School Leadership
by Rod Morrison, ACSA & AASSP President; Principal, Gilson Middle School

Over the past holiday break, I received an email from a former student I’d taught and coached over 15 years ago.

Coach,
How are you? I transitioned out of the Army after a little over eight years and am now attending grad school at Notre Dame. I’ve been married to my lovely wife since 2007 and we are blessed with two beautiful daughters. Ultimately we would like to get back to the Pacific Northwest, but we’ll see how things shake out following business school. There are so many opportunities... Just not all exactly where we would love to be!

I appreciate and value the impact you’ve had on my life, both from the hardwood as well as in the classroom. I can’t say I’m doing many fingertip push-ups these days but I know I’ve done them before and if necessary- they can be done! I trust everything is going well. You had such a positive influence on me. Take care. J.M.

Lately, I have been thinking a great deal about my first few years as a teacher and my years as an administrator.

My teaching career began 20 years ago. I could not believe I was getting paid to teach and coach. I relished the opportunity to work with so many different students, to help them mold their beliefs and futures. I had no doubt that my students would be successful in life.

Twelve years ago, I landed my first school principalship. The truth is, up to that time, I had never really anticipated becoming a school principal. As a public school educator, I desired to be in the classroom with students. I felt that being in the classroom interacting directly with students was where an educator could make a difference. Principals are often perceived as being disconnected from students, and I admit to having shared that perception on more than one occasion. Whether it was dealing with disgruntled teachers, angry parents, or misbehaving students, I wanted more out of my day.

In my fourth year of teaching in a public school, my building principal approached me about moving into a principal internship program. Aware that I had just completed a master’s degree in instructional technology, he encouraged me to further my education in leadership. As we talked about my future, initially I declined both the idea and opportunity. When he pushed the conversation further, asking about my hesitation, I shared with him my perception that school leaders didn’t really work with kids; that they were only there to discipline students and control teachers. At that time, I was truly naive in regard to the role that principals really play in schools.

One of my teacher mentors joined the conversation. “What if you could run a school the way you wanted?” He knew I had often encouraged students to take risks and think outside the box. He also knew that I possessed an ability to connect with students. He further, asking about my hesitation, I shared with him my idea and opportunity. When he pushed the conversation further, asking about my hesitation, I shared with him my perception that school leaders didn’t really work with kids; that they were only there to discipline students and control teachers. At that time, I was truly naive in regard to the role that principals really play in schools.

During the first few years in a leadership position, I was nervous, scared, confident, eager, and insecure. Many nights I couldn’t sleep because I was worried about decisions I had made and decisions I had yet to make, but I tried to put on a different face when I entered school each day. Todd Whitaker (2003) wrote, "Effective principals understand that they are the filters for the day-to-day reality of school. Whether we are aware of it or not, our behavior sets the tone. If people see us running down the hallway screaming 'Fire!', it will be the talk of the school for days, even if it was a false alarm".

Over the past 20 years, I have gathered many thoughts in regard to school leadership. I hope to add to this list throughout my years as a principal, continuing to be a life-long learner.

- **Forge connections.** Making connections with students and staff is of the utmost importance. Take the time to get to know those who surround you. Make sure you do the necessary steps to “make their day” special.
- **Be human.** People make mistakes. Don’t crucify them because of it. Address it if it is a continuing issue.
- **Have tough conversations.** As the school’s leader, you will have to have tough conversations with students, staff, and parents. Do it respectfully. The biggest mistake new leaders—and veteran leaders—make is not addressing the tough issues at the time they arise. Many think about the issues and have great intentions to address them “next time.” Be sure to talk about the issues now.
- **Instill laughter into your everyday practices.** Whether you are a principal, district office personnel, or a director, make sure you enjoy your job. Decisions you make will make a difference for students. There is no reason why every day can’t bring laughter. These days it’s more important than ever.
School Leadership (continued)

- **Surround yourself with good people.** I am nothing without my staff at school and support system at home. Your job will be much harder if you do not bond with those around you.

