

# GB News in Brief

Number 8

Spring 2025

**Diana Bell 2023 - 2025 SOP, is pleased to announce that for the 2025 - 2027 Biennium Aileen Dickson will be our new State Organisation President, and Barbara Kern will be our new State Vice President.**

## The differences in schooling between the American and British (English) Education Systems



Diana introduced Claire Smith, an expat living in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S.A, who has worked for 30 years teaching languages and is now the recording Secretary for Washington State. Claire shared her background, including her London birth, her love for languages, calligraphy, and choral music, and her experience teaching at various institutions. She also discussed her personal life, including her marriage to Avery, whom she met in Ecuador, and their move to the Pacific Northwest. Claire also explained her hat, which she wore for a performance of the Broadway show "The Music Man."

**American vs British Education Systems.** Claire discussed the differences in schooling between the UK, specifically England, and the USA. She highlighted that in England, children start school at the age of 5, while in the USA, children must have already turned 5 to enter kindergarten. She also noted that the curriculum in English schools includes more academic subjects from an earlier age. At the upper end of schooling,

the compulsory age in the USA is 18, while in England, it is 16. However, Claire observed that England is becoming stricter about what 16 to 18-year-olds can do if they leave school. She also mentioned that the USA has started to emphasize more career and technical education, which is a significant departure from the old vocational classes. Overall, Claire sees the two countries' education systems converging, particularly at the upper end of schooling.

Claire explained that in America, there are no equivalent exams to GCSEs, with students receiving credit for completing class requirements. She highlighted the Advanced Placement (AP) program, which provides a rigorous curriculum and exams that can grant credit or advanced standing at university. Claire also noted that the American undergraduate degree system is closer to the Scottish system, with students able to shorten their degree time with good exam results. Lastly, she compared the length of the school year in the US and England, noting that the US has a more condensed year with a longer summer break.

There are differences in school attendance and curriculum between the US and England. Claire noted that in the US, parents have significant control over their children's attendance, with little consequence for unauthorized absences. In contrast, England has stricter attendance policies. Claire also highlighted the absence of geography as a standalone subject in the US curriculum, and the lack of religious education in public schools due to the separation of church and state. She expressed her appreciation for the religious studies GCSE and A-level in England.

Textbooks are used more heavily in America, especially in elementary grades, and often contain too much information. In contrast, English schools offer a wider range of subjects, with students typically having 9 or 10 different subjects. Claire also highlighted the differences in teacher certification, with America offering a Master's degree for initial teacher training, which affects salary and placement. She also mentioned the induction programs for new teachers in both countries and the need for teachers to obtain new certifications when moving between states in America. Lastly, she touched on the endorsements on teaching certificates, which indicate the areas a teacher is qualified to teach.

Claire spoke about her father's role as a lecturer at **St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill**, and the importance of sports in American education. She explained that teachers in the US have more control over their curriculum, allowing for adjustments when students are absent. Claire highlighted the competitive nature of sports scholar-

ships in American colleges, which can significantly reduce tuition fees. Kathrin raised concerns about her grandson's participation in a cricket team, which might not contribute to scholarship opportunities. Claire clarified that soccer is gaining popularity in American colleges, particularly among immigrant and Latino groups.

Claire discussed the challenges of teacher recruitment and retention in the US, attributing the issue to workload and behaviour management in the classroom. She suggested that having a teacher mentor in the classroom could be a more effective solution than just providing guidance. She also highlighted the issue of class size in secondary schools, stating that it's rare to find a class under 30 students. Hilary and Claire Purcell from England shared their experiences, noting that workload and wellbeing are significant issues in the UK as well. They discussed the shift in responsibility from students to teachers, with Claire Purcell mentioning the series of national professional qualifications in the UK for middle and senior leadership. Claire Smith also shared her experience of choosing to stay in the classroom despite opportunities for higher positions, emphasizing the importance of teacher development and departmental meetings.

Claire Smith and Anne discussed various topics, including the educational system in the United States, the cost of higher education, and the availability of scholarships. Claire shared her personal experiences, including her daughter's education at Scripps University and her son's attendance at a community college. Diana asked about educational opportunities for 'dropouts', to which Claire responded that recovery programs and GED diplomas are available. The conversation ended with Claire expressing her interest in attending future meetings.

