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Sister Kelly is in elite company Holy Trinity principal is among 12 honored by national group *Eric Vo*

Record-Journal staff

WALLINGFORD - **Sister Kathleen Kelly**, principal of Holy Trinity School, has received the 2013 Distinguished Principal Award from the National Catholic Educational Association.

"It's a great honor and a surprise," **Kelly** said. "It's a wonderful perk for the school community. ... I'm thrilled to accept this honor on behalf of the school."

Kelly, principal at Holy Trinity for 26 years, is one of 12 principals nationwide to receive the award. The winners were chosen from a pool of more than 6,000. The award is given to principals who "demonstrate inspirational leadership, dedication to academic excellence and a strong commitment to offering their communities quality, faith-based education," according to the National Catholic Educational Association website.

Kelly was honored at the association's annual convention in Houston earlier this month. While she was the recipient, she said the award was really for the entire school.

"It's a shared model of leadership. The teachers work collaboratively ... they're all leaders," **Kelly** said. "The parents as well - they are all key parts of success of the school."

Holy Trinity is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. In her early days as a principal, **Kelly** noticed that classroom technology was limited. As technology advanced, she began to integrate it into the school.

"You can't talk about 21st-century learning without having computers and technology," **Kelly** said.

She also started an endowment fund, which is used for major projects at the school, such as roof maintenance or buying new computers and Smart Boards for teachers and students to use. Today, the fund has grown from the initial \$150,000 to \$1.5 million.

"In 1987, the stock market was doing very well. In order for the school to grow, we had to take a leap and invest," **Kelly** said. "It carried us through many obstacles."

As students were being dismissed from school Wednesday, they went out of their way to say good-bye to **Kelly** as they walked by her office - a clear indication of how much they respect her.

Kelly "embodies the spirit of nurturing and looking out for students," said Board of Education member Christine Mansfield, whose children are enrolled at the school.

Having a close-knit relationship with staff and students is important to her, **Kelly** said. Catholic education should be personal, she added.

"I do love the children. I believe they have so much potential," **Kelly** said. "I really do try to be an advocate for them."

While she said was surprised to receive the award, members of the school community were not.

"We always knew she was a winner in our books. It's great to see some positive news about education," Mansfield said. "Seeing someone who has dedicated her life to the school (win the award), it really warms our hearts to see that."

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Sister Kathleen Kelly, principal of Holy Trinity School in Wallingford for 26 years, recently received the Distinguished Principal Award from the National Catholic Educational Association. She was among 12 recipients chosen from a field of more than 6,000 principals.