Celebrate Proud and Loud
by John Pothast, President, ACSA and AAESP; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

Upon visiting the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District’s website, KPBSD.k12.ak.us, the first thing that appears, top and center, is our “District Highlights” celebrating the varied programs, staff and students in our district. Photos of our featured programs and people cycle through, allowing visitors to click on them to read more in-depth articles that showcase the great things happening in our district.

Down in the lower right corner of the home page is our “KPBSD Photo of the Day.” Every day of the school year our district posts a picture of one of our students with the caption “He’s the Reason” or “She is Why,” with an invitation to reflection: “She or he is why the school district exists. Every child is welcome in a KPBSD classroom for the opportunity to learn, to engage, to grow. Pause for a moment—gaze at this snapshot in time. This young person has a story. He or she matters.”

These images and stories are posted on our website in order to celebrate: celebrate the individual contributions of every one of our students; celebrate the successful programs delivered throughout our schools; and celebrate our collective partnerships as we work together to bring forty-four diverse schools together in one common direction.

On a statewide level, we must act in a similar fashion. AAESP, AASSP, AASA, ALASBO and ASDN represent our diverse and individual groups, yet we all come together under the ACSA umbrella, joining as one voice for the educational advancement of Alaska’s youth! As such, it is our responsibility to celebrate the great things happening in Alaskan education.

Our school districts’ budget talks continue to make headlines throughout the state, and accountability for how we spend our money and the achievements of our students remain on the forefront of public discussion.

Continued on page 7

Moore v. State of Alaska Settlement Terms

The Moore v. State of Alaska settlement will take effect if approved by a state judge, and if the legislature appropriates $18 million for it. The settlement creates four programs to address low achievement in struggling schools:

A. two-year kindergarten and related pre-literacy programs;
B. a targeted resources grant fund;
C. a teacher retention grant fund; and
D. a high school exit exam remediation reimbursement program.

The schools eligible to participate in A, B, and D are the state’s 40 lowest-performing schools. The teacher retention fund would not be restricted to those 40 schools, but they would receive preference. The 40 lowest-performing schools are calculated by using the three-year average of a modified version of the School Growth Index, which the state uses as an index for its growth model under No Child Left Behind. Under this index, the state measures the extent to which a school’s students improve, regress or remain the same in assessment scores from year to year. The list of eligible schools will be calculated in each year of the program.

Continued on page 8
A Focused Message
by Adam Mokelke, AASSP President; Principal, Burchell High School

Each year, principals, superintendents and business officials work closely together to formulate position statements on the key educational issues facing our state. These position statements guide our legislative agenda. They focus our statewide voice for legislators and guide our efforts to lobby for what is best for our profession and our kids.

I have personally had the pleasure of visiting Juneau the past three years to work with colleagues on sharing our message and insights with our elected representatives. We have the opportunity, on behalf of principals around Alaska, to present our positions and comment on current legislation. Each year, I’ve found it critical to have principals in the field tell their stories and share information with legislators. Although the issues we each face in our roles as school administrators are similar, how these issues play out in our local communities differs greatly, and it is crucial that our legislators have an awareness—and as broad an understanding as possible—of these differences. Legislators need to hear our stories about the effects of funding on our schools and the great things we are able to do for kids. It is critical that we maintain communication with them throughout the session, especially when key bills are being heard. They do listen, and it does help.

This year, perhaps the most important bills will be those affecting the Base Student Allocation (BSA). Currently, Senate Bill 171, introduced by the Senate Education Committee, proposes incremental BSA increases of $125, $130 and $135, respectively, over the next three years. While it is good to see action toward increasing the BSA, is it enough after a year of flat funding? SB 171 amounts to about a 2% increase, and since there was no increase last year it hardly helps to keep up with the rising costs of running schools and districts.

We hear about “flat funding” for education, which actually amounts to a cut in funding each year because the level of services we provide cannot be maintained. The BSA needs to increase each year, at least to the level of rising costs and inflation. Although we did receive the energy cost funding last year, it is important to note the BSA did not increase. This puts us a year behind on keeping up with increasing costs.

It is critical that we continue to support an increase in the BSA. We must share our stories on how funding affects our schools and districts. Your elected officials need to hear about the cuts we were forced to make, and how those cuts are affecting our students. They need to know what another shortfall in funding will mean to those they were elected to represent.