*This talk was AI minuted. There is a note to say 'the content may be inaccurate or misleading. Always check for accuracy'. I thought that it was about 97% accurate and just needed a 'read-through' and a few minor changes and the first summary part left out for this article.*

**AI thanks to Anne Goldstein. Checked by Diana Bell.**

Claire Smith wrote, 'Ladies: Thank you so much for inviting me to present recently. I greatly enjoyed meeting everyone. I thought the AI summary was pretty close to what I actually said! One of my colleagues on the International Editorial Board asked to see what I had shared with you, and I gave her an abridged version of my notes, having adapted the Britishisms!

I look forward to seeing details of the Brighton conference when they are available, and hearing about your future gatherings.'

'The *Bulletin* editor asked if I had spoken to you about writing for the DKG publications. I don't believe I did, so here is a plug for the *Journal* and the *Collegial Exchange*: our committee's goal for this biennium is to increase authorship, particularly amongst members from outside the USA. Your articles in the GB newsletter and in *Euforia* are always so well written - please do consider sending something similar in to [bulletin@dkg.org](mailto:bulletin@dkg.org). The *Journal* is of course an online publication, but the *Collegial Exchange* is online AND print (I believe one has to opt in to receiving the C.Ex. by mail.) I enjoy having a paper copy of the magazine... it is easy to hand on to others, to spread news of what DKG is all about. A plus for authors is that one receives 5 complimentary copies of the issue in which one's article appears. I would be happy to share some random idea of article topics that would be straightforward for British members to write, and that the wider readership (especially my very dear American friends) would lap up!'

**With best wishes to the group,  
Claire**

Dr. Claire Smith, DKG Washington State Secretary, 2023-2025  
DKG International Editorial Board, 2024-2028

### Virtual Visits for School Speakers

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us not you doo  
on Shbat x



Zoom has helped DKG continue high quality online meetings and give access to those who can't easily travel. For school speakers like me, there is nothing like visiting schools in person and meeting children face to face. However, Zoom and other similar platforms have enabled me to support schools around Kent who would like sessions on the Jewish way of life for their classes.

I often get requests from schools who are teaching about Judaism as part of the Kent Agreed Syllabus. However, they may not have any Jewish staff or pupils to give a real-life perspective on what it means to be Jewish today.

The picture, by a Year 1 child, is of me. I was wearing a jumper with stars on and I think she's made me into a star!

I always ask schools to provide questions from the children in advance. This helps with my preparation and shows what level the children are working at. While younger ones can ask amusing questions – “Can my hamster be Jewish?” – it’s always possible to move an answer to a linked teaching point. Children might be interested to know, for example, that working animals are also given a rest on Shabbat, just the same as humans have.

It is also a learning experience for the speaker. I was delighted, on a recent Zoom, that a Year 1 pupil seemed to know about not using electronic items on Shabbat. This knowledge seemed very sophisticated. I also shared the idea of ‘the spirit of Shabbat’ – although it could be possible to turn a device on before Shabbat started and keep using it, it would be against the concept of a day of peace.



This is a time when Religious Education is undergoing some national challenges. Taught by unqualified and often unenthusiastic teachers, with themes conveyed without depth, RE can be a low status subject.

I thank the teachers I’ve met online who put their heart into teaching the subject and the enthusiastic children who really want to learn about others’ beliefs and values.

**Anne Goldstein**, Gamma Chapter.

## Artificial Intelligence

Jacqueline van Meeteren gave us a very interesting talk on AI. She explained exactly what artificial intelligence is and how it ‘stimulates human mental processes such as interpreting and generating language’. It’s been doing it for 50 years!

In our lives, if we use websites we may be given suggestions as to what we need to buy. Chatbot or ‘Smart assistants’ will offer help, and E-payments make it easy to pay. AI knows what you like if you use the web searching for something, and will put forward suggestions.

We already use Navigation apps, and smart cars are in use in a few places. Facial recognition is with us and in some places if you go through a red light you can be fined! Text editors can make your words better, but are also making it more difficult for teachers to recognize plagiarism in an essay.



It can be of great benefit; in a class AI can help with content creation, making for example, posters such as the one for our European Forum Conference made by Carola van Zanen - van Rijn, Chair of the European Forum.

It offers more personalized learning, students can have their own programmes of work, and has many practical uses in the classroom.

There are downsides. AI uses lots of energy, so electricity use is high; also high volumes of water are used to cool down data centres.

There is, of course, a lack of human emotion and personalization. Also some bias, prejudices and discrimination may reflect what humans have put in. Students can become too dependent on technology, hindering their ability to think and solve problems. There is also the threat of data security and privacy breaches.