- **Check in on people.** Don’t get wrapped up in your own issues. Your job is to serve those you lead, which includes students, staff, and parents.

- **Complete teacher observations with integrity.** Too often, people look at observations as something to check off the list. Don’t do that, because they do matter. Focus on the parts of instruction that were engaging and the other parts that need work. If you don’t, who will?

- **Support Alaska’s Academic Standards.** Make sure your students and teachers are embracing the Alaska Academic Standards. Teachers need to be engaging in conversations with other educators in both vertical and horizontal alignment. Use your connectedness with students to enhance the Academic Standards.

- **Encourage teachers to be who they are.** We have too many cookie-cutter approaches to education these days. Encourage teachers to be different. Encourage them to take risks. They’ll thank you AND they’ll encourage their students to do the same.

School leaders will not just create opportunities for students to be college and career ready; they will take it one step farther and, in the words of Will Richardson (2013), help students to become “learning ready.” All students deserve those opportunities.

As I reflect on my many years as a student, teacher, coach, and principal, I invite you to join me in seeking to make positive connections with students. At times, our jobs seem to be overwhelming; it’s not hard to think how our lives might be easier in another profession. The occasional letter from a former student like J.M. can help to affirm the reasons we decided to become teachers.

Photos courtesy of Gilson Middle School, Valdez City Schools

---

What Matters Most
by Mary McMahon, AASSP President-Elect; Principal, Colony Middle School

“**They don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”** This phrase coined by John C. Maxwell is one that we need to pay attention to now more than ever in our schools. With up to 50% of teacher and principal evaluations in the coming years being linked to student achievement results, I worry that the unintended consequence may be that we focus less on our students and even more on testing. We are under so much pressure to raise student achievement that we can tend to overlook what matters most.

Creating schools that are safe, supportive and full of caring adults who take the time to get to know each of their students in a meaningful way is what matters most.

How students feel about school directly impacts their level of achievement. In a results driven world, the key to higher performance is usually within reach if we slow down enough to look into the eyes of our students and listen to their voices. I have heard educators say, “We can’t afford to make time to connect and build meaningful relationships with our students because we have too much content to cover.” My response to that, “We can’t afford not to.”

Photos courtesy of Colony Middle School, Mat-Su Borough School District

---

AASSP Board of Directors

- **Rod Morrison**
  - President
  - Gilson Middle School

- **LeAnn Young**
  - Region I Director
  - Reach Academy

- **Ed Lester**
  - Region VII Director
  - Newhalen School

- **Jennifer Schmidt**
  - Region VIII Interim Director
  - Fronteras Spanish Immersion School

- **Kelly Parsons**
  - AP at Large Director
  - Gruening Middle School

- **STAFF**
  - Denise Greene-Wilkinson
    - Executive Director
Accreditation focuses on school improvement
by Mary Johnstone, Director AdvancED Alaska

It is hard to believe it’s been nearly two years since the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) became the third accrediting division within the AdvancED network. All in all it has been a great time and we are proud to be serving the schools and students of Alaska. In Alaska, all accredited schools in each district are now visited in the same year. We completed two External Reviews this past fall and have 17 more Reviews scheduled for spring 2014. AdvancED accreditation is on a five-year cycle, but in the interim years, schools are expected to revisit their ratings on the standards, and to work on achieving their goals and objectives and setting new ones as needed. It is also expected that every fall before November 1, each school leader will update their demographics and complete a new Executive Summary which serves as an annual report. All of our External Reviews this year are based on the new AdvancED Standards, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of our accredited schools in implementing those rigorous Standards. Of course we are always looking for volunteers to serve on these teams, and we welcome hearing from you if you are interested.

Contact Mary Johnstone at mjohnstone@advanc-ed.org.

