ACSA President’s Message
by Alan Fields, Principal, Kenai Central High School

It is hard to believe that we are so close to the end of the school year and already facing the inevitable work load and time lines. We often have one foot in the current school year, working at a feverish pace to accomplish the goals and tasks at hand, while the other foot is on to next year’s planning and preparation.

ACSA’s spring Education Bulletin encompasses the theme of partnerships at the federal and state level. Our various memberships in state and national organizations are good examples. Often these memberships are the most utilized vehicles for advocacy on the state and federal levels. They offer a means of partnering with other organizations to create professional development opportunities that are meaningful for school leaders.

It is the leaders of these organizations who are often tasked with ensuring that our educational priorities are presented to policymakers in Washington, D.C. and Juneau. It makes sense that we assign the task to those who have shown interest and have volunteered to do the work. Our national and statewide associations have strong leaders who are committed to and passionate about public education and the students we serve.

Associations experience challenges when their members become complacent and allow a single voice to speak on their behalf. Policymakers at all levels are more likely to be influenced by many voices delivering the same or similar messages. When many calls are made and many individuals send email messages and letters, there is a greater impact than when only one voice represents everyone. A combination of representation and individual advocacy seems ideal. If you don’t use your own voice, how can you be sure your specific story is told?

Professional development happens regularly through partnerships. By pooling our resources and finding common themes or needs among our associations, we can leverage our professional development dollars and those of our members.

Each fall, the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals and the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals that, through deliberate efforts, would help schools meet the needs of diverse student populations. School districts will need such a commitment from the legislature to effect policy and programmatic strategies if they are to have any chance at tackling the complex, wide-ranging challenges that stand in the way of improved student performance.

Another notable component found within several measures is increased funding for the base student allocation (BSA) to account for inflation. Because Anchorage is one of the 27 urban areas monitored by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Anchorage consumer price index (CPI) is often used to gauge inflation statewide. According to Neal Fried, economist with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, writing in Alaska Economic Trends August 2010, the average annual increase for Anchorage’s CPI has been 2.7% since 1990.

As a cost of doing business, districts are faced with many of the major CPI elements: energy, food and beverages, transportation, housing, medical care, education and communication, and other goods and services. In order for districts to sustain programs and effective staffing ratios, year-to-year inflationary pressures must be considered.

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I’ve been thinking about what we mean by “partnership” in respect to the relationships we develop and nurture. We work with parents, businesses in our community, other schools and districts, and government agencies. Each of those partnerships is grounded in our common work to develop an educated citizenry that will be actively involved in our collective social and economic life. We work to develop in students a sense of civic responsibility and the skills needed to contribute to our economy.

When a business forms a partnership with another business, there is an understanding that both parties in the relationship will contribute resources toward a shared outcome. In our case, the shared outcome is an educated citizenry. We can’t support business partners by sharing a luncheon, though school business partners may express their appreciation for the work teachers do by hosting a luncheon. Our partners may volunteer in our schools by working directly with students as tutors. On the other hand, school principals are resource-poor as partners.

There is a difference in the types of things schools can bring to partnerships and what other agencies and governments can bring. No matter how mindful we are of ensuring that the school is reciprocating and supporting the alliance fairly, there are inherent differences. Public recognition, student artwork, and the satisfaction that comes from making a difference for children are about all we can give in the short term.

The most important thing we bring to the partnership is our expertise as educators—the knowledge we have gained regarding how children learn and how best to teach them. It is up to us to make the value of that expertise clear to the public. Our professionalism is not a “thing” that we can point to; we can’t even quantify it, except by outcome. Therefore, it may be difficult to validate and hard for taxpayers to appreciate.

When I talk with legislators and community members about the resources schools need to be successful, there is a perception that schools have their hands out. More than that, there are many who openly question our success in meeting our shared goal of an educated citizenry. Respected people in the national and local conversation tout statistics that cloud the discussion.

For example, in my district the community wonders why school budgets are rising when the consumer price index in the community has been relatively flat. But they don’t know that among the students we serve, more are qualifying for federally funded free and reduced lunches and more are receiving support as Children in Transition. They don’t know more students are receiving increasingly intense special education services. They don’t know how many students come to our district speaking languages other than English or understand that providing services to these students is more expensive.