There is a message from Juneau that our system is broken, and that funding won’t fix it. But we know the miracles public educators work every day, and we know that some of the statistics presented to them can be misleading. It is important that we stand up to any negativity and share our positive message. We need to make sure our voices are heard on this issue, and this year more than ever we must speak with one voice. Our top priority must be increasing the BSA.

Greetings from Delta/Greely School District!
by Patrick Mayer, Principal, Delta High School

The Delta Greely School District is located approximately 100 miles southeast of Fairbanks. We service roughly 1,000 students throughout our attendance area. Delta High School and Delta Elementary are located in downtown Delta Junction, whereas Fort Greely School is located within the boundaries of the Fort Greely Military installation. The district also has an alternative school, New Horizons; an “Old Believer” community school in Gerstle River; and the Delta Greely Homeschool program.

Delta Elementary, grades P-3, is a past recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School designation and it has historically provided a superior early educational experience for our youngest students. Principal Michelle Beito is a proponent of providing a strong educational foundation for her students.

Continued on page 3
**Inevitable Rising Costs**

by André Layral, Executive Director, AASSP

We are midway through the 2011-12 school year, and many of you, like me, are already thinking about a tumultuous spring. Many districts are already concerned about looming budget shortfalls in 2012-13. A perfect storm is pending with the combination of the end of one-time federal grant funds and Governor Parnell’s proposed 2013 budget, which contains no increase in the Base Student Allocation. Under the Governor’s budget, districts will be facing a budget cliff not seen for many years, with a strong possibility that staff positions will be reduced in the coming year.

With a record $3.7 billion state budget surplus, many are asking why education is being flat funded when Governor Parnell’s proposed budget calls for 3.2% growth. Over the past three years there have been moderate increases in the BSA, and schools have also received increased funding outside the BSA for higher energy costs and support for career and technical education. Citing a 64% graduation rate among 12th graders who entered 9th grade as a cohort, the governor this fall stated, “There is no tangible benefit from recent increases in the BSA.”

Focusing on standardized tests and graduating on time with one’s peers ignores development of each child as a whole over time and many other intangibles directly attributed to recent increases in the BSA. Schools have for some time been using school data to improve instruction and learning. There is a wealth of evidence in this data that reveals student progress that is tangible. Individual student growth, progress in cohort groups, and growth over time should also be considered. When multiple measures are used over time, there is even greater tangible evidence in the data. Kids come to school with real needs, real aspirations and real challenges, often resulting in gaps in their performance and progress. Recent increases in the BSA have allowed districts to provide resources where they are needed, when they are needed, so all students have a shot at success.

One thing is certain: school districts are facing rising costs, and there may be far greater consequences later for failure to build in annual increases in the BSA. At the school level, principals will be asked to do more with less funding for instruction—with fewer teachers, larger class sizes, fewer dollars for classroom equipment and supplies, and increased energy costs. Even if the current growth of state government at 7.8% since 2005 is not sustainable, another thing is equally sure: when it comes to teaching and learning, kids are our most precious resource, and failing to adequately invest in education now may lead to unforeseen consequences later.

This spring, principals will certainly be challenged to keep staff morale high while faced with the realization that some teachers may be pink slipped. The fortunate teachers and staff who remain next year may be asked to do more with less to help students succeed, all while being held accountable for improved results that ignore important intangibles that are evidence of student and school progress.

---

**Greetings from Delta/Greely School District!**

before they move to the next level. This year Delta Elementary was selected to be involved in the House District 6 iPad program, a study to determine the effectiveness of tablet computer devices in raising student reading achievement.

Fort Greely School (FGS), grades 4-8, offers a traditional self-contained classroom configuration at grades four and five. Beginning in grade six, FGS offers a traditional junior high school experience for students. During the past three years FGS has introduced innovative intervention strategies while simultaneously increasing the use of technology-based intervention programs. Principal Jeff Lansing is a firm believer in building character aspects into the comprehensive program at FGS. His belief is that the whole student should be ready to enter Delta High School!