“By Endurance We Conquer”
by John Pothast, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

I recently read Shackleton’s Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer, a book about the explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. The author states, “Sir Ernest Shackleton has been called ‘the greatest leader that ever came on God’s earth, bar none!’” for saving the lives of the twenty-seven men stranded with him in the Antarctic for almost two years.” Since reading about his incredible journey, I have found myself reflecting often on Shackleton’s life, trying to glean what lessons I can about effective leadership. In light of recent challenges facing our nation, state, districts, and schools, I have found several quotes from this book extremely timely and personally inspirational as we continue to find ways to offer our students a quality educational experience.

“As important as it is to continue finding renewed strength when we encounter challenges in life, it is equally important that we face those struggles with positive attitudes. As stated in the book, “optimism is true moral courage.” As we encounter difficulties, it is easy to get mired down in negativity. Remaining optimistic during tribulations in life is of little consequence if, after facing hardship, we become so embittered that we lose our ambition or desire to improve ourselves and our situation. We have great things to accomplish in our schools, and remaining optimistic throughout our work with our staff, students, and parents is paramount.

Along with optimism, success also requires us to learn from our difficulties. “In a rapidly changing world, be willing to venture in new directions to seize new opportunities and learn new skills. Find a way to turn setbacks and failures to your advantage.” Despite the difficulties surrounding our daily lives, we must constantly be looking to the future, keeping our eyes on our goals, and figure out how to move from our current situation to where we want to be. The recent ideas and proposals coming from Governor Parnell directly challenge us to develop and seize new ways for providing educational opportunities to our students and their families. Regardless of how we personally feel about these proposed reforms, they are front and center in both the state and national conversations and, therefore, require our attention and skills, as we continue to steer our schools and districts through these turbulent waters.

Despite the challenges facing education today, I am encouraged and excited about the talk of our future. As we continue to discuss the way ahead for our schools and districts, I hope you all will persist in being active participants in the process. Indeed, by endurance we do conquer, and I sincerely believe that our continued optimism will assist us immeasurably in the end.

AAESP Board of Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>John Pothast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redoubt Elementary School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Mary Carlson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic Light Elementary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President-Elect</td>
<td>Jennifer Schmitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic Park Elementary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Marcus Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Star Elementary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Representative</td>
<td>John Kito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson Elementary School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member-At-Large</td>
<td>Audra Finkenbinder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleknagik School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member-At-Large</td>
<td>Carl Chamblee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow Lakes Elementary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>John Pile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Mary Johnstone at mjohnstone@advanc-ed.org.
Tin Cup
by Todd Poage, AASA President; Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District

Education in Alaska is at risk. Districts across the state have announced proposed cuts to cover budget deficits, explaining that reductions in staff, instructional programs, and extra curricular activities are imminent for the next fiscal year in order to balance budgets derived mainly from the proposed Base Student Allocation (BSA). Continuing inflation is also contributing to these budget deficits, which are becoming unmanageable. Will increased class sizes, staff reductions, and fewer elective options adequately prepare students to be our future leaders?

The state budget, recently submitted to the legislature, flat-funds education for yet another fiscal year. If the BSA remains at the currently proposed level, 2015 will unfortunately mark the fifth consecutive year the BSA has languished at $5,680. This education funding formula has not increased since 2011, while inflation in Alaska has continued on pace, eroding the educational opportunities school districts can afford to provide students.

According to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the annual cost-of-living increase for inflation has averaged 2.7 percent over the past decade. A statement on the department’s website calls the Anchorage Consumer Price Index, which measures inflation and the changes in a variety of costs in the city, “probably the state’s most important cost-of-living measure.” The CPI’s 2.7 percent average annual cost-of-living increase in each of the four years since the BSA was last raised in 2011, has now added up to 10.8 percent. This means that, since the last increase in the BSA, school districts have lost nearly 11 percent of our capacity to educate Alaska’s children.