The important thing is that in spite of these challenges, it is our job and our privilege to provide the opportunity for every child to be a successful citizen. We need our government partners to fully appreciate our success and understand more clearly the nature of our contributions to the partnership equation.

As principals it is our role to invite our government partners into our schools to meet our children and see our work. Let’s join together and sing the praises of our teachers, our students and our schools. It will be a glorious chorus!
Talking Points for the Legislature
by John Pile, Executive Director, AAESP

The Joint Position Statements from the Alaska Council of School Administrators are a product of the partnership among the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, Alaska Association of School Administrators and the Alaska Association of School Business Officials. This document is the basis for the talking points used when Alaska principals, representing each of us, met with state lawmakers in Juneau in mid-March. It will also be used when principals meet with our federal leaders in Washington, D.C. in July.

It is good to have a document that reflects common concerns of our professional associations. One of our associations’ goals is to build strong partnerships that improve educational opportunities for Alaska’s young people. The Joint Position Statements are one step toward this goal.

Along those same lines, one of the many pleasures of working in the field of public education is the knowledge that many organizations, companies and individuals appreciate the importance of what we do and want us to be successful. They want to be part of a positive partnership to support the young people we serve.

I was reminded of this appreciation during the recent spring break. Thanks to a “partnership” of my own, I was encouraged to go to a Barry Manilow concert in Las Vegas. It was very well attended, with many couples seeming to have a lot in common. About half of the audience was brought by the other half.

I must say that I was moved by one part of the performance in particular. Manilow spent considerable time during the early part of his show describing his childhood and the neighborhood in Brooklyn where he grew up. He explained that it was his public high school orchestra that made it possible for him to be where he is today, and went on to express his concerns about the budget cuts affecting public education.

Barry Manilow considers himself a partner with public schools. He announced that anyone who donates a musical instrument through him for local schools would be provided with a free concert ticket. He also said that ten percent of all revenue from the Manilow Gift Shop is designated to promote local music programs in the public schools. The audience seemed to understand and share Manilow’s concerns, giving him one of many standing ovations in appreciation for his comments and actions. It was good to know that successful people remember their roots and fondly recall that there are special teachers who changed their lives.

As principals meet with their state and federal representatives, they are meeting with people who want principals to succeed. They are meeting with people who know the importance of the work principals do. They remember their own principals and want to be part of what we do to help our students succeed. People watch what we do, and when they ask how they can help us succeed, it is important for us to let them know.

Chevak—Partnering for Long-Term Success
by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA/AASA

The Kashunamiut School District, located in Chevak, and the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) have entered into a partnership to assist sixteen local paraprofessionals in securing a bachelor’s degree, complete with a teaching certificate. Spearheaded by Kashunamiut Superintendent Doug Conboy and Jim Powell, Director of the Department of Teaching at Learning at UAA, the partnership is a new effort to address a longstanding challenge to develop and retain local teachers in rural Alaska. The initial cohort started this fall. In addition to their daily paraprofessional responsibilities, these sixteen individuals are tackling their general education requirements toward a bachelor’s degree.

While most courses are delivered through distance education, UAA has committed to send an instructor to Chevak at least once during each course. According to Patricia Chesbro, Director of Special Projects at UAA and former principal and superintendent in the Mat-Su Borough School District, the program is designed to marry the Cupik ways of knowing with western traditions, producing teachers who know the community and the value of traditional knowledge and skills.

Superintendent Conboy stated that “success for all students is directly related to having quality teachers on staff and retaining them over time.” Everyone associated with the program shares the belief that growing teachers from within the community will have a long-term pay back. It will be exciting to watch the evolution of this program in terms of cohort success and benefits to the Chevak community.
AASSP President’s Message

by Adam Mokelke, Newhalen School

At a time when public education is often placed in a negative light, it is critical for us to stand up and advocate for it. The University of Alaska claims that we are producing under-qualified graduates and our legislators are listening. Legislators are questioning student academic performance, specifically with regard to graduation rates, while 5th and 6th year seniors continue to be counted as dropouts. NCLB will soon result in a vast majority of our schools being labeled as “failing,” including schools that are consistently growing and improving.

