenses per child, up to a limit of $5,000.00 per child per tax year.

**House Bill 1056**

This bill would allow a family to request that their local Superintendent waive the 1-year public school attendance requirement in order to be eligible for the Succeed Scholarship Program. It is our understanding that this bill was filed in direct response to requests from families who wish to be eligible for the program.

**House Bill 1208**

This bill allows a homeschool or private school student to enroll in an academic course at a public school. In many areas, this is already being done, but this bill formalizes the process.

**House Bill 1222**

This bill creates an Education Savings Account program for the state. The program would allow families to obtain $6600 to pay for their child's nonpublic school expenses. The money could be applied towards private school tuition, homeschool curriculum, AP exams, higher education courses, tutoring or specific therapies. The money for the program would be obtained through tax credits.
1. Private School Teachers: Exempt Employee Status

California law has long required that in order to be deemed exempt employees, private school teachers must earn at least twice the state minimum wage on a monthly and annual basis. With the enactment of legislation that will incrementally boost the state minimum wage to $15.00/hr. by 2022, few private schools would be able to meet the minimum salary criterion. To address the problem, CAPSO sponsored AB 2230 (Chu), a bill that replaces the twice minimum wage requirement with a new salary threshold. Effective July 1, 2017, a private school teacher must earn the greater of the following:

(A) No less than 100 percent of the lowest salary offered by any school district to a person who is in a position that requires the person to have a valid California teaching credential and is not employed in that position pursuant to an emergency permit, intern permit, or waiver.

(B) The equivalent of no less than 70 percent of the lowest schedule salary offered by the school district or county in which the private elementary or secondary academic institution is located to a person who is in a position that requires the person to have a valid California teaching credential and is not employed in that position pursuant to an emergency permit, intern permit, or waiver.

AB 2230 was enacted on September 12, 2016.

CAPSO is now engaged in “clean up” legislation designed to address the status of part-time teachers, as well as the issue of timing, given that private school budgets are developed, and contracts executed well in advance of a new school year.

2. Current Legislation of Interest

SB 807 (Stern) – Proposes a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for expenses incurred through participation in professional teacher induction programs, as well as an exclusion from gross income for salaries earned by public school teachers with more than six years of service.

AB 927 (Levine) – Proposes a state appropriation of $10 million to be used to provide additional security for private institutions of education. By making the appropriation available to local government entities who would serve as stewards of the funds (and would, presumably, contract with local law enforcement agencies to furnish supplemental security), the bill attempts a “work around” to the state’s “Blaine Amendments.”

AB 10 (Garcia) – Would require the California Department of Education to provide public and private schools with an adequate supply of feminine hygiene products sufficient to meet the needs of all female pupils. The bill, authored by a Democrat, would, if un-amended, provide another challenge to the state’s “Blaine Amendments.”

AB 699 (O’Donnell) – Would prohibit discrimination (by educational institutions) on the basis of an individual’s immigration status.
Results of the 2016 Florida Legislature

A. **Convenience Fee (HB 145)** (Became Law 3/10/16)
   A convenience fee imposed upon a student or family paying tuition, fees, or other student account charges by credit card to a private school, as defined in s. 1002.01, is not considered to be a surcharge and is exempt from this section if the amount of the convenience fee does not exceed the total cost charged by the credit card company to the institution. Effective Date: 7/1/16

B. **The Gardiner Scholarship Program (SB672)** (Became Law 1/21/16)
   - Expands the disabilities included in the Personal Learning Scholarship Account (PLSA) Program to include high-risk 3 and 4 year olds and those with muscular dystrophy
   - Expands the definition of autism to autism spectrum disorder as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, published by the American Psychiatric Association
   - Increases the funding for this program from $53.4 million in 2015-16 to $73.3 million in 2016-17 to accommodate the potential increase in students participating in the program
   - Creates The Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program and Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities

C. **Education Programs for Individuals with Disabilities (HB 837)** (Became Law 3-25-16)
   1. The new law expands the John M. McKay Scholarship Program.
      - It allows private schools to establish a transition-to-work program consisting of academic instruction, work skills training, and a volunteer or paid work experience for John M. McKay Scholarship Program students.
      - It allows private school to receive funding for McKay Scholarship students who participate in the Transition-to-Work Program until the student reaches 22 years of age if the student has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of completion.

D. **Education (HB 7029)** (Signed into law on 4/14/16.)

**Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK)**
- Funding for VPK remains the same as last year.
- Changes the eligibility for VPK to include 4 and 5-yr olds. The child would remain eligible until he/she enters kindergarten or reaches the age of 6 by February 1 of any school year.
Florida High School Athletics (FHSAA) (Effective 7/1/16)

- Allows students in private schools with less than 125 students to participate at their zoned public high school, public middle school or a 6-12 public school if the private school is not a member of the FHSAA, regardless of whether the private school has an interscholastic or intrascholastic athletic program or not.
- The law requires that the FHSAA allow a transfer student to be immediately eligible to participate in athletics and be allowed to join an existing team if the roster has not reached the maximum size for the sport and if the coach determines that the student has the requisite skill and ability to participate. The FHSAA, the school district or the charter school may not declare such a student ineligible because the student did not have the opportunity to comply with the qualifying requirements.
- A transfer student may not participate in a sport if the student participated in the same sport at another school during that school year, unless the student is:
  1. Dependent child of an active duty military personnel whose move resulted from military orders.
  2. Foster children who were relocated by placement in a different school zone.
  3. Children who were moved by court-order.
- A district school board, charter school boards and private school boards must establish, through its code of student conduct, student eligibility standards and related student discipline and safety regarding student participation in interscholastic and intrascholastic extracurricular activities.
- Recruiting violations by a school district employee or contractor shall result in escalating fines.
- A recruited student who participated in an activity shall cause the school, team or activity to forfeit all competitions or honors in which the student participated.
- Requires the FHSAA to allow a private school the option of maintaining full membership in the association or joining by sport and may not discourage a private school from simultaneously maintaining membership in another athletic association.
- The FHSAA may allow a public school the option to apply for consideration to join another athletic association.

E. Child Care Block Grant Bill (HB 7053) (Signed into law on 4/14/16.)

- Adds Office of Early Learning to the list of agencies eligible to use information from the central abuse hotline for employment screening of licensed child care facilities and providers of school readiness programs.
- All employees, future candidates for employment and all volunteers will now be required to undergo a state and federal background screening.
- Removes exemptions for current employees or prospective employees in a school readiness program who have a criminal history for specific crimes relating to violence and crimes against minors.
- Allows information in the central hotline to be used for employment screening.
- Repeals s.302.3057 eliminating the exemption for those fingerprinted under chapters 393, 394, 402, 409 and for those who were fingerprinted pursuant to
chapter 1012 who had not been unemployed for more than 90 days to submit fingerprints for a state and federal background screening.

- Prior to employment each employer must attempt to contact every employer within the preceding 5 years and document the findings.
- Requires inspections for health and safety standards. Requires that monitoring and inspection reports, along with the number of deaths, serious injuries and substantiated child abuse incidents in the facility and other information be made available electronically to the public.
- Amends the licensing inspection section (s.402.311 F.S.) to include school readiness providers and requires that unlicensed providers allow the state or local licensing agency access to facilities, personnel, and records, in order to inspect and ensure compliance with s. 1002.88.
- Requires the Office of Early Learning to coordinate with DCF and local agencies to conduct inspections of school readiness providers and terminate participation for any provider that refuses permission for entry to inspect.
- Eligibility for a school readiness program now includes children whose parent(s) is in attendance at a job training or educational program.
- Includes grants to school readiness providers for certain training and technical assistance.
- Allows a child to remain in school readiness program for 3 months after the child no longer qualifies in order to allow the parent to find employment.