As school leaders, all of us have analyzed and re-analyzed our budgets to find cost savings. We all do our best to guarantee that the funds that remain are used as efficiently as possible to ensure every dollar spent goes toward meeting the educational needs of our students. Many districts have now reached the point where further elimination of staff positions may be the only option.

However, in his recent State of the State address, Governor Parnell sent an encouraging message when he announced he was introducing legislation to “raise the BSA for each of the next three years.” Although packaged with vouchers and changes in charter school funding, a multi-year approach is now on the table for legislators to debate. This development now gives our organizations a great opportunity to advance the highest funding priority in our recent Joint Position Statements: Adopting a multi-year foundation funding plan.

Our partnership efforts enjoy the support of many other like-minded organizations. Superintendents and principals, the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska’s Children (CEAAC), and business interests from across the state share our resolve to fund our schools at levels that will enable us to reach our goal of providing each child a “world-class education.” It’s also an election year, which brings enhanced opportunities to draw legislative finance and education committee members to our cause. We must continue to weigh in during public comment periods, participate in legislative fly-ins, and write letters of support. The governor and others are calling the 2014 legislature the “Education Session,” and vowing to enact “real education reform.” Each of us needs to stay involved, speaking to legislators with a strong and united voice to assist them in shaping the future of education in Alaska.

Best wishes for a successful legislative session.

Poverty – A Predictor of School Success?
by Dr. Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA/AASA

The impact of poverty and its relationship to student academic achievement has generated considerable national press over the past decade with ever-more convincing evidence telling us that students living in poverty, on average, struggle to perform academically at a pace comparable to more fortunate students. According to Eric Jensen in his book Teaching with Poverty in Mind, behavioral geneticists commonly attribute 30-50 percent of a child’s behaviors to DNA, leaving 50-70 percent to be determined by environment. He points out that this high-level hypothesis does not take into account the quality of a child’s prenatal care, which may include stressors, exposure to toxins, and other factors proven to affect a child’s functioning. According to Jensen, the combination of factors—DNA, prenatal care, and increasingly complex social relations—vary by socioeconomic status. He cites conclusive evidence that children raised in poverty face daily challenges that their more affluent counterparts rarely or never confront. These combined factors present an extraordinary challenge for children facing life in an impoverished home or community—a challenge that begs for greater investment and unique attention to their needs.

With Jensen’s body of work as a backdrop, it’s not hard to see that America’s 15-year-old-student performance on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) requires a more complex approach than simply suggesting the public school needs to work harder. The PISA, administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), tests more than 500,000 students from 65 countries in reading, math, and science. Results of this assessment reflect not only the literacy, numeracy, and science skills of participating students, but also inform policy makers about the performance of students relative to those in other countries. The results also assist policy makers in setting targets for improving educational performance.
Poverty – A Predictor of School Success? (continued)

When reporting PISA results, national headlines tend to reflect the public’s perception that the performance of America’s 15-year-old students, who generally score in the middle of the global pack, is lagging, flat, and in crisis. What should Alaska school districts and policy makers take away from the PISA results as we seek to improve the academic performance of all students?

As when reviewing any assessment results, we must be mindful of the broad array of factors affecting the success or failure of public education today. Noted scholar and critic of the current assessment frenzy, Diane Ravitch, in her recent book Reign of Error, points to a study by Keith Baker titled “Are International Tests Worth Anything?” After examining the economic performance of the 12 nations whose students took the first International math test in 1964, as well as scores from 40 years later, Baker found no relationship between a nation’s economic productivity and its test scores. Nor did the test results correlate to quality of life or the presence of democratic institutions in a given country. He concluded that America’s economic success is traceable not to our country’s testing fixation but to our national “spirit,” an amalgam of ambition, inquisitiveness, and independence—all qualities most Alaskans can agree are important.