AI can be adapted, improved, and helpful to the community, it can provide support, offer tips and instructions, monitor and give feedback. But we need to encourage critical thinking in students so they can judge the fairness and accuracy of AI powered tools they use. Critical thinking is the most important thing to encourage with students.

Jacqueline gave us some questions, and as we answered almost straight away we had a bar and scatter graph showing our answers.

Jacqueline warned us to be nice to Co-Pilot as it works better if you are!

To see this full talk visit [www.dkgeurope.org](http://www.dkgeurope.org), then Educational Topics and AI Wanted—Yes or No.

I am delighted to announce that Jacqueline will be one of our Keynote speakers at the European Forum Conference in July.

I suspect that AI generated minutes would have been more accurate than mine!

**Diana Bell**, Alpha Chapter.

## Human Values



Suzanne Palermo focused the meeting on the importance of human values in education and personal development. She shared a story about a toddler named Jimmy who accidentally damaged an ancient world map, symbolizing the need to put the pieces of humanity back together.

Suzanne emphasized the importance of righteousness in fostering beauty in character, harmony in the home, order in the nation, and peace in the world. Emphasizing the need to cultivate these values from a young age. She explained that the Sathya Sai education and human values programme, which she has followed for 35 years, provides a clear structure and is based on universal human values such as right, action, peace, truth, love, and non-violence.

Human values 'are universal and common to all cultures and traditions and are present as invisible seeds, in every human being'.

The Sathya Sai program also incorporates a set of value aspects, such as kindness and honesty, and is designed to nurture the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a child. Suzanne highlighted the philosophy of the programme, which emphasizes the need to connect outer and inner experiences for a complete education. She used the metaphor of a cartoon character named Marty, who has three antennas representing his thoughts, feelings, and actions - learning to control them to make precise decisions.

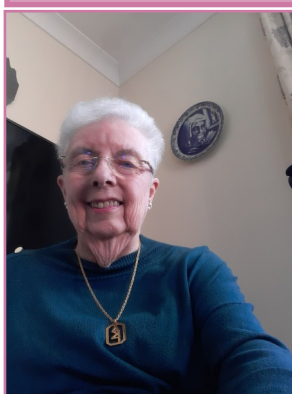
Suzanne discussed the versatility of her educational programme, designed for children aged 3 to 12, which can be adapted for different age groups. Her 3 HV Circuit, is a process for integrating values by connecting thoughts with heart and actions.

Suzanne shared an example of a successful implementation of her programme into a Swiss middle school, where 300 students participated in a year-long program focused on human values, culminating in an exhibition of their artwork. While the program is designed for children, Suzanne highlighted its self-development potential for teachers, parents, and children alike, reinforcing the importance of the parent-teacher-child relationship.

This thought provoking talk led to discussion covering the influence of technology and social media on children's values, the need for a coherent approach to promoting good human values in schools and at home, and the potential for implementing similar techniques in the workplace.

**Diana Bell**, Alpha Chapter, with help from AI.

## News from Anne Cattoor



After 30 years in Whitstable we realized that life was becoming more difficult and that asking the family to travel for 6 hours to get to us was unfair so we agreed to move closer to them in Somerset. My Parkinson was still under control (just) but Maurice had severe COPD and I was his Carer.

After a search by the children and COVID we finally arrived in 2021 in Blagdon Retirement Village in Taunton, just 20mins from the family. Why had we waited so long? We bought a lovely 2 bed/2 bathroom apartment in an 85 dwelling village of bungalows, cottages and apartments in this independent living complex surrounded by lovely grounds and a clubhouse area with lots of amenities including a restaurant, bar, library, shop, hair-dresser, gym, etc. We even have a guest suite should you fancy a visit! The housekeeper comes to clean, the laundry does the bedding, the chef cooks lunch, the gardener cuts the

grass, maintenance clean the windows or change a light bulb, the health assistant orders the prescriptions.

So what do we do? How do we fill our days? We join all kinds of hobby groups, we go on outings, we have speakers, films, social events, quiz nights, etc., etc. Free tea, coffee and chat is available all day. Oh and finally we have quite a lot of retired educators!!

Think about it. Don't wait too long. Life is too short. Our eldest resident is 103. Now I'm on my own, and almost 89, I wish I'd come sooner. Mister Parkinson gets more difficult, but I hope I have a few more years. I keep up with all your news and wish you all well. After nearly 40 years of DKG I'm glad I joined.