Creates a Clearinghouse for Information Relating to persons with unique abilities.

- The Department of Health is required to create a comprehensive information clearinghouse to educate health care providers, inform parents, and increase public awareness regarding brain development, developmental disabilities and delays, and all services, resources, and interventions available to mitigate the effects of impaired development among children.
- The clearinghouse shall provide information to the public regarding the availability of supportive services, such as resource centers, educational programs, other support programs for parents and families, and developmental evaluation and intervention services.
ILLINOIS STATE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES: In the past few years, the Illinois state government has experienced great financial shortfalls. At this time, there is no budget in place at the state level, which has negative effects on state programming. Changes have already been made in the Illinois State Board of Education with new leadership in the Recognition department. For the eighth consecutive year, three programs that gave some financial support to public and nonpublic schools have not been funded. These programs were the Textbook Block Grant, the ADA Block Grant and The Parent Transportation Program. Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) along with ICNS worked with Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to reshape the Textbook Loan Program into the Textbook Block Grant for the sake of efficient distribution. This work remains in place in the hope of restored funding in 2017. ICNS legislative goals for the current Spring Legislative Session are: 1) Work to restore funding to the Textbook Block Grant, Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant and the Parent/Guardian Transportation Reimbursement programs; 2) Keep up- to- date with a view to support school choice options such as tax credits and vouchers as opportunities exist; and 3) Be aware of any legislation, rules, or regulations associated with early childhood education so ICNS can respond appropriately. ICNS has again contracted with a lobbyist who will continue to promote our ICNS initiatives in partnership with the Catholic Conference of Illinois lobbyist.

EFFORTS WITH THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (ISBE): A fourth ICNS goal is to work with the ISBE to maintain a smooth and cooperative relationship between the State Board of Education and nonpublic schools to ensure an effective state school recognition process for nonpublic schools. In the past years, ISBE decided to correct the backlog of recognition visits of nonpublic schools. ISBE conducted training for evaluators who worked as independent contractors to conduct state recognition visits of nonpublic schools. Much progress was made in the backlog. This year, new visits are already being scheduled based on a consistent 5-year visitation schedule.

SCHOOL CHOICE INITIATIVE: ICNS has been active in the formation of a new statewide coalition working to advance school choice options in Illinois. The coalition is led by a group known as Educational Choice Illinois and their campaign coalition is called Illinois Kids Campaign. This effort has brought together the major school choice organizations in the state with an attempt to expand outreach into the business community. Educational Choice Illinois has hired an Executive Director to lead this work. The truth is that until there is a broader coalition organized and engaged, school choice efforts are outnumbered in Springfield. Broader political, business and grassroots support is needed to assist in the efforts to make school choice in Illinois a reality.

Submitted by Arlene Friedman, ICNS Treasurer
**Legislative Update**

On March 1 Indiana’s General Assembly hit the midpoint of the 2017 Legislative session (crossover). This session has had its share of inconsequential overreach bills that would not only impact public schools but state accredited non-public schools as well. Those bills include: curriculum bills involving Indiana history and citizenship, cursive writing, bills on school calendars and report cards, bills on expanded background checks, and bills on financial transparency. More significant bills on expanding preschool education and revising the state assessment have also been discussed and have moved through the first house. We are also hoping to expand the statewide scholarship tax credit cap from 9.5 million to 12.5 million dollars. Indiana has a biennial budget, so this is a long session. Here’s to hoping that substantive bills advance and the minuita bills die in committee. Our legislative defensive posture has never been more important as some legislators continue to attempt to regulate non-public schools more and more.

**Catapult Pilot**

INPEA is spearheading a pilot process with Catapult Learning to assist lower performing voucher schools. Five pilot schools were selected and have undergone Phase I of the Pilot, which included an extensive onsite program evaluation. Through the generosity of Catapult and outside funders, Phase I of the pilot was made available to schools at no cost. The Pilot is now moving into Phase II where schools are creating school improvement plans based on the evaluation recommendations. The Intervention phase could include things like leadership and instructional coaching, teacher professional development, and training on testing data interpretation and usage. We are pursuing third party funders to combine with ESSA Title Program dollars and school operational dollars to fund Phase II. It is our hope this intervention program will be replicable in Indiana and in other state with choice programs.

**Early Learning**

INPEA serves schools/programs from pre-K – 12. Historically, our value added for pre-K members has been sorely lacking. As Indiana looks to expand state funded preschool, INPEA has recommitted to its service to our pre-K membership. We have added an early learning seat to our board and have established an early learning committee from the board. We are focused on finding, with the various entities currently supporting early learning, where INPEA’s most
helpful niche is to support its members. INPEA received a grant to add a part time staff position so that existing staff could better focus on membership services with a particular emphasis on early learning members.

**Strategic Planning**
During this past year INPEA went through a strategic planning process with its board and we continue to focus on implementation and monitoring efforts. Our three main areas of focus are advocacy, professional development and INPEA advancement efforts.

**State Superintendent of Public Instruction**
Indiana elects its State Superintendent of Public Instruction, one of only 11 states nationally. The incumbent was defeated in November and the new Superintendent took office in January. With the change in Superintendent, there comes a significant change in IDOE staff as well. This means INPEA has much to do to reintroduce and reeducate IDOE staffers on the role of INPEA, as well as a general orientation to the non-public school community. The 2017 General Assembly has been considering bills that would shift the position to an appointed one.

**ESSA Implementation**
Indiana seems to be moving forward well with ESSA implementation. Indiana has appointed an ombudsman and we have met and plan to meet on an ongoing basis. The new administration has committed to continuing our Non-Public School Advisory Committee and the Federal Programs Coordinator has agreed to a joint webinar training on ESSA changes for non-public schools for both public and non-public school leaders.

**AFC Summit in Indy**
The American Federation for Children is holding its National Summit in Indianapolis on May 22nd & 23rd. AFC has worked out a group discount and educator’s discount as well. Great time to come to Indy!

Respectfully submitted,

John F. Elcesser
Executive Director, INPEA
Year of Political Change Saw Alternate Accreditation Move Forward, Professional Development Continue to Excel and Tax Credit Program Expand

The 2016 elections reflected the desire for change, both nationally and in the state of Kansas. Whatever these changes bring, KAIRS will continue to advocate for its more than 140 member independent and religious schools, 35,000 students, more than 2,000 full-time teachers and 22,000 families.

This past year, KAIRS was pleased to participate in both the exciting headway that was made on the long-standing state issue of alternative accreditation and the high quality professional development it was able to provide for administrators and teachers.

Since the early 2000s, KAIRS has worked diligently with state officials on an accreditation model that satisfied state requirements while still allowing independent and religious schools to maintain their unique and diverse missions.

In 2016, the Kansas State Department of Education’s Accreditation Advisory Council created a new accreditation model that should permit private religious and independent schools to be accredited through AdvanceED.

While many details have not been finalized, Dr. Nick Compagnone, KAIRS President and Dr. Nancy Bolz, AdvanceED Kansas State Director, are to be commended for their continued diligence and patience with the process. For additional information about alternate accreditation, please read Dr. Compagnone’s column, “From the President.”

Professional Development

Once again in 2016, KAIRS provided outstanding professional development opportunities for administrators and teachers. Thanks to a federal grant, KAIRS has offered workshops and conferences with nationally and regionally renowned presenters at an affordable cost.