The documentary film “Waiting for Superman” suggests that charter schools are the answer, despite the fact that there is no evidence to show that charter schools outperform public schools. The school turnaround models in the proposed reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act call for firing the principal instead of calling for the support that principals need to be successful. Under this pressure, principals need to do what they do best: stand up and lead. The question is, how?

With our profession under fire, principals need to take a lead role in advocacy. Alaska is still a “small” State; our legislators still listen and open their doors to us, and human relationships still matter. We need to capitalize on this. Many people are telling their stories, sharing their opinions, and these individual accounts can sway lawmakers.

Principals need to be doing the same. We need to build relationships with policymakers and share good information with them. They need to know that your “failing” school experienced 20% growth. They need to hear that your “dropouts” came back for a 5th year to complete their education. Legislators need to hear stories about what you are doing to keep kids in school, reduce dropouts, improve achievement, eliminate bullying, and keep schools safe.

They need to hear the level of time, commitment, effort, energy and care we put into our profession, all in the name of doing good things for kids.

Not all of us can fly to Juneau and provide testimony and advocacy. This is a service provided by ACSA and both principals’ associations. ACSA officers, along with several principals in the field, recently completed a visit to Juneau focused on sharing information with legislators and advocating for public education.

The message should not end there, however. We can all write letters, send emails, and pick up the phone. Personal testimony matters, and it can impact policy.

We have a responsibility to our children to speak out. Negative perceptions and misinformation about our schools, systems and practices are heard on Capitol Hill. Those testimonies, for good or ill, do affect public policy. A perception that our system is not working, or that we are not doing enough, can lead directly to reduced support and funding for public education.

For example, Senate Bill 84 proposes a modest increase in the Base Student Allocation—enough to keep up with inflation. Yet there is still the possibility that this bill will not pass, due to a lack of support for any increase in funding for education. We have a collective responsibility to inform our legislators about the ways in which we use these resources to benefit students and improve achievement. We have a collective responsibility to explain that no increase actually means a decrease. With rising costs, especially fuel, we would have to reduce the services we provide students.

We do not need to make excuses or lower ourselves to pointing fingers. We just need to stand up for our profession and share our stories. Our staff and students expect us to lead, and this includes advocacy.

Partnerships Within Our Communities

by André Layral, Executive Director, AASSP

Anyone who has lived in Alaska for any length of time knows that this state has enjoyed a great deal of federal aid due to the efforts of our congressional delegation, and in particular the late Senator Ted Stevens. The influx of these federal funds has benefitted the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Alaska school districts and schools, and the many state agencies that partner with school districts to provide education services.

The challenge in the near future will be to broaden existing partnerships and to identify new partnerships that will continue to strengthen pre-K to postsecondary education and opportunities for students. As the federal deficit is
Partnerships Within Our Communities

Looming large on many people’s minds, there is a growing awareness that there may be far fewer dollars to go around and more competition for them. Past relationships developed through state and federal partnerships will be called upon to help sustain programs in this new environment of doing more with less.

Scrolling down the page of resources for educators and administrators on the DEED website, it becomes clear that the state oversees a long list of diverse education programs that benefit Alaska school districts. Many of these partnerships go beyond merely satisfying the federal NCLB requirements. Most have the broader goal of enhancing student learning and achievement, developing curriculum or resources that engage students, and enhancing staff capacity to improve instruction through professional development and training. Several others fulfill the broader goals of supporting families, improving communication and engaging the local community to support youth success.

Partnerships infuse new thinking and energy essential to strengthening educational opportunities for all students. Partnerships build student knowledge while making a lasting impact on student attitudes and beliefs about what they can achieve in their lives. Partnerships lead to effective policy and greater support and advocacy.

Any meaningful partnership with a federal or state agency must be one that offers mutual benefit while achieving desired outcomes. Receiving funding is often a reason to enter a partnership, but if the partnership is only about money, mutually beneficial outcomes could easily get lost.

