

WNSAA

ACCREDITATION NEWS

Wisconsin Nonpublic School Accrediting Association

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Beatrice Weiland, Editor

New Executive Director On Board

On July 1, 2001, the Board of Directors selected Beatrice Weiland as the executive director of WNSAA.

Beatrice served as principal at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School in Park Falls, Wisconsin for 12 years. She is married and has four grown children. She taught for five years at St. Peter School in Stevens Point, Wisconsin and was the Director of Religious Education at St. Ann Catholic Church in Blackduck, Minnesota for eight years.

Beatrice led the accreditation process while principal at St. Anthony School. She also served on a number of visiting teams and as team chairperson. Having once experienced the accreditation process, she became convinced that it can be one of the most effective ways to make changes and improve schools if embraced by the school community.

Beatrice states that she finds working with school principals, and serving on visiting teams in the nine jurisdictions to be most rewarding experiences. She looks forward to implementing the WNSAA long range plan, expanding the membership, and assisting schools in their school improvement endeavors.

Acknowledgment

The Board of Directors wishes to express its deepest gratitude to Gail Nichols for serving as the executive director of WNSAA from 1994 to 2001.

The Board also thanks Paul Wichmann for serving as the jurisdictional representative for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod from 1999 to 2002.

Review Process Undergoes Change

On September 25, 2002, the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Nonpublic School Accrediting Association met to determine the accreditation status of schools applying for or renewing their membership. This year, the annual review process differed from the way it was conducted in the past.

In the past, an annual review committee consisting of 30-40 educators from around the state met at the fall meeting and reviewed all of the annual reports. In the Membership Survey conducted in the spring of 2002, some principals expressed concern for this process. Specifically, they mentioned concern about subjectivity on the part of the individual reviewers, and the difficulty of sufficiently training new reviewers prior to the review meeting. Because of these concerns, the Board of Directors decided to try an alternative approach this year to reviewing the documents.

Once the jurisdictional representatives received the annual reports from their jurisdictions, they reviewed all of the documents and made recommendations directly to the executive director. The executive director conducted a second review. Depending on the recommendations of the jurisdictional representatives and/or the findings of the executive director, some schools were contacted in regard to deficiencies in their reports. Other reports were brought before the entire Board at the September meeting for a third review. As a result of this process, **239** schools were **Accredited**. **Two** were **Denied** accreditation. **Eight** were **Accredited-Upon Receipt** which means they have been given 30 days to correct a deficiency in their report and resubmit it to the executive director. If schools choose not to resubmit their information, accreditation will be denied.

The Board will be evaluating this annual review process at a future meeting and selecting a method that best meets the needs of the organization.



The Wisconsin Nonpublic School Accrediting Association serves religious and independent schools who seek continuous improvement and high standards of accountability.

New Members Join Board

WNSAA welcomes Jeffrey Inniger, the new representative for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod jurisdiction and Jeff Gardner, the new representative for the Diocese of La Crosse jurisdiction.

Jeff Inniger is the principal at St. Paul Lutheran School in Appleton, Wisconsin. He is married and has two children. Jeff is in his 25th year of teaching. He is completing his masters in educational leadership. While teaching in Minnesota, Jeff became involved with accreditation. Convinced of its benefits, he led the accreditation process at St. Paul Lutheran School in Appleton and became the contact person for the Northern Wisconsin District of WELS. Having seen how a self-study and accreditation have helped schools focus on improvement, one of Jeff's goals is to help other WELS schools understand these benefits and undertake the challenge of accreditation.



Jeff Gardner is married to Christine Gardner and together they have two children. Jeff has been involved in secondary and higher education for over twelve years. As Assistant Director of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of La Crosse, his top priority for this year will be "to see to it that our schools, through the process of accreditation, become the best Catholic schools that they can be."

Board Does Long Range Planning

As a result of the spring membership survey, extensive discussion, and an open forum with members of the Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools, the Board of Directors is developing its own long range plan for WNSAA.

The three main areas of long range planning are to:

- 1.) develop an alternative process for accreditation of schools that have completed more than one cycle of accreditation, and to consider additional accreditation targets for early childhood, high school, and extended day programs;
- 2.) insure a quality accreditation process including a review of the self-study, visiting team and annual review processes and the development and implementation of a more user friendly reporting program;
- 3.) address WNSAA management and organizational issues including the training of new principals, financial planning, analyzing time/responsibilities of executive director in terms of future goals of the organization, marketing, long range planning, linking with other regional and/or national accrediting organizations, and revising the policy handbook.

The Board intends to have the long range plan completed for the spring, 2003 meeting.

Spring Survey Results

In April of 2002, WNSAA member schools were surveyed. 246 schools were surveyed. 165 responded.

The most frequent comment (89 occurrences) about the self-study process was that it was a good experience. 30 principals rated it as excellent. In speaking about the visiting team experience, 64 principals rated it as excellent, and 44 gave it a good rating. Some principals were indifferent or found the process difficult. The rest gave no response because they had not experienced it.

The one suggestion stated most often (33 times) was the duplication of paperwork in jurisdictions that have more than one accrediting agency. Fewer than 10 principals also listed time intensive process, paperwork, visiting team problems and faculty/parent/pastor understanding the process as problems.

The **top five advantages** of accreditation identified were: outside accountability through an independent accrediting agency; credibility for the work and programs of religious and independent schools to the people they serve and to the general public; marketing and recruitment; self-reflection and examination of the entire school program which reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of the program; and, school improvement as a result of ongoing long range planning.

In conclusion, when principals were asked if they had any other comments to make to the WNSAA Board, 133 specifically stated that accreditation is good for their schools. They value accreditation as a tool for self assessment and long range planning. It affirms what they are doing in their schools and challenges them to evaluate and plan for their future.

FAIL TO PLAN AND YOUR PLAN WILL FAIL.

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