Annual Administrator Conference

The year began with the Annual Administrator Conference, February 8-9, in Topeka. Keynote Dr. Randy Watson, Kansas Commissioner of Education, and featured speaker Davis Laughlin who highlighted the importance of a positive school culture. A panel discussion with members of the Kansas State Board of Education was another highlight of the conference.

Invited speakers for the 2016 Administrator Conference included (left to right) keynote speaker Dr. Randy Watson, Kansas Commissioner of Education, and featured speaker Davis Laughlin who highlighted the importance of a positive school culture.
Year of Change and Expansion

the importance of a positive school culture and encouraged administrators to stay current in their careers.

Adrienne Runnebaum, Director of Tax Credits, Catholic Education Foundation (CEF), provided clarity on Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) in Kansas.


A highlight for the 2016 conference was a panel discussion with six members of the Kansas State Board of Education. Steve Roberts (District 2) also attended both days of the KAIRS conference as a guest.

Continuing a long-time tradition, several Kansas legislators participated in an early morning give-and-take session. Senator Steve Abrams (Arkansas City), Senate Education Committee Chair, and Representatives Steven Johnson (Assaria) and Ron Highland (Wamego), House Education Committee Chair, were present.

Early Childhood Education Workshop

The 5th Annual KAIRS Early Childhood Education Workshop featured a new partnership with Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO). The two groups came together with Kansas Wesleyan University, who hosted the event, for the March 19 all-day event.

KCCTO trainer, Bernie Koppel (standing), answered attendee questions during her presentation at the Early Childhood Education Workshop.

Featuring the theme “Preparing Students for the Next Level,” KCCTO Trainer, Bernie Koppel, led more than 40 early childhood educators as she presented two courses, “Play: Problems and Interventions” and “Process and Art Creation.”

K-12 Summer Teachers Conference

KAIRS partnered with the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson to host the 2016 K-12 Teachers Conference “Science, Tech & Cosmic Curricula.” On August 1-2, more See Year of Change and Expansion, page 3

From the President

values, caring teachers and supportive community.

To ensure the academic excellence schools offer and values, caring teachers and supportive community.

To ensure the academic excellence schools offer and to remain accountable, public and private schools engage in an accreditation process. In the early days of KAIRS, accreditation was limited and receiving accreditation from the state of Kansas was not an option.

However, in the early 1990s, school accountability became a main focus across the nation. Public schools utilized Quality Performance Assessments (QPA) and then came No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These specific changes had consequences for accreditation of many private schools.

For the past 12 years, KAIRS has worked with closely with the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and alternative accrediting bodies to discuss co-accreditation. All parties were hopeful to agree on a model that would satisfy state requirements, allow religious and independent schools to maintain their unique and diverse missions and eliminate duplicating accreditation procedures.

In 2016, the KSDE Accreditation Advisory Council created a new accreditation model, the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA), which was later approved by the State Board of Education. The model allows protocols from AdvancED, a national accrediting agency, to meet requirements for state accreditation. Details are still being hammered out but the recognition of AdvancED opens the door for private schools to maintain their own autonomy and accountability by going through an approved alternative accreditation agency.

It is essential to safeguard the parents’ right to choose an education for their children that is consistent with their beliefs. Accreditation that validates a school’s mission, academic standards, and culture helps accomplish that goal. The rich and diverse landscape of educational variety in Kansas is important and that includes private education. After all, Independent and Religious Schools are Good for Parents, Good for Students and Good For Kansas!

Timeline – Process for Adoption of Alternative Accreditation for Non-Public Schools

In 2004, representatives of KAIRS, North Central Accreditation (NCA) and the Commissioner of Education for KSDE (Dr. Andy Tompkins) began discussions about co-accreditation. At that time, NCA accredited many of the private schools in the state of Kansas.

In 2006, AdvancED was formed at the national level, consolidated with NCA and partnered with many independent and religious schools in Kansas. Discussions continued with KSDE, AdvancED and KAIRS.

In 2011, KAIRS proposed a co-accreditation agreement with AdvancED to the State Board of Education. The board recommended that KAIRS work with KSDE staff to establish such an agreement. KAIRS participated in the KSDE Accreditation Advisory Council meetings along with representatives from AdvancED.

In 2016, the Accreditation Advisory Council created a new accreditation model, the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA). The model allows protocols from AdvancED, a national accrediting body, to meet requirements for state accreditation. In October 2016 the State Board of Education approved the KEASA framework. Recognition of AdvancED opens the door for private schools to maintain autonomy and accountability by going through an alternative accreditation agency, which was recognized by the state of Kansas.

— Nick Compagnone, Ph.D., KAIRS President

KAIRS Schools: Good for Students, Families and the State of Kansas
than 75 teachers from across the state came to hear keynote speaker, Janet Ivey, founder and CEO of Janet's Planet.

Breakout speakers included Mimi Meredith and Brad Nuest, Cosmosphere faculty, and Traci Kallhoff from Exploration Place. The meeting featured inspirational presentations and numerous hands-on activities for teachers to use in their classrooms.

**Public Policy**

Tax Credit for Low Income
Students Scholarship Program
Continues to Grow

In the 2016-17 school year, 118 students were awarded scholarships totaling $318,318. Since the program began in January 2015, 297 student scholarships have been awarded, totaling $588,972. There are currently seven Scholarship Granting Organizations in Kansas and 90 participating schools.

Contributions in the 2016 tax year totaled $790,000, with $553,000 in tax credits. Beginning in 2015, $1,566,000 contributions have been received with $1,096,200 earned in tax credits.

(Information from the Legislative Report 2017) [http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/School%20Finance/Action%20Items/Legislative%20Report%20January%202017%20%20TCLISSP.pdf](http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/School%20Finance/Action%20Items/Legislative%20Report%20January%202017%20%20TCLISSP.pdf)

**Issues to Watch in 2017**

School Choice at the Federal Level

The president's proposal would add an additional federal investment of $20 billion toward school choice - done by reprioritizing existing federal dollars.

Three Considerations:

- Give states the option to allow these funds to follow the student to the public or private school they attend. Most likely, recipients of this grant will be from states that have school choice, magnet schools or charter laws.
- Establish the national goal of providing school choice to each of the 11 million school-aged children living in poverty.
- If the states collectively contribute another $110 billion of their own education dollars toward school choice, on top of the $20 billion in federal dollars, this could provide $12,000 in school choice funds to every K-12 student who today lives in poverty.

**KSHSAA Reclassification of Private Schools**

A Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) reclassification study has been presented to the KSHSAA Executive Board and will be voted upon in April 2017. Concerns have been expressed by a majority of schools that there is not an equitable formula in deciding classification for high school activities.

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**Terry Tilson Inducted as 11th Member of KAIRS Hall of Fame**

Terry Tilson will be inducted as the 11th member of the KAIRS Hall of Fame at the 2017 Hall of Fame Banquet, February 13. As the Superintendent of Berean Academy for the past 23 years, Terry has provided faithful, consistent, compassionate and forward-thinking leadership while continually exhibiting the highest level of integrity and commitment to his Christian faith. He also previously served his school as a teacher, counselor and coach, beginning in 1973.

In addition to his outstanding service to Berean Academy, Terry has been a visible advocate for private education, with his influence felt throughout Kansas and beyond. For the past 20-plus years, he has served in leadership positions for both the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) - as chair of a regional accreditation commission and a member of numerous accreditation teams - and KAIRS - as the Christian School representative on the Executive Committee.