Delta High School offers a variety of opportunities to students desiring to pursue a traditional education program or to pursue a vocational track. Lindsay Pinkelman, our DHS counselor, has been instrumental in developing career paths that help guide student’s educational choices beginning with their freshman year. Our Construction Trades program offers students a variety of opportunities, including a summer construction academy. The academy gives students multiple experiences that often lead them into an apprenticeship program. Our Culinary Arts program is developing into a very high interest option for up to 20 students a semester! During the past several years, Delta High School has increasingly become a data-driven school that empowers all staff to assist with raising students’ academic achievement. We review and inspect a variety of academic data to identify instructional areas in need of improvement. We are very proud of our language arts SBA scores at DHS, which approach 90 percent proficiency. Our DHS student advisory program now includes such segments as choosing a career path, periodic reviews of progress toward graduation, monthly academic progress, teambuilding, and resume preparation, to name a few. In addition, last year it was suggested by staff that to increase graduation rate we should
Using Our Network to Advocate for Education Funding
by Jenny Martens, ALASBO President; Director of Budget and Finance, Lower Yukon School District

With the start of the second session of the 27th Legislature comes the optimism that legislation for adequate funding for public education through a multi-year funding mechanism will pass early in the session. To encourage this, ACSA members and affiliate organizations must have a united voice to advocate for adequate funding for quality education for Alaska’s children.

Through the power of networking, ACSA members completed two very important projects that will support that one strong voice at the Capitol. First, ACSA members approved Joint Position Statements; and second, districts provided data for the FY13 Funding Review project, based on Commissioner Mike Hanley’s request for districts’ funding needs.

The ACSA Joint Position Statements were written and approved by the four professional organizations that make up the ACSA membership. Members of these educational organizations brought their expertise together to develop a message of what is necessary for a quality public education in Alaska. One position statement speaks to the need for adequate funding. It is formulated to send a strong message that funding is the cornerstone for the future of education in Alaska: “The Alaska Council of School Administrators strongly encourages the Legislature to ensure adequate operational and infrastructure funding for school districts. Without adequate funding support, school districts cannot deliver the quality education services required by Alaska students, citizens and the State Constitution.”

We must send the message to our legislators that adopting a multi-year funding plan early in the session is crucial for districts to plan budgets that can handle the pressures of rising energy, payroll, benefits, and transportation costs. In a state of almost 590,000 square miles it is crucial that there be sufficient funding for broadband infrastructure to provide educational opportunities to all of Alaska’s children. It is imperative for us to send the message that the hold-harmless funding formula trigger must be reduced to prevent districts from cutting services so deeply that it would become impossible to deliver quality education. Encourage parents, students, community members, educators, and support staff to provide the successes of the previous multi-year funding. The stories are important for our decision makers to hear in order to support multi-year funding in the future. What are your district’s stories?

Another important project that will help us deliver the message that adequate funding is necessary for quality education is the FY13 Funding Review. After Commissioner Hanley asked the superintendents to provide him with their districts’ funding needs for FY13, ACSA Executive Director Bruce Johnson called on ALASBO’s membership to help answer the question. A committee of members, led by ALASBO Executive Director Amy Lujan, collected data from 48 of the 54 school districts, compiled the information and analyzed what it would take to meet the demands of escalating costs. The report provided another clear message: to “ensure a continued quality education” it is important to extend the FY12 grant provided by HB108, which is critical to keep up with rising energy costs, and the Base Student Allocation must increase $320 “to keep pace with expected cost increases.”

From the hard work of our organizations, we have vital and credible information to provide to legislators to support the effort to gain the adequate multi-year funding that is crucial to a successful outcome for education when the 27th Legislature adjourns.
One of the advantages of involvement with ASBO International is that we can connect with the larger world of school business officials nationally and internationally. At a recent ASBO conference, I learned about an extremely valuable resource that is open to all: the Pennsylvania ASBO Electronic Resource Center (PASBO ERC).

As one of the largest ASBO state affiliates, PASBO has taken on the project of coordinating a document database of best practices and resources in school business management. As of September 2011, the database consisted of nearly 2,000 documents that include job descriptions, RFPs, budget documents, and best practice articles. These documents are uploaded by ASBO members from across the country, and you may find just what you need to jump-start your latest assignment.