Here are a few successful school and school district partnerships made possible by federal and state funds as well as business investments in education:

- **21st Century Alaska Community Learning Center (CCLC)**—provides competitive grants to organizations that are working in partnership within their communities and schools to provide expanded learning and enrichment opportunities for children and their families outside of regular school hours. The program is designed to target funds to high-needs communities that have low achieving students and high rates of poverty but lack the resources to establish after-school centers.
- **Alaska Statewide Mentor Project**—provides individualized support to first and second-year teachers, developing an effective teaching force that is responsive to the diverse academic needs and cultural backgrounds of all students.
- **Preparing Indigenous Teachers for All Alaska Schools (PITAAS)**—a partnership between school districts, the University of Alaska Southeast, Sealaska and Tlingit-Haida that provides mentors in Southeast Alaska high schools.
- **Future Teachers of Alaska**—a statewide collaborative effort to inspire Alaska Native K-12 students to become teachers that involves a partnership among parents, teachers, University of Alaska campuses, communities and others.
- **Business and Industry Internships**—allow students to experience a variety of career pathways while strengthening their skills for the work force. Tech Prep agreements between many school district, university and apprenticeship programs provide students with credit toward postsecondary certificates, credentials or degrees.
- **Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE)**—works to give Alaskans at the local level the information, tools and assistance to work together and engage in the shared responsibility of preparing Alaska’s children and youth for the future.
- **Best Beginnings**—a public-private partnership that mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed.
- **BP Principal and Commissioner Scholarship Program**—a partnership between BP Alaska and the Alaska Principal Foundation to annually provide 25 four-year scholarships to graduating Alaska high school seniors nominated by their school principals.
- **Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN)**—is designed to serve as a resource for compiling and exchanging information related to Alaska Native knowledge systems and ways of knowing. It has been established to assist Native people, government agencies, educators and the general public in gaining access to the knowledge base that Alaska Natives have acquired through cumulative experience over millennia.

Improving Alaska’s Education System: Task Force Recommendations

The Final Report of the Alaska Advisory Task Force on Higher Education and Career Readiness is complete. The Task Force, co-chaired by Senate President Gary Stevens and House Speaker Mike Chenault, was comprised of 20 individuals representing various entities including higher education, K-12 public education, the Commission on Post-Secondary Education, the Association of Alaska School Boards and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA). Sitka School District Superintendent Steve Bradshaw served as the ACSA representative.

The Task Force had a rigorous meeting schedule over the past several months with eight two-day meetings, followed by brief meetings on March 26 and 30 to finalize the report.

The Task Force began its work with the following goal: *Every student in Alaska will complete high school with sufficient skills to enter the workforce, or a course of study at a postsecondary institution, without the need for remedial coursework in the core areas of reading, writing and math by the end of fiscal year 2017.*

In completing their work, the Task Force identified four core areas and accompanying themes to focus the recommendations:

1. **Student Success**: career and technical training, bridging programs, alternative pathways, and robust academia.
2. **Career Path Guidance**: parental engagement, informing the public and students about the importance of finishing high school, well trained advisors, and academic and career coaches.
3. **Strengthening Schools**: data collection and sharing, statewide interagency support, communication and collaboration, objective
Improving Alaska’s Education System

assessment of student academic skill level, programs designed to meet needs of rural students, teacher professional development including cultural relevance, and reexamination of remedial education.

4. Predictable and Sustainable Funding: value of Pre-K and early literacy investments, new teaching pedagogy investments, incentives for college students to graduate on schedule, and long-term sustainable financial aid for students.

The report concluded with recognition that Alaska will not be able to build a healthy and diverse economy without changes that improve productivity in the education system. The time for change is now. It is time for a plan of action. The full report is available at hecr.aksenate.org.

Meet Alaska’s 2011 Middle and High School Principals of the Year

T he Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals has named Lisa Zelenkov, Principal of Central Middle School of Science in Anchorage, and Karen Gaborik, Principal of Lathrop High School in Fairbanks, as the 2011 Alaska Middle and High School Principals of the Year. Each was chosen for her accomplishments and for completing the rigorous MetLife/NASSP National Principal of the Year application. The application involved writing three reflective essays on topics such as Collaborative Leadership; Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; and Personalization.

Zelenkov and Gaborik are now eligible candidates to become the 2012 MetLife/NASSP National Middle and High School Principals of the Year. They will attend a special State and National Principals Institute and Awards Banquet in Washington, D.C. in October 2011, where the Middle and High School Principals of the Year for all fifty states will share their expertise among peers and national leaders in education.