A native of Kansas, Terry and his wife, Connie, have been married for 42 years. They have three daughters and eight grandchildren. Read more about Terry at the Hall of Fame page on the KAIRS website, [http://kairs.org/honors/hall-of-fame/](http://kairs.org/honors/hall-of-fame/).

**KAIRS Hall of Fame**

KAIRS Hall of Fame ([www.kairs.org](http://www.kairs.org)) is where KAIRS honors its outstanding educators who have made life-long contributions to independent and religious schools in Kansas. These educators have given extraordinary service to a KAIRS member school (or a series of schools) during their career as educators.

**Founders:**

- Vincent DeCoursey (1917-1991)
- Robert Eggold
- James Thiessen
- Bunny Hill
- Karen Norton
- Jean Ross

**Year of Change and Expansion, Continued from Page 2**

- 2005:
- 2006:
- 2007:
- 2010:
- 2013:
- 2017:

- Edward Bierbaum
- Keith Jopp
- Suze Anne Norton
- Larry Daugherty
- Terry Tilson

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**KAIRS 2016 Distinguished Teachers**

KAIRS 2016 Distinguished Teachers were recognized at the 2016 Hall of Fame Banquet. (From left) Robin Kneifl, Independent Schools; Donna Mans, Diocese of Wichita; Cindy Ritz, Diocese of Dodge City; Sandra Nelson, Lutheran Schools.

**KAIRS 6th Annual Early Childhood Education Workshop**

**Fostering Readiness in Early Childhood**

**MARCH 18, 2017**

KANSAS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
SALINA, KANSAS

**Registration Begins February 3**
KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2017

Christian Schools

Duane Cilke is a talented, kindhearted high school English teacher at Maranatha Academy, Shawnee, who brings more than 40 years experience as an executive pastor, academic administrator and teacher. He is fervent about his students mastering English, but also in helping character development – by mentoring and in small groups. In 2017-18, he will use that passion as he becomes the Bible Department Chair.

“His love for his students and their lives is quickly evident, even sharing his heart through tears to parents, as he conveys his desire to mold hearts and minds to be disciples of Christ as they learn the subject of English,” said Susan Hanson, Secondary Principal, Maranatha Academy.

Mr. Cilke attained his B.A. in education from Evangel University (1967) and his M.Ed. from Western Illinois University (1972).

Lutheran Schools

Rebecca Denney teaches fifth-eighth grades with great joy at St. Paul Lutheran School, Leavenworth. For the past 25 years her students have trusted and confided in her as she tutors them after school, constructs interactive science experiments and creates enjoyable, but still “meaty” chapels.

Outside the classroom, she has been the yearbook sponsor and has assisted in large tasks including textbook adoption and curriculum alignment.

“No day she comes in with a smile and goes above and beyond in the classroom,” said Terry Braun, Principal, St. Paul Lutheran School. “I admire the hours she puts in, the effort and how she models what it really means to be a Christian leader.”

Mrs. Denney received her bachelor’s degree in education from Concordia Lutheran College, Austin, TX. (1992)

Diocese of Dodge City

Robin Doll is a beloved kindergarten/first grade teacher at St. Joseph Catholic School, Ellinwood. For the past 22 years, she has brought the latest curriculum concepts to a student friendly, attractive and well-organized classroom.

Mrs. Doll is also careful to pay attention to her young students’ strengths and needs, and is quick to attain assistance, should it be needed.

“After teaching for 22 years, you might expect that Mrs. Doll just recycles old ideas,” said Marlene Clayton, Principal, St. Joseph Catholic School, KAIRS Distinguished Teacher 2015. “That’s not the case for Robin. She is constantly searching various Internet resources for new ideas. Students have fun while learning with Mrs. Doll’s latest finds.”

Mrs. Doll earned an associate degree from Barton Community College (1991) and a bachelor’s degree from Newman University (1994).

Diocese of Salina

Cindy Curran began her 27-year tenure at St. Mary’s Catholic Grade School in Salina in 1987. At her retirement in 2014, she was beloved by students and faculty. With her creative curriculum for sixth/seventh grade science, she created an interactive lab setting for her classroom, Junk Box Wars and the Science Olympiad Competition.

Her strong faith also meshed naturally with her delightful sense of humor as she routinely wrote entertaining, faith-filled scripts to celebrate annual Catholic School Week.

“I think what makes Cindy so special is that she is just so much fun to be around. Her students knew that too,” said Cindy Compagno, kindergarten teacher, St. Mary’s Catholic School, who nominated Mrs. Curran. “She is a one-in-a-kind person as well as a teacher.”

Mrs. Curran graduated from Marymount College, Salina (1985).

Independent Schools

Virginia Kehoe has taught Latin with excellence at Wichita Collegiate since 1979 and is a student favorite. Beginning with seventh graders, she instills a love of the language as she skillfully guides her students who hold her in the highest regard. In 2016, her students received more than 50 awards on the National Latin Exam.

“Virginia has had a positive impact on every student she has taught,” said Chris Ashbrook, Head of Upper School, Wichita Collegiate. “While Virginia is kind, gentle, and soft spoken, her intelligence, quick wit and tireless work ethic make her a tenacious teacher.”

Ms. Kehoe earned a B.A. in Latin from Mount Holyoke College, MA, (1965), a master’s degree in classical studies from the University of Cincinnati, OH (1967) and a degree in Latin from Bryn Mawr College, PA (1971).

Diocese of Wichita

Sister Mary Clare Johnson has gracefully elevated her students’ lives and spirits since 2002 at St. Peter the Apostle Catholic School, Schulte. As the sixth-eighth grade religion teacher and a sixth grade homeroom teacher, her curriculum integrates increasing her students’ knowledge of faith with opportunities for stewardship.

Additionally, St. Mary Clare makes it a priority to know her students personally and also assists with their learning needs and organization skills.

“When you walk into Sister’s classroom, you instantly become smarter because her entire classroom is filled with visual lessons. Sister Mary Clare is not only teaching tangible facts, she is teaching her students how to ‘live their faith,’” said Brenda Hickok, Principal, St. Peter’s.

St. Mary Clare received her B.A. in elementary education from St. Mary’s College, Salina (2002).

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.
Kentucky State CAPE Report
February 27, 2017

For the first time in 90 years, Republicans now control the Senate, House, and Governorship. A bill has already passed to allow Charter Schools (Kentucky was only 1 of 7 states that did not have them) and legislation is pending (Senate Bill 102 and House Bill 162) that would allow Scholarship Tax Credits.

A very successful School Choice rally was held at the State Capitol in Frankfort in February with over 500 in attendance representing a wide variety of School Choice groups. The Governor has his own children in private school and education is a priority for him.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Greener
Kentucky CAPE State Rep.
2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT

2016 Legislative Session Recap – BOOST!
The second legislative session of Governor Larry Hogan was a remarkable one that saw Maryland finally crack the list of “school choice states” after many years of legislative failures trying to pass a school choice bill. 2016 was the year of BOOST (Broadening Opportunities and Options for Students Today), a scholarship grant program for low income students, featuring a brand new allocation of $5 million. This grant program, coupled with the level-funded textbook/technology program and aging schools grant program, set a new record of $15 million in state aid to nonpublic schools.

Upon session’s end the implementation of the BOOST program became a large focus for MDCAPE and friends to ensure that the program rolled out effectively and providing benefit to the maximum number of students. Nearly 2,500 students – all of whom were eligible for free/reduced school lunch – were awarded scholarships, an average of $2,000 per student.