Another prominent researcher, Jenny Perlman Robinson from the Brookings Institution’s Center for Universal Education, offers lessons learned from PISA scores. Robinson asserts that, while more money does not necessarily lead to more learning, more equitable allocation of funds can. She makes a convincing argument that improving literacy and numeracy skills is not just a matter of funds but, rather, of investing in teacher quality through greater autonomy, better training, and well-structured incentives; and conducting early individualized assessments to identify struggling students; and offering quality preprimary school, especially for socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Historically, Alaska has made considerable investments in the first two areas—identifying struggling students and improving teacher quality. Yet, investment in preprimary school (i.e., pre-kindergarten) has been woefully lacking in our public school cache. The importance of pre-kindergarten for socioeconomically disadvantaged children is now more imperative than ever. Robinson outlines several reasons for action:

1. America’s poverty rate, at 17.1 percent of all children (Alaska’s rate is 14 percent), is higher than many countries, including Finland, Germany, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and Japan.

2. According to the 2012 PISA report, students who attended early childhood programs performed a full year ahead of their peers. High-performing countries that invest heavily in pre-kindergarten opportunities include Singapore, where 99 percent of children have at least one year of pre-school; Shanghai, which provides universal pre-school access for all children; and Poland, an impressive performer where pre-primary education is now required, resulting in a 33 percent increase in early childhood participation between 2005 and 2011. These countries and others are proving, in quantifiable ways, the undeniable value of pre-kindergarten programs.

3. A solid body of research shows that investments in early childhood education pay real dividends socially and economically. One such study by David Deming of Harvard found that Head Start graduates were less likely to repeat grades, be diagnosed with learning disabilities, and more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.

In Alaska, an examination of recent graduation rates provides strong evidence that our economically disadvantaged students are disproportionately identified as non-graduates. As illustrated in the table below, of the 2,798 non-graduates, 1,565 non-graduates (56%) were in the economically disadvantaged sub-group. Clearly, opportunities for early learning such as pre-school would provide a necessary and important boost for these children.

High quality, early childhood programs across the world are demonstrating positive results, with fewer referrals to special education programs, reduced grade repetition, and increased high school graduation rates—advancements that would make all Alaskans proud. We have an opportunity to make a difference and give all children a chance by stepping forward and clearing pathways to early success for our children living in poverty.

### 2011, 2012 & 2013 Alaska Graduation Rate Total vs. Economically Disadvantaged 4-Year Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cohort</th>
<th>Economically Disadvantaged Cohort</th>
<th>44% of total non-graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7,116</td>
<td>3,378</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7,116</td>
<td>3,144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>7,129</td>
<td>2,798</td>
<td>56% of total non-graduates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALASKA ARTS EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
ADMINISTRATORS RETREAT
ANCHORAGE APRIL 30-MAY 1, 2014

This program is provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The Alaska Arts Education Consortium is supported, in part, by a grant from the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

This program is provided under a contract with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The Alaska Arts Education Consortium is supported, in part, by a grant from the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Register online now at www.akartsed.org
Contact MK MacNaughton with questions — aaec@akartsed.org — 907-957-2061

• Learn why the arts are important for ALL students
• Focus on working with students with disabilities
• Learn how to integrate the arts with the Common Core and Alaska Standards
• Gain statewide and national arts and special education perspectives
• Assess your school’s arts health
• Hear about state programs, resources and training opportunities
• Experience live student arts performances
• Collaborate with art leaders across the state
• Leave the retreat ready to increase the arts in your district!

Keynote Speaker
Mary Liniger
Executive Director of Art Enables has designed and implemented professional development workshops for inclusive arts programs and worked extensively within the D.C. arts community as both the Arts Education and ADA/504 Accessibility Coordinator for the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities.
District Budgets: Make Every Dollar Count!
by Jim Farrington, Treasurer, Anchorage School District; President, ALASBO

Happy New Year!!!