**Anne Cattoor**, Gamma Chapter.

**Anne is a former DKG European Regional Director.**

## Hard Graft Exhibition

The “Hard Graft” exhibition at the Wellcome Centre is an interesting exploration of the impact of work on health in three different areas of our life both now and in the past.

The “Plantation” section covers plantations across the world - in Africa, America, Asia and Europe. Inhumane working conditions led to poor body development, malnutrition and injuries. We learnt how herbal healing practices adopted by slaves were used to help them endure their working conditions.

People still work on plantations around the world today. The prison system in the USA was modelled on the plantation economy and today has the largest prison system in the world.



Charmaine Watkiss celebrates herbal knowledge shared by family and African diaspora. She uses Coffee in the picture.



Maria Auxiliadora da Silva’s picture represents the Afro-Brazilian religion Umbanda.

The “Street” section covers the wide range of people who work on our city streets, many of them part of unregulated economies and the risks posed to workers' health. These jobs include street vendors, waste pickers, sanitation workers (often exposed to pollution and toxic materials), sex workers (placed at risk by the restrictions on how and where their work can take place), etc.

The “Home” section includes cleaning and domestic work. These are some of the most common and widespread occupations for migrant women workers across the world and is often un-

documented and unregulated.

The video of some of these women describing their experiences was harrowing. Powerful campaigns in the 1970s demanded recognition, equality and better conditions for women expected to stay at home to perform unwaged housework and childcare.



Vikram Divecha. Street sweepers in the UAE. Bags left daily outside the museum highlighted their labour.



Street vendors unknown artist 1840

This is a fascinating look at under-represented work, undervalued by society but crucial to how it functions. It certainly makes you stop and reflect on what goes on unseen around us.

A small group of Alpha members were able to attend this exhibition. We got together in the cafe at Wellcome beforehand and all agreed how lovely it was to meet and spend time chatting and catching up with news in person.

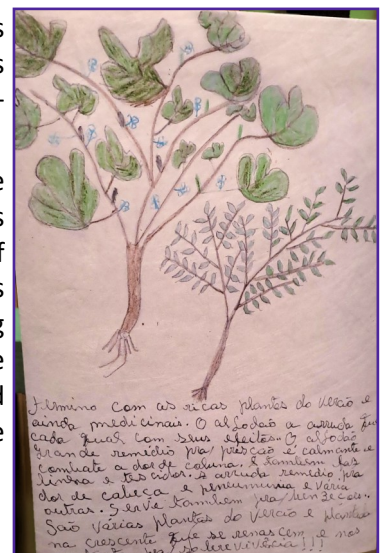
**Penny Kinnear, Alpha Chapter.**



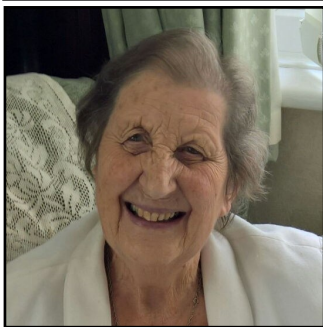
It was good to meet up with DKG members and catch up with personal news as well as progress made towards the Regional Conference – well worth my long journey.

The Wellcome Institute is a good venue providing space to talk and a good meal as well as an exhibition, this time the Impact of Work on Health. It focussed on work that is essential but undervalued by society using three areas, the plantation, the home and the street to illustrate how people have coped with their situation. Personally, I liked the section on medicinal plants best.

**Unity Harvey, Alpha Chapter.**



## Judith (Judy) Sutton



Judith Meriel Sutton was born on 1st December 1930 in Great Yarmouth. She wrote 'Our house faced the sea. Life was good as we grew up. We had a family hut on the beach in Gorleston and there was always a crowd of aunts, uncles, cousins, friends – it was great.'

Judith and her brother were evacuated during the war, but when the summer holidays came, they returned to their Gran's house while their parents went house hunting. They bought a house on the Broads. Judith and her brother went to school in the next village.

Judith's parent were asked to call in at a local inn to meet some airmen (her father had received his call-up papers). Soon after they arrived a lone German bomber flew overhead and dropped his remaining bombs, getting a direct hit on the inn - there had been an air raid in Norwich. 5 family members died, including her parents. She was 10 years old.