By year’s end, Governor Hogan was so pleased with the program’s rollout and its statewide popularity that he undertook an initiative to double the funding from $5 million to $10 million over a three-year period, with an additional $2 million for 2017.

Erin’s Law: In addition to the nonpublic school funding pieces, another important bill relevant to nonpublic schools that passed with MDCAPE support was “Erin’s Law” – focusing on sexual abuse awareness and prevention training in nonpublic schools. “Erin’s Law” requires schools to implement child sexual abuse protection curriculum into their health related studies. MDCAPE lobbied to allows each school to implement the curriculum according to its own philosophies and sensitivities.

MDCAPE ESSA Seminar
In mid-January 2017, MDCAPE held a statewide seminar to train nonpublic school administrators to be proficient in the new ESSA federal education law. Approximately 100 school administrators attended the seminar - which was led by Michelle Doyle and sponsored by Catapult - to learn of the many changes made in the reauthorization process. The program also featured a legislative forecast and updates on all things nonpublic school related in Maryland.

Start of the 2017 Legislative Session
As of this writing, the MD legislature is just past the midpoint of the 2017 session.

The notable success of the BOOST program in its inaugural season, coupled with Governor Hogan’s pride in finally getting school choice going in Maryland, made the hopeful renewal and expansion of BOOST become the number one item on the 2017 legislative agenda for the nonpublic schools. For the first time in a decade we did not pursue a scholarship tax credit bill, and put our focus on protecting the BOOST program and the Governor’s additional $2 million allocation in the state budget.

The first round of budget hearings in both House and Senate to uphold the funding allocation took place in late January. The committee debates on the funding will commence sometime in March.

Opponents to nonpublic school funding who felt humiliated when BOOST was created under their noses last year have put out several different bills, all of which seek to tie up the funds for nonpublic schools and prevent access to these programs. One bill has been introduced to force nonpublic schools to adapt an expanded slate of unprecedented anti-discrimination policies (including religion, sex, age, disability, gender identity, etc.) in school admission, retention, and employment. Another bill would require any BOOST participating schools to create special education programs in their schools. For many schools, this already exists and is feasible, for others, it is simply not an option, and is not even necessary. We are working diligently to ensure these bills are defeated.
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MANS)
MARCH 2017 CAPE REPORT

MANS EVENTS

• Public Policy Day – On March 9th over 130 MANS’ member administrators came to the Capitol to meet with key legislators in the morning on a variety of issues impacting non-public schools that are discussed below. The afternoon will consist of policy sessions including some time on ESSA, teacher evaluations and criminal background checks.

• MANS Administrators’ Conference – Go Boldly is scheduled to take place at Mackinac Island on October 11-13, 2017. Over 200 faith-based administrators from across the state will come to this professional development conference where they will be inspired and challenged to make their schools the best they can be.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

• Shared Time – is a State of Michigan program that allows for public and non-public schools to partner on eligible non-core elective classes (including Advanced Placement courses) such as but not limited to art, music, PE, modern language, media, computers, and other similar courses. The core of the program allows for a public school district to collect state revenues (FTE) for non-public school students attending mutually agreed upon eligible classes, noted above. The public school can collect the FTE by hiring eligible teachers and taking budget responsibility for their salary and benefits. Repeating a failed effort from last year, he Governor’s FY2018 budget caps the amount reimbursable to a shared time provider at $60 million, roughly a 50% cut in expenditures. The proposed cap is largely unworkable and given the timing would chill the ability of a public school district to offer shared time programming. It is a program that is currently saving MANS member schools tens of millions of dollars. Elimination of this language from the final K-12 state appropriations budget will be a focus of the early legislative session.

• Mandate Reimbursement – MANS is working again this year to secure language in the FY 2018 budget for an appropriation to reimburse non-public schools for health and safety mandates. Last year’s budget included a $2.5 million appropriation for these costs. Governor Snyder signed the budget and requested the Michigan Supreme Court to opine on its constitutionality, which it refused to do. The Executive budget did not include this appropriation. MANS is recommending reinstatement of $2.5 million for this year’s budget cycle.
• **FIRST ROBOTICS** - The State has been encouraging expanded opportunities for all students in science education skills by assisting school districts to participate in events and competitions in FIRST Robotics and Science Olympiad. Grant funds have been available to provide financial support for coaching, materials, and travels expenses related to these programs. However, those funds are restricted to public schools only. These are skills in which all students in Michigan should be encouraged to excel. These are typically extracurricular activities and not part of core curriculum. MANS is recommending that language be included in the FY 2018 budget to allow nonpublic schools to be eligible to compete for the $2.5 million appropriated for grants to support the FIRST Robotics program, and for Science Olympiad, should that program be reinstated.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian D. Broderick, Executive Director
Michigan Association of Non-public Schools
There is always something going on in the Mississippi independent school world, and sports-related events often take the spotlight. February ends and March begins with the Overall soccer and basketball championships and All-star events, which wind up months-long boys' soccer and boys' and girls' basketball seasons. Soon, track and field events, golf, tennis, baseball, and archery will be the foci of attention. Also, two Mississippi schools' teams will compete against teams from Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina in the SECIS (Southeastern Commission of Independent Schools) golf competition in Atlanta, GA. SECIS is a new joint venture of AISA, GISA, MAIS, and SCISA to provide interstate athletic and academic competitions for their member schools.

Other state-wide student competitions, recently concluded, include Spelling Bee and Quiz Bowl. March competitions include the Overall Science Fair and Art Competition.

Of course, independent schools are not all fun and games. At least, not all games. MAIS (Mississippi Association of Independent Schools) recently hosted its association student council and honor society convention. Keynote speakers included Sarah Thomas, the first female referee in the NFL, and the Honorable Justice Jim Kitchens of the Mississippi State Supreme Court. MAIS has also hosted multiple professional development activities this year. Recent events have included specialty training for early childhood educators, admissions officers, guidance counselors, and board members. March training events include more board member training sessions and the popular worldview conference for teachers and administrators.

Accrediting teams from MAIS have been putting to use its new Accreditation Portal, which facilitates the accreditation process for both schools and external review teams. The Portal, as well as the new partnership between MAIS and AdvancED/CASI, focus schools on on-going improvement rather than the old tick-the-box format. Schools accredited by MAIS are now automatically accredited by AdvancED/CASI through the partnership agreement. Three well-established schools from the Diocese of Jackson joined MAIS this year, the first Catholic schools in the Association.

MAIS is also in the beginning stages of partnering with other independent school associations in the Southeast to create a buying consortium to maximize the buying power of schools in their memberships.

Several "School Choice" initiatives—including so-called "Education Savings Accounts" and an expansion of a state-funded dyslexia scholarship—were introduced into the Mississippi Legislature this session, none of which have survived. A revenue bill to allow tax credits also died in committee.
Minnesota Independent School Forum

Minnesota is pleased to report a very successful year with a highly active and engaged membership.

- During the past year, a record number of participants came to the STEM Education and School Leadership Conferences with more than 370 educators and school leaders attending these two events.
- Nearly 150 schools participated in the 2015 Statewide Census of Private Education (SCOPE) study. This effort is a comprehensive research project focused on independent and private education in Minnesota. ([http://misf.org/scope-study/](http://misf.org/scope-study/))
- More than 85% of our member schools engaged in at least one of our offerings during the year and nearly 40% of our cohort accessed more than 3 offerings or resources during the year
- $130,000 in STEM grants were distributed to 33 schools to fund hands-on projects in member schools across Minnesota.
- Through our Opportunity for All Kids (OAK) coalition, significant progress is being made toward enhancing educational choice in Minnesota. The Equity and Opportunity tax Credit Scholarship has passed out of committee in the house and will be heard in the Senate in the coming weeks. There is greater awareness and progress during this session than in years past.
NEBRASKA:
State CAPE Report, February 2017

I. State Legislature:

A. School Choice languishes in 2016: Yet another session in the unicameral drew to a close without a private school choice law of which to boast.