As we move into the second half of the fiscal year, we find ourselves right in the middle of budget time. Most districts face the possibility that they will have to make cuts to staff and programs, and we realize this is not going to be easy. The cuts will likely impact customers who should not have to suffer. Those customers are the children of the State of Alaska.

The reality is that this is a serious issue for all districts—not just the big or small, the rural or urban, but every district across our state. How districts will manage and forecast the cuts that they are faced with will vary, but the bottom line is that most cuts will probably impact the classroom, whether it be through increased class sizes, additional class periods, reduced curriculum, elimination of programs—and, in some cases, more than one of these.

In the Anchorage School District, we recently announced a 6% reduction of our classroom teachers. This accounts for 159 positions being eliminated. Some of these teachers may have been given notice in prior years, but, through attrition and the late addition of one-time funding from the legislature, they were not released at that time. However, here we are again in the same position of balancing the budget, knowing we will have to make significant reductions in classroom teachers and support staff in order to make the budget effective.

One-time funding can be a helpful addition once it is proposed and passed. However, you cannot budget for it or count on it to appear. The budget needs to be balanced based on what we know. So the question comes back to: How do we do this? Sure, the easy answer is to increase the Base Student Allocation annually so we will have a better ability to foresee and plan for the future. This remains a possibility, and, if it does happen, we will be able to better plan and balance the budget with known factors.

As school district employees, we can also help in this process in a way I suggested to the ALASBO organization in December—that is, to “Make Every Dollar Count.” How we do this may vary from district to district and position to position within each district. Simple things range from preventive maintenance that will make our equipment and facilities last longer, to embracing new technology in order to better utilize the strengths of remaining personnel. I encourage each of you to consider for your district what it means to not just “count every dollar,” but to make every dollar count.

A Visit to a Primary School in Zimbabwe
by Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

My husband Stan and I recently had a chance to vacation in southern Africa. For us, one of the highlights of our tours with Overseas Adventure Travel is a chance to visit a local school. On this trip, we visited St. Mary’s Primary School, located in a rural area about 90 minutes from Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates of any country in Africa. However, recent political turmoil has taken a toll on the education system. Our tour guide explained that most of the students have had few interactions with Caucasians or other people from outside their village, so our visit was important for their exposure to us as well.

St. Mary’s School was founded by the Catholic Church in the 1930s, but is now run as a community school. The enrollment is about 750 students. Although our visit in mid-January was only on the 2nd day of the new school term, we were impressed by the organized greeting we received from some of the older students, who sang a welcome song for our group.

The headmistress gave us some information about the school. Class sizes are 40-50 students per room, and space is a problem. Former bathrooms have been converted to classrooms, and there was a row of outhouses behind the school. There is no space for a library. All classes are in English after the first two years. School subjects are mostly standard, but also include local language and HIV/AIDS, which is still an important health issue faced by students in their community.

All students wear uniforms and short haircuts, to decrease the transmission of head lice. Local farm animals tend to wander into school grounds, so the staff would like to put a fence around the school. There is one computer at the school for administrative use, and another goal is to find a way to expose students to computers prior to their transition to secondary school. Students typically walk several kilometers to and from school. No school lunch is provided; some bring their lunch and others do not have anything to eat until they return home.
A Visit to a Primary School in Zimbabwe (continued)

One of the biggest challenges faced by the school is teacher turnover, which is related to a lack of teacher housing in the community – sounds familiar! Another challenge is that parents are shy to tutor and assist their students at home, though they often assist with school maintenance projects. Occasionally, the school has received support from UNICEF and other charities, but these programs come and go. In spite of many challenges, the headmistress proudly reported that several students from St. Mary’s School have scored in the top 10% nationally on primary school tests in recent years.

We visited two classrooms. One of the teachers took the students through an English drill. Some of the visitors in our group were asked if there was snow where they lived and about half the students raised their hands to indicate that they’d like to visit a place with snow some day! In the second classroom, the books I’d brought with me on Alaska were quite popular – snow and some new types of wildlife too!