In 1949 Judy started a 3-year teacher training course in Bedford. Her grandmother, who had looked after Judith and her brother, died in 1952. Judith started working in a girl's boarding school near Horsham, and was 'a bit of a nomad as I had no home base and spent holidays staying with friends'

Judith then got a job teaching 7-year-olds at Earlswood School near Redhill in Surrey. Ellen Rosier was the headmistress and she & Judy became good friends. Judy continued her teaching career and stayed friends with Ellen. Before she retired, Judith was Headteacher of an infant's school in Croydon. Judy was an active member of the National Association of Head Teachers and became President of the Croydon association. She lived in Sanderstead near Ellen and attended the local church there.

Judith was Initiated into DKG in November 1977 at the founding of GB State. There were 10 founding members and eight additional Alpha Chapter Charter members; these included Judith. She was then Second Vice President and Ellen Rosier, also a Charter Member, was recording secretary. Judith became Alpha Chapter President 1980 – 1984.

DKG was not new to Judith. She had been to an International meeting in Georgia, and also went to some DKG meetings in Florida when she was on a teaching exchange visit.

Judith and Ellen were very enthusiastic, loyal, friendly and active members in Alpha Chapter. They had attended many state conferences and the Regional Conference in Malmo. They were renowned for their hilarious comedy acts such as 'Doggies' (from a collection of duologues called 'Deck chairs'). They were unforgettable, and showed what these two 'dark horses' were capable of. They moved to the Isle of Wight in 2025.



Judith became a reserve member, but still was interested in DKG and kept in touch with cards and notes. She wrote, 'I was thinking back over the years and all the things we have done. Although we have always been low in numbers members have achieved so much, particularly internationally'.

Judith died on the 25th February. Her full eulogy will be put on the DKG GB Website in the 'White Rose' section.

Judith asked for donations in her memory to go to David and Faith Paterson who are working with children with HIV in Uganda. Unity or I can provided further details.

This piece was taken partly from Judith's eulogy, very much abridged, and notes from an article celebrating Judith's 40 years (actually 42) as a member of DKG. Judith's full, fascinating Eulogy will be put on our [www.dkqgb.org.uk](http://www.dkqgb.org.uk) website. The 'White Rose' section is in the History page, at the bottom of the right-hand column.

Diana Bell, Alpha Chapter.

**GB State Conference and AGM was on Saturday 5th April at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School in Dulwich Village. Claire Purcell kindly hosted our meeting, and after her excellent talk gave us a quick visit to Pickwick and Turney Buildings. The minutes of the AGM have been circulated.**

**Don't forget to register ASAP for the <https://dkg-ef-conference2025.weebly.com>**

## Strengthening Our Community, Building Our Future Together Claire Purcell – Miracle Worker?

Following the very successful (Outstanding) Ofsted inspection of Dulwich Hamlet Junior School, Headteacher Claire Purcell had hoped to be able to catch her breath before continuing to ensure her school maintained the excellent environment that she and her staff had worked so hard to achieve.

However, plans were afoot to disrupt her plans. Claire received a phone call from the CEO of the Charter School of Education Trust (comprising six primary and three secondary schools, one of which is DHJS). The Head of one of the schools in the borough, Ivydale Primary, was leaving. The school had wanted to join the Trust, but their finances were poor. Claire was asked to take over as Executive Head, and to take on that same role at her own school, DHJS.

In the summer term of 2024, Claire spent one day each week at Ivydale in a consultancy role. Within the Borough of Southwark, as in many other London boroughs, people are moving away due to the high costs of living in the capital city. As a result, pupil rolls are decreasing in many schools – and Ivydale is no exception.

The deputy heads of DHJS and Ivydale took over the roles of Headteacher, allowing Claire to split her time 50/50 from September 2024. Both schools' financial situations needed attention and so much of Claire's days were, and still are, involved in budget balancing. Ivydale then had to face their own Ofsted inspection, which resulted in a Good evaluation.



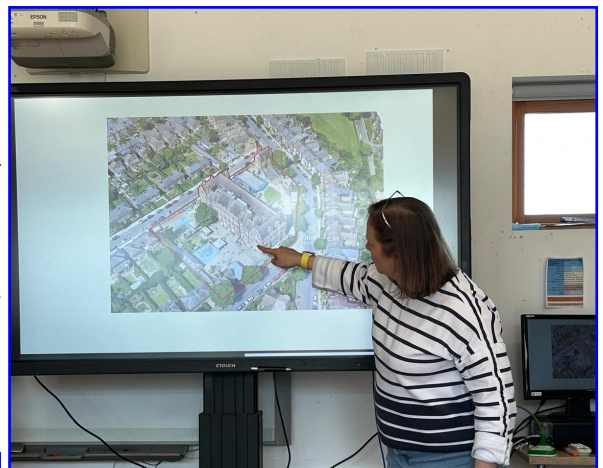
Claire believes that one of her most important roles is to be visible in both of the schools. This is complicated even further as Ivydale is split over two sites, and each site has two gates – four places in which she needs to be a presence, as well as back at DHJS. Oh, to be a quadruplet! Her regular week is to spend Monday split between the two schools, Tuesday in DHJS, Wednesday and Thursday at Ivydale (important to have consecutive days in the less familiar school) and Friday 'back home' at DHJS.