- Once again, the Revenue Committee failed to advance our tax-credit scholarship bill to the floor for full debate by the Legislature. The bill’s sponsor lacked the necessary energy and enthusiasm to work the Committee in support, and the short session in an even-number year doomed the bill to legislative limbo in relative short order.

B. School Choice Hope for 2017: However, we are optimistic about the landscape for this upcoming Legislature.

- A coalition has once again rallied behind a new, similar version of the tax-credit scholarship bill in 2017. A diverse local coalition helped organize a second-annual school choice rally at the Capitol during National School Choice Week, and the tax-credit scholarship bill’s Committee hearing took place on the same day shortly after the Rally. There is a growing internal recognition that tax-credit scholarships are the “lowest-hanging fruit” in the school choice landscape in Nebraska, and thus prior charter-only advocates have become proponents of our bill, without requiring private school stakeholders to commit to similar support for future charter bills. This year, the bill is being sponsored by the chairman of the Revenue Committee, where it likely has majority support for the first time in its history. However, the Committee has yet to take a vote on the measure.

- There is a significant need to educate likely supporters on the distinctive characteristics of tax-credit scholarships and how they (a) save state and local dollars with the use of private funds, (b) provide real, needed choice for low-income families, while (c) not compromising the identities of private religious schools.

- A new, Omaha-area state senator also introduced a private-school voucher bill for students in the lowest-performing public schools in Nebraska. The bill has helped start a discussion about the fact that not all public schools in our state are “just swell,” as it were, and that not all parents who desire it can afford private school for their children. The voucher bill will likely languish in an evenly split Education Committee, but the enthusiastic sponsoring senator (who also co-sponsored our tax-credit scholarship bill) and the burgeoning public discussion on key private school issues provides hope for the near future.

II. State Board of Education:

A. Textbook Loan Program:

- After much wrangling, the State Board of Education agreed to update the state’s regulation governing our Textbook Loan Program to ensure that it includes digital and bundled materials frequently used by public school districts. However, some public school districts have taken a
restrictive interpretation of the new language and are making implementation burdensome on a number of private-school administrators.

B. Private School Ombudsman:

- The State Board continues to drag its feet in creating and designating a private-school ombudsman for purposes of carrying out the new requirements of ESSA. We are continuing to communicate with the Board about the importance of this position and the need to have a highly qualified, experienced individual established in the position as soon as possible.

III. Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA):

Targeting private schools for alleged discrimination based on special education, financial status:

- The NSAA is again stirring controversy by purporting to correct a private-public imbalance in high school athletic “success.” Thus, this de facto public body is proposing to require schools that enjoy sustained athletic success to move up in classification – but only if such schools have a relatively low number of students receiving special education services from public schools, and only if such schools have a relatively low number of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch.

- In effect, the policy perpetuates the stereotype that private, religious schools educate only the wealthy and the elite – and that such factors are the sine qua non to their disproportionately consistent athletic success.

- A coalition of private schools is responding in kind, with a focus on dispelling the myth that we don’t educate special needs students, and shedding light on the drastic funding discrepancies that disproportionately incentivize special needs students to attend public schools.

- Issues concerning private school demographics are very much at the heart of the education discussions in the Legislature, as well, so we are working to link our efforts on the NSAA front to our battle for “school choice,” as well.
• Nonpublic School Transportation
  This continues to be an area of great concern to our schools. Despite our best efforts, the $884. Nonpublic school transportation aid amount remained unchanged. This is a difficult area because transportation is not an entitlement for all nonpublic school students, but only those whose resident districts provide transportation to public school students, and the student meets mileage eligibility requirements. We spearheaded efforts to use private school parking lots as testing centers for CDL license requirements, and have worked with an Educational Services Commission to develop pilot legislation to assist in development of routes across district lines.

• State Budget
  This budget year we have redoubled our efforts to increase nonpublic school transportation, focusing in the early stages on the Governor’s proposed budget. To that end, we negotiated a bipartisan letter from Assembly and Senate membership to the Governor, requesting the aid increase, while parent groups used our Voter Voice system and their own letters and phone calls to contact the Governor. The Governor delivers his budget to the Legislature today, 2/28/17. If all funding levels are returned to the FY’17 amounts, we will then turn our attention to members of the Legislature in advocating for increases to those amounts in the Appropriations Act expected to be drafted and negotiated in mid-June.

• School Choice
  If the Governor reintroduces in his Budget a pilot program modeled on the Opportunity Scholarship Act, it is expected to be unceremoniously derailed by Senate Democratic leadership and not to be part of serious negotiations in the enabling Appropriations Act. We have participated in stakeholder conferences on Education Savings Accounts, and are looking to the day when we can garner legislative support for same.

• Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
  Through robust representation on the Nonpublic Advisory Committee to the NJ Department of Education, we have been pushing for clarity on the Ombudsman position in NJ, in addition to seeking direction from the state to districts on how AP exam fee waivers will be handled under Title IV this year and next. We are expecting changes in NJ’s online education grant reporting system to reflect the law’s changes to set-asides in Titles I and IIA. Many private schools have been availing themselves of CAPE’s materials and other training on ESSA.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary McManus McElroy, Esq.
Director Government Programs and
NJ Network of Catholic School Families Newark Archdiocese
New York State Report to CAPE  
March, 2017 – Submitted by Jim Cultrara

• Parental Choice Update: Lawmakers have once again introduced the legislation which proposes a series of tax credits worth: $300 million for donations to Education Scholarship Organizations and to the public school sector; $1,200 for tuition expenses for families earning up to $200,000; and $50 million for teachers’ out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies. The Senate is poised to include their version within their one-house budget resolution while the Assembly version remains under consideration. There is a growing coalition of organizations, including 32 labor unions, supporting the measure. More information on the initiative can be found here.

• State Office of Religious and Independent Schools: Our coalition secured $2 million in state funds to support the new State Office of Religious and Independent Schools (SORIS) and for initiatives to support such schools. In addition to program initiatives, the funding enables the hiring of: an Assistant Commissioner to oversee SORIS and several other offices; a Director who will also serve as the ESSA-mandated Ombudsman; and six additional staff members who will oversee the implementation and enforcement of state and federal laws, programs and standards intended to benefit our students and teachers. The original office, created in 1979, was effectively eliminated through the retirement of personnel, budget cuts and the erosion of its stature.

• ESSA Implementation: In response to a request of the private school representatives of the state’s Committee of Practitioners, the SED has created and engaged a workgroup on Equitable Participation of Private Schools. The workgroup, comprising private and public school representatives and department staff, is advising on the various processes and systems used to ensure the equitable participation of our schools, including the position of the Ombudsman, the Private School Participation Form of the consolidated application, as well as guidance and technical assistance offered by the department. The workgroup has convened four times with several additional meetings to come.

• State-level Title Ila Funds: As a result of a USDOE review of the NYS Education Department’s administration of NCLB funds, the State Education Department (SED) was directed to set-aside 13.4 percent of New York’s Title Ila state-level funds for professional development activities for private school teachers and administrators. A portion of the funds were used to reimburse attendees for their registration, hotel and travel expenses incurred in attending our annual Religious and Independent School Educators (RISE) Conference. Consultation continues between SED staff and the Commissioner’s Advisory Council for Nonpublic Schools on effectively expending remaining funds.