Some of the other large ASBO affiliates are members of the ERC, which allows them to have special search capabilities for documents originating in their home states. However, by entering “Other” on the home page where it says “Please choose your affiliation,” anyone can search all 2,000 documents.

Here’s an example of how to use the PASBO ERC:

1. Access the website, www.pasboerc.org (the link is also available on the ALASBO website).
2. Select Other from the drop-down menu and click Submit.
3. Click the Search Documents tab at the top of the page.
4. If you enter “request for proposal” in the search window you’ll get nearly 2,000 documents!
5. In the box to the right you can refine your search by category, information type, affiliation, submitter, or submitted. As an example, by entering Transportation Management as the category and Request for Proposals- Services as the Information Type, you’ll get 21 documents, most of which can be downloaded in Microsoft Word.

As other examples, I quickly found 175 job descriptions and 176 evaluation tools on the site. Among best-practice topics, some excellent articles are available on leadership and bargaining, just to name just a couple. I used the above examples because I have often received requests for them. While an Alaskan perspective is sometimes necessary, documents from school districts elsewhere can also help you shape your projects. I encourage you to take a few minutes to check out the PASBO Electronic Resource Center and make use of this great resource!
Public Education: Advocacy is Essential
by Dave Herbert, AASA President; Superintendent, St. Mary’s Schools

Happy New Year, everyone! When contemplating what I would say in this article, I reflected on the ways in which we celebrate public education in Alaska. As I did, it became apparent that we do not consistently celebrate the positives that Alaskan public education has to offer. In fact, it often seems as though public education is criticized more than it is celebrated. Why is this?

Perhaps it is because providing quality educational experiences for Alaska’s children makes for boring headlines. Or maybe negative headlines that criticize schools capture public attention more than headlines that praise schools for positive accomplishments. Whatever the case, as Alaskan educators we must make sure the public is informed about the daily positive accomplishments of public education.

We find ourselves in an era in which the best marketing campaigns tend to have the greatest influence on public opinion, so Alaska’s educational community must make it a priority to ensure that our daily successes are strategically marketed to the public. The public must understand the value of public education and its vital importance to our communities, state and country.

With 59 legislative seats to be decided by the voters in this election year, I make this point because I believe we underestimate the power of public education and the power of the people who are involved in providing quality education to Alaska’s children. If we embrace public education as one of our country’s pillars, we must act accordingly. Often, we are too complacent, and just hope that the good occurring in Alaska’s public schools will be recognized. We need to become more deliberate in marketing ourselves to ensure that the public, legislature and governor know of our commitment, every day, to offer the best possible educational opportunities to Alaska’s youth.

As we know, the governor’s fiscal year 2013 budget does not include an increase in the Base Student Allocation (BSA). This could become the third consecutive year that the BSA has not been increased. At a time when oil prices are at record highs, should the educational community sit on the sidelines, or should we actively advocate for our youth and their education? I urge you to think about this and to act by doing three things.

First, I urge you to educate your local communities on the impacts that no BSA increase will have on them and your schools. Let them know about the cuts you will be forced to make, and how those cuts will affect your educational programs. This outreach should not be reserved only for board meetings or staff meetings; it is critical that you reach out to all people affected by public education in your community. The educational community, parents and local business officials are extremely powerful and can have very influential voices.

Second, I ask that you talk with your legislators and ask them to commit to supporting an increase in the BSA. Do not settle for anything less than a full commitment to increase the BSA, and ensure them that you are available to assist them in justifying this increase. In addition, make sure they understand that the powerful and influential voters of the educational community will be closely watching how the legislators of the state vote on the BSA issue.

Lastly, I ask that you inform your constituency, your legislators and the governor about all of the accomplishments occurring in your schools. Make sure to market your own success stories in a manner that will prevail over the negative media, help set the record straight, and celebrate the positive things happening in Alaska’s public education system.

We cannot afford to wait for others to be our advocates. It is time for each of us to act on behalf of public education and the children that depend on public education for their future.
The FY13 Education Funding Need

At the summer AASA meeting, co-hosted with the Alaska Department of Education, Commissioner Hanley asked the superintendents to provide projected base student allocation (BSA) needs for Alaskan school districts for the coming year. He qualified his request by suggesting we determine the necessary BSA increase to roll the FY12 program forward to FY13. To provide a factual, unbiased framework, AASA enlisted members of the ALASBO board and executive director to conduct the study. ALASBO members willingly accepted the challenge and before the BSA increase was determined, 48 of the 54 school districts across the state were involved in providing the necessary data as well as the DEED school finance staff to help ensure that our team was dealing with accurate financial information. This team worked tirelessly over several weeks, holding multiple teleconferences to verify, challenge and investigate the data.