Zelenkov has served as principal of Central Middle School of Science since 2007. She began work with the Anchorage School District as Student Services Assistant Principal in 2000. Prior to joining Central, Zelenkov worked as principal of Anchorage’s Wonder Park Elementary School from 2004-2007. She received her B.A. in K-8 Education in 1996 from the University of Alaska Anchorage, where she completed her M.Ed. in 2005. She is currently working on her Ed.D. from Grand Canyon University.

Zelenkov believes schools must involve teachers, parents, students and community to achieve a shared vision. She believes every student must have the best possible chance of realizing success. Key to success at Central has been the alignment of the school curriculum with high school standards in career and technical education. Combined with targeted resources and collaboration with many partners, Central has been able to provide additional academic support for students who may otherwise have fallen through the cracks, using data to compare the success of students in various subgroups where new interventions are being tried.

Gaborik has served as principal of Lathrop High School in since 2006, where she also served as assistant principal from 2003 to 2006. A graduate of Fairbanks’s Ben Eielson High School, Gaborik began her career as a teacher at North Pole Middle School, where she worked from 1995 to 2002. She received her B.A. in Education in 1992 from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and her M.Ed. in 1994 from UAA. In April 2011, Gaborik completed all requirements for her Ed.D. from Argosy University.

Gaborik had a singular goal when she became principal at Lathrop in 2006, “that all Lathrop students have access to high quality academic programs and the necessary support to achieve success.” Today, Lathrop is implementing reforms fueled by staff commitment to achieve the shared vision developed for the school.

For three years, Gaborik led a diverse planning group in researching how to effectively develop smaller learning communities. This effort ultimately led the school to apply for a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop Smaller Learning Communities. In October 2010, Lathrop was awarded one of only 28 national five-year, $1.9 million grants.

Under Gaborik’s tenure, Lathrop has now implemented several elements of small learning communities: freshman teams, advisories, an academic intervention center, professional learning communities, an Engineering and Design Academy, a Positive Alternative to Suspension program, an Ignition Mentorship program, a Fine Arts and Communication Academy, and personal learning plans.
Laying the Groundwork for Building Community Partnerships
by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA/AASA

As the first session of the 27th Legislature comes to a close I am reminded of the many times the word “partnerships” has been part of the advocacy conversation as senators and representatives debate issues and the public provides testimony. Partnerships are frequently cited as a solution when testimony is voiced during the countless hours of listening.

As school administrators, we recognize that partnerships take many forms and encompass many players including students, parents, businesspersons, state and local agencies and the federal government. Recently, Margaret Brown, President and CEO of Cook Inlet Region, Inc. offered an intriguing partnership concept during testimony before the House Education Committee in support of Senate Bill 199.

SB 199, Funding for State Boarding Schools, intends to increase the state residential boarding stipend being paid to three districts—Galena, Nenana and Lower Kuskokwim. While Brown endorsed the funding increase, her testimony quickly expanded with approval from Committee Chair Alan Dick to focus on concerns that she and other Native corporation leaders have regarding small rural high schools and her observation that these high schools lack the capacity to offer a comprehensive program to meet the needs of today’s students.

Brown spoke of her own family’s experience with the Alaska education system, the Molly Hootch lawsuit and Tóbelók consensus decree, and how the decree changed the education landscape as parents living in rural Alaska no longer faced the difficult decision of sending their children to a boarding school or relocating to a community with a school. What came next may have surprised many in the room as she explored the need to reexamine the impact of the consent decree. She spoke of the need to congregate high school students in order to create a more meaningful, inviting and motivating school environment, something she believes is extremely challenging in Alaska’s 72 high schools that have ten or fewer students.

In her testimony and in a recent article in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner, Brown stated that education has changed dramatically in the last 39 years. Now is the time, she said, to reassess the impact of decisions made since the consent decree. She reaffirmed that the time is ripe to consider systemic change associated with the reestablishment of residential high schools in Alaska’s regional hubs. She has also backed up her seriousness about this need by having CIRI establish a residential facility in Anchorage for approximately 40 rural homeless or nearly homeless students. This facility near Bartlett High School could potentially serve to reintroduce residential regional high schools and could set an example for other corporations to follow.