• Mandate Reimbursement: $250 million, appropriated in June 2015, has been fully disbursed to schools intended to substantially resolve the state’s prior-year obligations under Mandated Services Reimbursement (MSR). $60 million in additional funds have been appropriated to close out the state’s prior-year obligations.

• Technology Funding: Governor Cuomo has advanced $25 million in classroom technology funding for our schools as a means to rectify the inequities created in the implementation of New York’s $2 billion Smart Schools Bond Act. Adopted in 2014, the SSBA was intended to provide an equitable share of public school classroom technology expenditures to religious and independent schools located in the district.
North Carolina Legislative Report for CAPE

The 2015-2016 NC Legislature’s “Short Session” was one that, in many respects, focused on education and resulted in the passage of several bills that may impact independent schools. The 2016-2017 budget adds $5,800,000 to the Scholarship for Students with Disabilities program, more than doubling the amount available in 2015-2016. It also increases funding for the Opportunity Scholarship to $34,840,000 in 2016-2017 and appropriates an additional $10,000,000 each year for the next 10 years, bringing the program total to nearly $145,000,000 by 2027-2028. This would provide scholarships for close to 36,000 students which is almost equivalent to all of the students in NCAIS schools.

The 2016-2017 budget also provide raises for public school teachers over the next 3 years, increasing the average teacher salary to over $50,000 in 2016-2017 and to $55,000 within 3 years. Provisions were also included to reduce class size in pivotal early grades.

On other fronts:

- Non-profits continued to come under scrutiny in 2015-2016, especially with regard sales tax refunds and the state charitable deduction. While discussions continue on these topics and speculation is that they will come up again in the 2017 session, the 2016-2017 budget preserves both.
- NC House Bill 2, which has gained national attention and has come to be known as the bathroom bill, was enacted in the last legislative session and remains in effect despite unsuccessful attempts to repeal it and replace it with legislation that is more agreeable to both parties. This law continues to have social, economic, and political implications across the state.
- Newly elected Governor Roy Cooper (D) faces numerous challenges with a Republican supermajority in both the house and senate.
2016-17 Oregon Federation of Independent Schools (OFIS) Report

We continue our positive approach of using established communication lines to make friends and prevent problems before they occur. Our new Governor declared February 2, 2017 as Oregon Private Schools Appreciation Day. The private school community uses the proclamation to talk about the private school world with their parents and students and they promote the day widely. Many of our schools also celebrated National School Choice Week.

Oregon private schools again reported steady or increased enrollment with a few schools closed, with some impact from the charter school movement. Still facing challenges due to the rise of virtual schools, as well as various public school reform initiatives. Membership is slowly recovering from the 2008 crash, and we are adding new faces to the OFIS Board.

Oregon now has a Democratic Governor and a D-majority in both houses. Our biennial session is in full swing and private schools are generally off the radar. Of more concern is a general anti-business climate and proposed laws that reflect that combined with huge budget issues creating lots of problems. The head of the Senate Ed Committee is the senator for the district where my school is located, making it easy to communicate with him if we have issues or concerns.

I’ve been lucky to be engaged in regularly private conversations with the head of the Oregon Department of Ed, and the head of Oregon’s college and university system, making friends for the private school community whenever and wherever I can!

OFIS BACKGROUND

The Oregon Federation of Independent Schools is the voice of private education in Oregon, representing private preschool and K-12 schools in Oregon. Governed by a board of directors reflecting the diversity of Oregon's private schools, OFIS works to ensure that Oregon private schools are able to operate with a minimum of government influence or control so parents can choose from a wide range of educational options for their children. OFIS conducts programs and meetings throughout the year, publishes its Oregon View newsletter and e-mails notices to keep its members informed of developments and news affecting private schools. Subject to underwriter approval, member schools are offered preferred insurance rates based on lower client acquisition costs. OFIS members receive a complimentary CAPE Outlook subscription.

At OFIS’ request, Oregon Private Schools Appreciation Day has been proclaimed by the Governor every year since 1991, often affirmed by the Board of Education and/or one or both houses of the Oregon Legislature. OFIS has received recognitions and commendations for its work from the U.S. Department of Education.

Mark Siegel, Executive Director
Pennsylvania State CAPE Report Spring 2017

Legislative Initiatives and Responses

We continue to sponsor multiple legislative meetings with leaders of the school associations and key legislators. We are also actively involved in a major effort for legislative reform to build in protections for early education programs, the advancement of educational savings accounts for special needs families, increases in the tax credit program, and continual improvement and increases to our budget line items. Our tax credit programs have been maxed out and we are working toward a 75 million dollar increase this year. Protection of our private early education programs within the changes that are happening in the regulatory and funding streams within the commonwealth are a major priority. Religious liberties have become some of the most significant challenges that we are facing, but the coalition was successful in joining others in the state to resist religious liberty challenges to our religious schools’ mission.

We currently are finding the topics of early education, Educational Savings accounts, ESSA implementation and the expansion of our current line items an important focus in the early post election sessions.

Current Activities

1. Awarded our fifth annual School Choice Champion Award this year at a 400 person event which received some national exposure because of school choice week.
2. Continued advocacy for private schools in the Commonwealth on a variety of levels.
3. We are building a very successful 4 year old teacher- administrator appreciation program in the state with additional applications coming in each year.

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The Biennial 2017 Legislative Session is Off and Running!

- **School Choice:** SB 542/HB 1184 Our tax credit scholarship bill was filed again with the same sponsors. The Lt. Governor’s priority bill, SB 3, is a combination tax credit scholarship/universal ESA bill. It will pass easily out of the more conservative Senate. We are not opposed to the ESA, but we are strongly in favor of the tax credit scholarship bill and we see this as the only school choice bill that has a chance of passing the House of Representatives. The Governor has come out in full support of private school choice for the first time, but the Speaker of the House has remained hesitant to hear any private school choice bills.

- **School Marshals:** SB 444/HB 867 This bill allows private schools to have access to the school marshal training program in the same way that public schools are allowed to take this 80 hour training class through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

- **Epi-pens:** SB 579 No house sponsor yet. This bill allows private schools to stock and use un-prescribed epi-pens and provides a measure of liability protection in those instances when they must be used.

**ESSA Workgroup** – I did manage to pull together a group of folks at the Texas Education Agency to talk through the ESSA provisions that relate to private schools. Thank you to Mark, Susie and Josie for documents that were very helpful in those conversations! Apparently it was the first time that TEA staffers have been present for and proactive about issues with non-public schools.

**State Board of Education** – I was alerted to a discussion at the State Board of Education when a routine vote of how much to charge private schools for the STAAR (state test) turned into a discussion of private school scores on this test. An anti-school choice member was interested in seeing these test scores, so I alerted those schools to this possibility. I had never heard of any private school issues coming before the SBOE before, but now I am trying to get notice of the agendas for these meetings, so that I can keep tabs on it in case private schools continue to be a topic of discussion in this body.

**National School Choice Week** – On January 24th, 4,000 people marched in Austin to celebrate the many kinds of schools we have in Texas. TPSA had 12 buses coming from all over the state to participate in the rally and to talk to legislators. It was a beautiful 70 degree day and the teachers, students and parents enjoyed the experience. The only problem was getting them to keep the scarves on!
EARLY EDUCATION

Expansion of Fingerprint Background Checks: SIGNED BY GOVERNOR, February 23, 2017

- HB 1568 (Orrock) and SB 897 (Wexton) Fingerprint searches required (Effective July 1)
  - Required for all and must be completed by September 30; and
  - Expires July 1, 2018 or repealed if CCDBG requirements change.