This extensive study indicates that in order for Alaska’s school districts to be able to meet FY13 projected cost increases, an increase to the BSA of $320 will be required.

AASA strongly supports that the highest priority for the 27th legislature is increasing the FY13 BSA by $320 to avoid staff and program cuts that will have compounding, detrimental effects for students, communities, and public education throughout Alaska.

Greetings from Delta/Greely School District!

consider placing special emphasis on our incoming freshman class. Therefore, this school year began with a very special welcome to our incoming freshmen. Our goal is to see 100 percent of them walking across the stage in 2015!

Lastly, KDHS is our Delta High School radio station. Under the direction of Rick Vanden Boom this program has transformed into a communitywide treasure. Students design, develop and produce all programming played on KDHS. In addition, students and staff schedule outside guest speakers to provide programming segments that are important to our local community. Please visit us on Facebook at 95.5 KDHS.

In the Delta Greely School District we would welcome any visitors to come see and meet our wonderful students and staff!

Celebrate Proud and Loud

In light of this reality, it is incumbent upon us to tell our stories and to publicly celebrate our successes.

Educators are famously humble, hesitant to draw attention to what we do best—work with our students in noble and heroic ways. Now is the time, however, to overcome those unassuming reservations and to be “proud and loud” about the educational system we have built in our schools, our districts and our state! It’s time to publicly celebrate our students, our staff and our programs that make such a difference.
Recognize and Celebrate Our Accomplishments

by John Pothast, President, AAESP and ACSA; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

Rosabeth Moss Kanter once said, “People often resist change for reasons that make good sense to them, even if those reasons don’t correspond to organizational goals. So it is crucial to recognize, reward, and celebrate accomplishments.” Faced with so many directives, initiatives and mandates, we must continue celebrating our successes. We need to remember to take the time to thank staff for their tireless work every day in the classroom. We need to recognize and reward our students for coming to school, making the right choices, and doing the right thing!

Statewide, there are many things to celebrate. Examples include the development of the Alaska K-12 Science Curriculum Initiative, which gives our students and teachers a science curriculum created by Alaskans, for Alaskans, and the many teachers in each of our districts who have been nominated and recognized as outstanding educators by the BP Teachers of Excellence Program.

On a more intimate level, I know there are many programs in each of our districts and schools that deserve our celebrations. Down on the Kenai, the students and staff involved in our Workforce Development Program have developed After School Academies, and have greatly expanded the programs and opportunities for students to learn trades and skills from construction and culinary arts to medical and health care fields. Even in our own Redoubt Elementary School, staff recently celebrated current progress on implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, an initiative we have worked to develop since last year.

Despite the issues that often distract our attention, I am confident that things happening in our schools every day are worthy of celebration. As AAESP’s recently seated president, I look forward to sharing our collective accomplishments and celebrations. As our year reaches its midpoint, I encourage you to take the time to share your successes with your colleagues and celebrate with your staff the great things you do in public education. I look forward to working with you this year and thank you for your service!

Moore v. State of Alaska Settlement Terms

The programs will be funded by a one-time $18 million appropriation to be disbursed over the next three school years, with all funds to be obligated by June 30, 2017. At least one-third of the funds will be reserved for the kindergarten/early-literacy programs. The settlement creates specific requirements for each grant that include such topics as local matching funds and accountability.

To award those grants, the settlement establishes a seven-member Moore Collaborative Committee. The committee is composed of three members selected by the Executive Director of the Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska’s Children, three members selected by the Alaska Commissioner of Education and Early Development, and a non-voting chairperson appointed by mutual agreement.