As if she wasn't busy enough, Claire decided to start studying for the *National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)*. This is continuing, where time permits...as the old saying goes: Ask a busy person!

One of the major decisions that had to be made was which of the two sites that Ivydale used should be the base for the school in the future. One site is an old, impressive Victorian building, but it was run down and needed a lot of money spending on it. The other is a relatively new, purpose-built building, built to accommodate a bulge in children's numbers – but only one year group use it. Both buildings could not be kept as before; apart from the problems of dwindling numbers and the subsequent loss of income, running two buildings, doubling the ancillary staff costs, made no financial sense.

The first thoughts were to move into the more modern building – of course, choosing one was a delicate decision – parents needed to be consulted and brought on side. Ivydale is still a maintained school, meaning it is wholly owned and maintained by the London Borough of Southwark and it needs to pay back a large amount of money to the local authority.

Plan A was to close the old building and set up a new, two form entry for KS2 in the new building. Following numerous discus-



Claire showing us the school plan



sions, the decision was reversed. Southwark Council have agreed to spend money to upgrade the old, Victorian building. The current plan is to move the children (some are currently in the new site) into the refurbished Victorian site in September 2026, though that may be a shade optimistic, but never say never!

The new building is destined for a new purpose – it will become a unit for specialist SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision for the borough.

But the works continues: because Ivydale is a maintained school and DHJS is part of the Trust, they each have different financial years, Ivydale finishing at the beginning of April, and DHJS at the end of the school year in August. On top of this balancing of budgets at two different times of the year, Claire is enjoying the role of project managing architects and builders involved in the Ivydale upgrading.



But, being the Executive Head means that she cannot take her eye off DHJS. A new school uniform, as cheaply available for parents as is possible, with a new school crest, will be introduced from September. There is a new website in the offing, which will also be up and running from the start of the new school year. DHJS must keep developing. The needs of the children are increasing with many more SEND children than ever before. A three-year plan has been developed to take effect from September.

Her current priorities are to secure Ivydale's future. This needs to be through community work and engaging parents, which needs constant hard work. It requires the ability to communicate with clarity and letting people understand that you will do what you promise.



Diana thanked Claire

When Claire spoke to us in early April, she said that there were plans to embark on a school rebuilding programme at DHJS and that they were at the pre-feasibility stage. It might involve refurbishing or even completely demolishing parts. Watch this space.

Claire has learned much from the past 12 months and has been honest with parents about what was going to happen, and still will happen, in the coming months and years. She has had support from the Trust: meeting with a coach twice a term; from the central team at the Trust, particularly in IT and branding. And, of course, from her wonderful husband, Jim, who has offered practical as well as moral support.

With inspiring and hardworking members of the teaching profession, of which Claire is a shining example, our education system should be in the very best of hands.

**Kathrin Hodgson**, Gamma Chapter.

## Building the Next DKG Slate of Nominees Begins With YOU

Your invitation to DKG highlighted your leadership potential. Are you ready to apply for an elected position at the international level, or can you encourage another member to do so?

The **International Nominating Committee** (INC) will begin accepting applications in the summer of 2025. The deadline for applying is September 15, 2025.

The time to plan and recruit is now! As a DKG member, you can take steps to move our organization into #SecondCenturyDKG. Leadership is crucial for the growth of our organization, so please give careful consideration to this important task.

All qualifications and recommendations for applicants for each position are listed in the *International Standing Rules* (ISR) 8.103. These may be found on the International Website [www.dkg.org](http://www.dkg.org). These are the **only** qualifications the INC will consider when evaluating applications.

Act now! Assess your interests and skills alongside the qualifications listed in ISR 8.103.

Guidelines and applications will be posted on the DKG website in May 2025.

Additionally, the International Nominating Committee will present at two **Inside International** sessions to review the application process.

Mark your calendars for one or both sessions:

~ Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. Central Time - 6.30 p.m. here.

~ Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. Central Time - 11.30p.m. here!

From the DKG **International Nominating Committee**.