

Nancy Coonis: tireless and inspiring



It all started in 1975 when Sr. M. Louise Wanamaker hired Nancy Coonis as a faculty member at St. Matthias High School in Huntington Park. Nancy had a B.A. in music from Occidental College and no previous

experience with the Sisters of Notre Dame; this was her first teaching job. Little did Sr. Louise know that Nancy was going to become an educational leader in her own right, sharing the SND educational principles for years to come.

Nancy continued at St. Matthias in various capacities, including 17 years as principal. Under her leadership, the St. Matthias campus was relocated to the Pius X campus in Downey. In 2000, Nancy was named Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and in 2008, she assumed responsibilities as the President of Notre Dame Academy and Notre Dame Academy Elementary School in West Los Angeles. She is also an Associate of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Nancy has been able influential as a member of the Board of Visitors for the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University, the Education Committee of the California Conference of Catholic Bishops, and has been

active in the accreditation process, chairing numerous visiting teams in the western United States and Asia on behalf of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

It came as no surprise, then, when Nancy was recently named the Executive Director of the Western Catholic Educational Association, a private accrediting agency that oversees the accreditation of over 980 Catholic elementary and secondary schools in 10 western states and the territory of Guam.

Sr. M. Frances Taymans, Director of the SND National Education Office, shared this reflection on Nancy's influence, words that would certainly make Sr. Louise very proud! "Nancy is a founding member of the SND National Education Office Advisory Council which provides guidance and direction for the National Office and representation for the 54 schools and educational centers which comprise the Sisters of Notre Dame U.S.A. educational partnership. Nancy is a wonderful partner in mission and one of the first laywomen to assume major leadership roles in SND education. Her leadership and how she relates to whatever community she is a part of, whether nationally or locally, is based on her strong Catholic faith and her vision for Catholic education. In addition, her gift of song puts much in perspective whether it is a part of prayer, discussion, or casual conversation. It is one thing to be tireless. It is another to be inspiring. Nancy is both."