In her closing remarks, Brown challenged the House Education Committee to seize the moment by creating the opportunity for this dialogue to continue. The committee members were obviously intrigued by the concept and some members began thinking out loud about creating a task force to examine the matter further over the interim and into the 27th Legislature second session.

I cannot speak for the House Education Committee or for Margie Brown and her fellow Native Corporation leaders, but the “chemistry” that overtook the room invited action. All need to be aware that a broader discussion could develop at any time we benefit the association. As we place one foot into next year, let’s step out of our comfort zone and explore the need to reassess the impact of the consent decree.
AASA President’s Message
by Jim Nygaard, Superintendent, Cordova City Schools

Maintaining a state level partnership in Alaska involves several challenges. One obvious challenge is the geographic isolation of most districts and the resulting distance from elected leaders in Juneau. Another is the challenge of working with legislators who are spread thin in their efforts to serve all constituents. Taken together with the citizens’ vote to reduce the legislative session to 90 days, these challenges severely limit the amount of time we have to spend with our state legislators.

Still, as longtime U.S. Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill once commented, “All politics is local.” Understanding that many policies and bills are decided by a small number of people, time spent in the offices of our legislators or at lunch with them during a trip to the capital is time well invested.

In the long run, all of us listen especially to people we know, like and trust. Although we strive to keep open minds, when we hear conflicting arguments we fall back on those we have learned to trust. Hopefully our legislators feel the same about each of us. When it comes down to decisive votes, if we have maintained honest relationships and have presented them with realistic expectations, our letters of support and our phone calls do make a difference with our legislators. They will pay more attention to those they are familiar with than to those they do not know.

While I have typically given my own experience with our legislature a “satisfactory” grade, there are times I cannot get in to see my representative or senator due to scheduling conflicts. They know that when they speak to superintendents or board members they are not talking to a single person, and that their information will soon be shared within our districts and associations. This works both ways. I carry a given message to all members and teaching staff, and I trust that each legislator will do the same. For that reason we all need to ensure that we are consistent and realistic with our expectations.

If your legislator returns your phone calls, trusts your information, and is willing to go out on a limb for you, you are more apt to reach your goals for funding, legislation and other important matters. Such relationships don’t happen without effort, however. Maintaining regular contact, establishing yourself as both trustworthy and reliable, and of course respecting the limitations of the legislators’ aides will help win and keep their support.

What to do when there is a break in your partnership? We have all experienced tough situations when conversation was difficult. As an example, unexpected turnover in a legislative seat when you had openly supported the incumbent could force you to establish a new partnership. In many instances, the newly seated legislator may be somewhat hesitant at first. Bottom line: you’ll need to be absolutely honest about where you stand and what you support. They need to know that they can trust you to be open and honest. They must know they can believe you, even if you disagree on an issue.

There are no short cuts in developing or maintaining strong partnerships. “All politics is local” will keep each of us open to our legislators.

Darroll Hargraves: 2011 AASA Honorary Member

AASA is proud to acknowledge the outstanding professional contributions of Darroll Hargraves, whose Alaska career spans over four decades.

In the mid-1970s, Hargraves assumed his first superintendent position in Nome, where he served until he became superintendent in Ketchikan in 1981. He continued in Ketchikan through the 1987-88 school year before entering private business.

By 1994 he was back in the superintendent ranks to assist the Alaska Gateway Borough School District, where he stayed through the 1997-98 school term. Hargraves was then recruited by ACSA/AASA, where he served as Executive Director from 1998-2002.

He answered the call of superintendent once again for a two-year stint in Yukon Flats, and then assisted Dillingham City Schools during a brief transition period in 2004.

It is with great pride that AASA honors Darroll Hargraves as the 2011 AASA Honorary Member.
An Inside Look at the Alaska Class of 2010

The pie chart to the right represents an overview of the students who started high school in the fall of 2007 and finished four years later in the spring of 2010. With data provided by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the students in each category—graduates, continuing and dropouts—were verified. With this student cohort, 67.4% graduated, 10.6% remained in school to secure their diploma and 22% left school without receiving a diploma.

Many of the continuing students are 5th and 6th year students who are sufficiently motivated to extend their time in high school in order to achieve a diploma. The fact that nearly 1,300 students remain in school as young adults to secure a diploma speaks volumes for the work carried out daily across our state on behalf of teenagers. At the same time, we recognize the need to do better with students choosing to leave school early, knowing that for a host of reasons, students depart due to circumstances beyond the control of the school and family.