Exemptions from Licensure Bills: WAITING FOR GOVERNOR ACTION by March 27, 2017

After a battle that lasted throughout and until the end of Virginia’s General Assembly session, two bills regarding exemptions from licensure emerged from a legislative conference and are waiting for action by the Governor. The Governor can take three possible actions by the deadline of March 27 at midnight; he may approve the bills as passed, he may veto the bills (subject to a 2/3 override by the legislature), or he may propose amendments (subject to simple majority approval by the legislature). The bills as passed:

- HB 1837 (Orrock) Certified (Accredited) Preschool Exemption from Licensure
  - Montessori mixed age group ratio for ages 3-6 at 1-15 and ages three and four at 1-12.
  - Expanded to include programs for three and four year olds;
  - Expanded to five hours from four hours; and,
  - Reporting requirement for serious injury and death.

- SB 1239 (Hanger) All Other Child Care Exemptions from Licensure
  - A new category of programs was created to clarify that certain programs are NOT child care and are not required to report or be licensed. These programs include:
    - Accredited summer programs;
    - Programs of religious instruction (Sunday school, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, nurseries…)
    - After school programs of single focus (music, computer, sports…)
  - Religious exempt programs Code section 63.2-1516 removed.
  - Broad health and safety standards for all exemptions including religious exempt:
    - Notices of exemption to parents and posted in a visible location
    - Reporting of serious injuries and deaths
    - Background checks
    - First aid and CPR certification
    - Emergency preparedness plan
    - Compliance with laws and regulations governing transportation of children
    - Compliance with safe sleep guidelines from American Academy of Pediatrics

School Choice

- Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) – Still alive as of March 1 but VETO expect by March 27.
- Education Improvements Scholarships Tax Credit Program Initiatives: FAILED
- Charter School and Virtual School Initiatives – Still alive as of March 1

Other VCPE Activities

- VCPE added standard for Safe Schools Initiatives: currently addressing bullying, concussions and medication administration training
- Website Improvements
  - Search Tool launched
  - Redesign in the works
- Continued Award Programs: Extra Mile Awards, Legislator of the Year and Child Advocate Award.
- Annual legal guide Virginia Law and Private Schools: A Guide to Opening and Operating a Private School in Virginia; Plan to follow Wisconsin model for 2017-2018
By Suzie Hanson, Executive Director

**Advocacy**
Washington State has a new superintendent. He was a legislator and has many friends on the hill. His first month in, he’s making some radical changes. He requested a bill that limits the State Board of Education’s (SBE) decision-making role and moves much of their responsibility to his office. This is creating anxiety and negative feelings for the members of the state board and puts private schools in an awkward position. On the one hand, WFIS wants and needs to build a relationship with the new superintendent, but on the other, we support the SBE. Private schools have cultivated a strong voice and significant seat on the State Board.

The legislative session started January 9 and is scheduled to go 90 days, although no one I’ve talked with thinks we’ll be done before July. The quagmire about defining “basic education” and funding it, which is a requirement in our state’s constitution, continues.

WFIS’s advocacy agenda includes writing legislation for private school inclusion in the state’s School Safety Plan. We are asking for funds to map our schools and to build a communication system for real time alerts from police/fire. The bill did not make it past committee, but we will advocate for its passage next year.

WFIS is also active on several other bills. One bill requires the inclusion of Native American history in the compulsory Washington history class. Another makes changes to teacher certification rules offering more flexibility to help with teacher shortages. Lastly, we are opposing legislative over-site of our athletics association. WFIS is involved in advocating for many early learning bills, as well. We are: joining forces with an advocacy coalition to increase subsidies dollars for low-income children to attend private preschool programs; supporting a bill that creates a path to license outdoor preschool programs; and backing a bill that would create of a single background check system for K12 and early education.

School Choice is on the WFIS agenda as well. Our goal is to have a bill to support during next year’s legislative session. We are hosting meetings with interested parties to build consensus and support.

**The Business Side of Things**
WFIS held its first School Safety Summit in Seattle. The goal was to increase the dialogue between schools as well as between schools and professional emergency response personnel. One looming issue is the lack of notification to private schools when there is an incident occurring close to a school. Public schools have developed a way for their schools to be notified. It is up to the private schools, with the support of the state, to figure out a solution to this problem. Private schools do not have a central phone bank or the coordination of a District, so Safety Summit was an opportunity to figure out a simple and direct way to communicate to schools during an emergency.

WFIS invited local experts to lead seminars, kept the attendance cost low to encourage school teams to participate, and offered clock hours to teachers. Attendees forged new relationships and WFIS received much needed exposure. Many schools were motivated to renew their membership. WFIS made $1,600, which will be enough to pay for the event in the more rural part of the state in May. We have been asked to make this an annual event. This request is being taken under consideration.
ESSA Ombudsman: We are working with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to have the Ombudsman located outside the agency. We are creating a hybrid structure much like what is used with federal funds in Health and Human Service arenas. (See here OR go to: http://longtermcare.wi.gov/section_detail.asp?linkcatid=1953&linkid=1014&locid=123)

Wisconsin state statutes have a competitive bid process for an agency to seek a provider of services from the free market. There is also provision for a "sole provider contract" where a state agency can claim that one and only one entity is capable of delivering required services.

After reviewing both options, the DPI proposed, and Gov. Scott Walker supports pursuing the sole provider contract. DPI and WCRIS are working together to build a case that WCRIS is the only qualified provider of the Ombudsman services and submit it to the state Department of Administration. If the DOA agrees, then WCRIS & DPI will draw up a contract, budget etc. The whole process is expected to take 6-8 weeks from start to finish. Work is expected to begin sometime in March.

If the DOA rejects the proposal, then the DPI will go to the competitive bid process, which WCRIS is aligned to enter. All of the material generated in the sole provider process can legally be used in the competitive bid process. That process would take 6-8 months.

In either case, both parties have proposed starting with a 1 year or 18-month contract to see how the arrangement would function. In practical terms, whatever route we use, the plan is that the Ombudsman will be located in the WCRIS office, which is across the street from the DPI. The Ombudsman would be employed by WCRIS and supervised by the WCRIS Executive Director. The DPI will also provide a desk in its headquarters so the Ombudsman can work there a few hours a week, to tap the resources of the department to solve problems.

Parental Choice Programs: We are seeking to simplify and synchronize our state’s various school voucher programs, which each have different rules and income eligibility requirements. We have a 36-point list of things that need changing in the law. Gov. Scott Walker included seven of them in his 2017-19 budget proposal, which was just introduced in February. We have one party control in Wisconsin so those initiatives are likely to pass. We will spend the next 18 months seeking passage of the other 29 points.

Voucher Amounts & Enrollment: We have 313 schools and 33,781 students participating in our four voucher programs (Milwaukee, Racine, Wisconsin and Special Needs Parental Choice programs).

Beginning in 2016-17, a $12,000 voucher was provided to children with Special Needs if they met a whole host of entry requirements based on public school enrollment status. Although the program is highly complicated and difficult to enter, there was great demand from parents and schools to participate. There were 28 schools and 206 students participating in the 2016-17 school year.

In 2016-17, vouchers for the Milwaukee, Racine and Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs were $7,214 for grades K-8 and $7,860 for grades 9-12. Under Gov. Walker’s proposed 2017-19 state budget, vouchers will increase by $217 in each year of the biennium.