Some of the visitors took digital pictures on their cameras and iPads and shared the pictures with the students right away, which was very popular. We were told that some students don’t have a mirror at home, so it was a rare chance to see their own image.

We were impressed by the attentiveness of the students to their teachers. Like students everywhere, these kids deserve a chance for a better future through education!

Jenny Martens Named ALASBO School Business Official of the Year

Congratulations to Jenny Martens, Director of Budget & Finance with the Lower Yukon School District. Jenny was named the Alaska School Business Official of the Year at ALASBO’s December 2013 annual conference in Anchorage. Candidates for this prestigious award are nominated by their colleagues within the Alaska school business profession.

Annually, a panel of previous recipients selects a deserving individual from the nominees submitted based upon their recognized outstanding service, innovative plan design and implementation, and the use of exemplary business practices within school business management.

The award has been sponsored for the past fifteen years by PenAir. The recipient receives roundtrip travel certificates, a check for $500 and an engraved plaque.

Jenny Martens grew up in Seward, Alaska. She began her work with school districts as a School Board member in Petersburg, and later became an employee of the school district and served as Business Manager. Martens was also Business Manager of Nome Public Schools before moving to the Lower Yukon School District.

Jenny Martens has been active on both ASBO and ALASBO committees, and served as ALASBO President in 2012.

In her nomination materials, Jenny’s colleagues note that “her work ethic and character are second to none” and that she “always maintains a priority for our students”.

Congratulations, Jenny on this well deserved honor!

ALASBO Board of Directors

Jim Farrington
President
Anchorage

Robin Mullins
President-Elect
Fairbanks Northstar Borough

Laurie Olson
Past President
Kenai Peninsula Borough

Mark Vink
Secretary
Bering Strait

Lee Ann Andrew
Treasurer
Southwest Region

Holly Holman
Director, Seat A
Unalaska City

Rebecca Wright
Director, Seat B
Mat-Su Borough

Martha Morgan
Director, Seat C
Kuspuk

Cassee Olin
Director, Seat D
Sitka

Melissa Bell
Director, Seat E
Alaska DEED

Carl Horn
Director, Seat F
Nenana City

STAFF
Amy Lujan
Executive Director
This Working Conference will provide participants with the opportunity to: 1) reinforce their knowledge and understandings of the statutory requirements; 2) learn from colleagues about their design and planning efforts; 3) examine recommendations and sample tools from the EED Educator Effectiveness Task Force; and 4) engage in planning conversations to prepare for the full implementation of an Educator Evaluation System.

**2014 Spring Leadership Working Conference**

**Designing and Implementing High Quality Educator**

**Date:** April 8 - 9, 2014 / 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Downtown Anchorage Sheraton Hotel

**Special Feature:** Pre and post webinars will help prepare participants for the Working Conference and will offer follow-up on the outcomes of the Working Conference. The preparation webinar will be on March 6 (a recorded version will be available for all registrants).

**Cost:** Tier One Districts/Organizations - $125; Tier Two Districts/Organizations - $225. Lunch provided.

**Target Audience:** This conference is designed for district teams (2–5 people) involved in the design of new educator evaluation systems for their district. Teams should consider including the point person for the educator evaluation work, a teacher leader, a school site leader and a central office administrator.

Across the nation, policy makers and the general public have turned their attention to improving teacher quality. Bolstered by research acknowledging that the quality of the teacher is the single most important factor in improving student learning, over thirty-eight states have passed legislation and instituted new rules concerning educator evaluation. This working conference will explore the issues in designing, planning, and implementing an educator evaluation system based on the new Alaska regulations. It will offer concrete tools for getting started with your implementation effort.