Whenever possible, let it be known that we are experiencing success with nearly 80% of our public school students and ramping up to reduce the number of dropouts in the near term with many ongoing initiatives and extra efforts occurring on behalf of students at risk of leaving school early.

2011 AASA Honorary Member Sends Thanks

I want to express my deepest appreciation for the really good time afforded me at the AASA Fly-in banquet. I am happy to accept the honorary membership in AASA. My first association with AASA was in 1972 when I attended the convention in Fairbanks. Now this honorary membership brings back many memories of some really great school administrators and their commitment to Alaska’s children.

Most encouraging of all is the fact that today’s school administrators are talented, skilled and attuned to the political, cultural and fiscal realities of school leadership. I know that today’s school leaders are the best that we have ever had. I wish all of you great success.

Again, may I thank you for the honor that you have given to me.

Sincerely,
Darroll Hargraves
ASDN Partners with School Districts and Professional Associations for Professional Development

Every February the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN) surveys approximately 150 district and professional association leaders. At the same time, as part of our annual statewide professional development needs assessment, ASDN also surveys nearly 4,000 teachers and administrators who have participated in recent ASDN programs.

More than 1,500 responses came back to us, including input from all 53 Alaska school districts. We use this data to set priorities for ASDN distance learning, webinars and face-to-face training programs for the 2011-2012 school year.

Key topics identified in this year’s professional development needs assessment:

- Using data to improve student achievement
- Assessing student work
- Collaboration/Professional Learning Communities
- Multi-Grade Instruction
- Exceptional Education
- Classroom Management/Behavioral Intervention
- Using Technology in the Classroom
- Response to Intervention
- Brain-based Instruction

Highest-need content areas:

- Reading/Language Arts
- Writing
- Social Studies
- Alaska Studies & Multicultural Education
- Math
- Science

We will be working this spring and summer to develop a number of new programs to address these critical statewide priorities. Watch for our fall catalog in August. In the meantime, visit http://asdn.org for the latest information on all ASDN programs.

Alaska Statewide Mentor Project Makes a Difference

by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA/AASA

In January, I was invited to Fairbanks by project leaders to attend and observe the professional development trainings at the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP). This was an excellent opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how ASMP operates, how the project’s research findings relate to effectiveness, and how it works with school districts and leaders. In addition to attending part of the training, I met with Dr. Barbara Adams, Lead Researcher for ASMP; Michael Dunleavy, EED Project Administrator; Melissa Hill, the University of Alaska’s Director of K-12 Outreach; and several of the Alaska Statewide Mentors.

Key take-aways and observations I gleaned during my visit include:

- Professionalism and collegiality—There is a genuine passion and commitment to supporting new teachers. I found the entire group of educators dedicated to learning and to sharing their knowledge. They were highly engaged in their work and actively contributed to the rich dialogue in the training sessions I observed.

- Formative Assessment Tools—A great deal of emphasis was placed on tools to help teachers accelerate their practice in the classroom. Key project components are a non-evaluative model; mentors and teachers have confidential conversations; and mentors are not allowed to endorse or write letters of support on behalf of their teachers.

- Research and Evaluation—The project has collected a wealth of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the model, including focus group interviews of mentors, connections between mentoring and student achievement, and an end-of-year survey of new teachers who were mentored, their site administrators and the mentors themselves. ASMP’s results are encouraging, and I look forward to having Dr. Adams share more in the future. In the meantime, please visit ASMP’s Research Summary.

- Operations—As leaders, we can do many things to support the project. The most obvious is supporting mentors while they are on site. I was not surprised to hear that mentors sleep on floors, pack their own food, work with teachers in the evenings, and end up weathered in during travel. But more importantly, on the instructional side educational leaders have an opportunity to capitalize on the expertise of the mentors who have worked for the project. As mentors return to schools after their two or three years with ASMP, they bring with them a new perspective on education, a deeper understanding of instruction, and a set of skills that can help schools and districts. Needless to say, we need to be strategic in how we connect with these talented and highly trained professionals.

Overall, this was a great opportunity for me to go “behind the scenes” with a project that is focused on improving our schools. We need to identify how best to share information about what ASMP is doing for Alaska and connect the project in a more systemic way to our statewide systems of support. As an essential first step, I highly recommend that we advocate strongly for continued funding for ASMP. It is a proven project and one that is vital to the future of our profession and the students and families we serve.

Senator Menard & Trainer Cathe Rhode
ALASBO President’s Message

within the state’s funding plan. To our benefit, lawmakers are considering the inflation rate with increases to the BSA in SB 73, SB 84, and HB 143.

The additional costs associated with offering vocational programs to students in grades 9-12 is also addressed in SB 84. The importance of such a factor cannot be understated. Currently, the 20% block grant does not provide enough funding within the foundation formula to cover special education, vocational education, English as a second language, and gifted/talented programs. A new vocational education factor would help cover costs associated with the innovative career and technical education classes currently being offered by districts.

Lastly, energy relief and revenue sharing for local municipalities is taken into account with SB 97. This measure provides a funding corridor, so to speak; moving a certain amount of funds from the state’s coffers to local communities when North Slope crude exceeds $89 per barrel. Many districts procure or set a base price for fuel during summer months, so such a provision would provide timely relief for high energy costs.

Again, while this session has yet to bring about concrete gains for education funding, we can be encouraged by the quality of legislation that has been introduced. If anything can be gleaned from this session, it is that lawmakers are listening. With the aforementioned items, it is clear that our collective voice is providing legislators with useful information to improve funding for schools.

House Education Committee Shines a Bright Light on School Districts

House Education Committee Chair Alan Dick, a first-time legislator and long-term teacher and resident of western Alaska, has embraced the involvement of superintendents by allowing a district presentation at the start of each committee meeting. Throughout the first session of the 27th Legislature, Chairman Dick has introduced a superintendent who, in turn, has provided a short ten-minute presentation. These brief but powerful presentations, complete with Google Earth zooming in on the school district, have proven to be beneficial for committee members to gain a better feel for and understanding of each district. Since late January, there have been presentations by 22 superintendents:

Ty Mase, Lake and Peninsula
Kenneth Burnley, Mat-Su
Bob Crumley, Chugach
Karen Ladegard, Iditarod
Stuart McDonald, Kodiak
Jim Smith/Chris Reitan, Galena

Peggy Cowan, North Slope
Michael Byer, Haines
Norm Eck, Northwest Arctic
Jim Nygaard, Cordova
Steve Atwater, Kenai
John Lamont, Lower Yukon

Dave Herbert, St. Mary’s
Jamie Stacks, Pribilofs
Howard Diamond, Yupit
Mike Johnson, Copper River
Steve Bradshaw, Sitka

Rob Picou, Bering Strait
Carol Corneau, Anchorage
Glenn Gelbrich, Juneau
Jack Walsh, Bristol Bay
John Conwell, Unalaska

Chairman Dick, a steadfast advocate for instructional and content relevance as well as quality role models for all students, has reminded his fellow committee members prior to their discussion, “Let’s not forget that we are here for the hundreds of boys and girls out there who are pulling their boots on and loading their backpacks in preparation for another school day.” He has offered to hear from the remaining superintendents as the second session of the 27th Legislature commences in January 2012.

The AASA membership is grateful to Chairman Dick and members of the House Education Committee for their willingness to invest valuable time to gain a better understanding of the educational program being offered students across our state.
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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.

2011 Educational Association Events

**NAESP National Convention**
Tampa Bay • April 7-10

**NSBA 71st Annual Conference**
San Francisco • April 9-11

**ASDN Annual Membership Meeting**
Anchorage • April 14

**ACSA Strategic Plan Update**
Anchorage • April 14

**Alaska Legislature Adjourns**
April 17

**DEED State Board Meeting**
Anchorage • June 9 & 10

**DEED/AASA Summer Meeting**
Juneau • July 31 & August 1

**ALASBO Summer Leadership Conference**
Fairbanks • July 22-24

**ASBO International Annual Meeting**
Seattle • September 16-19

**AASA Fall Meeting**
Anchorage • October 6-8

**AAESP/AASSP Fall Principal Conference**
Anchorage • October 16-18

**ALASBO Annual Conference**
Anchorage • December 4-7