**Conference Purposes:**

- To review the statutory and regulatory requirements in anticipation of implementing new plans and processes for educator evaluation.
- To explore the foundational elements of building a plan including: specifying goals, engaging stakeholders, and communicating the plan.
- To review sample tools developed by the EED Educator Effectiveness Task Force and consider how they can be applied to your district initiative.
- To engage in planning and learning conversations about processes for selecting an observation tool and piloting the tool with staff.
- To review guidelines for selecting measures with a focus on student learning objectives.
- To highlight the criteria and components that will ensure high quality implementation of the educator evaluation process.

This Working Conference will provide participants with the opportunity to: 1) reinforce their knowledge and understandings of the statutory requirements; 2) learn from colleagues about their design and planning efforts; 3) examine recommendations and sample tools from the EED Educator Effectiveness Task Force; and 4) engage in planning conversations to prepare for the full implementation of an Educator Evaluation System.

**Conference Leaders:** Dr. Al Bertani, Senior Design Consultant - ASDN; Dr. Susan McCauley, Director of Teaching and Learning - EED, Sondra Meredith, Administrator

Alaska Staff Development Network: 907-364-3809 or e-mail asdn@alaskaacsa.org

Register online at: [asdn.org](http://asdn.org)

---

### Alaska Staff Development Network Annual Meeting

**Date:** Thursday, April 10, 8:00 am - Noon  
**Location:** Anchorage Sheraton Hotel  
**Cost:** No charge, please register online at [asdn.org](http://asdn.org). Breakfast provided.

**Join Us!**

The Alaska Staff Development Network is a statewide partnership that provided over 5,000 Alaska educators with face-to-face training and distance learning classes last year. Our mission is to improve student achievement by providing research-based professional development programs for Alaska’s teachers and school administrators.

Please join us for our 26th annual meeting. Help develop our 2014-2015 priorities and provide input for our upcoming programs. Hear about the latest statewide and national developments in professional development, educator effectiveness systems, new standards implementation and distance learning opportunities. Our annual meeting is also a great opportunity to network with your colleagues from all over the state.

**Target Audience:** central office administrators, professional association leaders, EED staff and university representatives.
## 2014 Educational Association Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location/Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NASSP National Conference</strong></td>
<td>Dallas, TX&lt;br&gt;February 6-8, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASB Leadership/Legislative Fly-in</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;February 8-11, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASA National Education Conference</strong></td>
<td>Nashville, TN&lt;br&gt;February 13-15, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASTE Conference</strong></td>
<td>Anchorage, AK&lt;br&gt;February 22-25, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASA Legislative Fly-in</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;March 2-4, 2014&lt;br&gt;State Board of Education – Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;March 13-14, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALASBO Legislative Fly-in</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;March 17-19, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASB Legislative Fly-in</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;March 22-25, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAESP/AASSP Legislative Fly-in</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;March 26-28, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSBA 74th Annual Conference</strong></td>
<td>New Orleans, LA&lt;br&gt;April 5-7, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASDN Annual Spring Leadership Conf. &amp; Membership Meeting</strong></td>
<td>Anchorage, AK&lt;br&gt;April 8-11, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATP Job Fair</strong></td>
<td>Anchorage, AK&lt;br&gt;April 11-12, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>28th Alaska Legislative Session Ends</strong></td>
<td>June 20, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACSA Quarterly Board Meeting –Teleconference</strong></td>
<td>May 22, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State School Board Meeting – Fairbanks, AK</strong></td>
<td>June 5-6, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAESP National Conference</strong></td>
<td>Nashville, TN&lt;br&gt;July 10-12, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASA/EED Summer Meeting</strong></td>
<td>Juneau, AK&lt;br&gt;July 27-28, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AASA Fall Conference</strong></td>
<td>Fairbanks, AK&lt;br&gt;September 25-27, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**BUSINESSES ARE CHAMPIONS FOR ALASKA’S CHILDREN!**

The Alaska Association of School Administrators is grateful for the sponsorship and financial support of the businesses that provide goods and services to public schools across Alaska.