The Commissioner of Education and Early Development will provide funding based on the committee’s recommendation unless the Commissioner determines that the recommendations are contrary to the public interest. The committee also will serve as the setting for broad collaboration on establishing and implementing effective programs. Please see the districts and school communities targeted in the Moore settlement on the following page.
ASDN Spring Leadership Retreat Focuses on Principal Evaluation

The theme of the Alaska Staff Development Network’s April 13th Spring Leadership Retreat is Principal Evaluation: Trends, Issues and Best Practices. The meeting will be held at the Downtown Anchorage Marriott Hotel from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Lunch will be provided.

Principal evaluation is a critical issue not only in Alaska but also throughout the nation. Principals matter: they have a strong effect on school climate and culture, teacher quality and satisfaction, and school context and community. Based on multiple research studies, principal leadership is second only to teacher quality as the single most important factor in improving student learning and organizational performance. Unfortunately, current principal evaluation systems are inadequate because they do not address the key practices that principals engage in to improve and transform student learning and their schools.

Across the United States, principal evaluation practices and policies are being redesigned following the path of teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation with a significant number of states making changes. Researchers and policy makers alike acknowledge that principal evaluation systems are problematic because they are not aligned with professional standards; they are inconsistently administered; they are not implemented in ways that maximize rating consistency and validity; and they have minimal impact on principals’ practices and sense of accountability. This workshop will explore the current trends and issues in principal evaluation to help Alaskan school leaders keep abreast of potential changes on the horizon.

**Workshop objectives:**

- Analyze trends and issues reflected in policy and procedural changes regarding principal evaluation across the United States.
- Identify the key components of principal leadership that should form the basis for improving the frameworks and designs of principal evaluation systems.
- Examine emerging models for redesigning principal evaluation systems that consider the domains, dimensions, and measurement issues for creating new policies and practices in principal evaluation.
- Discuss implications of these trends and issues for local district and state-level policies and procedures in Alaska.

**Target Audience:** Site Administrators, teacher leaders and central office administrators.

This workshop will be presented by Senior ASDN Consultant and internationally recognized leadership development expert Dr. Al Bertani.

Visit [www.asdn.org](http://www.asdn.org) to register.

---

**Districts and School Communities Targeted in Moore v. State Settlement**

- **Alaska Gateway:** Tetlin
- **Bering Strait:** Brevig Mission, Diomede, Gamble, Savoonga, Stebbins, Wales
- **Kuspuk:** Chuathbaluk and Crooked Creek
- **Lower Kuskokwim:** Atmautluak, Chefnornak, Eek, Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwethluk, Nelson Island, Newtok, Nightmute, Tuntutuliak
- **Lower Yukon:** Kotlik, Marshall, Pitkas Point, Pilot Station, Scammon Bay, Sheldon Point
- **North Slope:** Meade River and Nuiqsut
- **Northwest Arctic:** Kobuk, Kivalina, Selawik, Shungnak
- **Southeast Island:** Naukati
- **Southwest Region:** Twin Hills
- **Yukon Flats:** Arctic Village, Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon
- **Yukon-Koyukuk:** Hughes and Kaltag
- **Yupiit:** Akiachak and Tuluksak
Preventing for the Future in Times of Plenty
by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA and AASA

I am confident that ACSA members from around the state will join me in extending a hearty thanks to members of the Senate Education Committee who have taken an interest in shoring up public education funds. Senator Davis has introduced SB139, which provides an annual $125 increase to the base student allocation (BSA) for FY13, FY14 and FY15. In addition, the Committee has introduced a committee bill, SB171, that provides increases to the BSA over the next three years: FY13, $125; FY14, $130; and FY15, $135. These increases would raise the BSA from its current level of $5,680 to $6,070 in FY15. Special thanks to Senators Thomas and Meyer, too, for their efforts on behalf of public education.

It is clear that Alaska has entered an era when funding basic services is becoming increasingly challenging despite our enormous wealth. We can all acknowledge the need to set aside funds for our future. The challenge is determining the proper balance between saving and providing basic services for Alaska’s citizens. This debate is not new to Alaska, but I would propose that the outcome of the debates in the second session of the 27th Legislature will impact the lives of many public school children.

A cadre of Alaska’s finest school business officials spent weeks this fall examining the base student allocation increase necessary to maintain district programs and staffing levels from FY12 to FY13. The result was significant: a $320 increase. Alaska’s schools haven’t received such an increase to the BSA funding level since 2005. This funding level is needed due to rising costs and dwindling financial support from the federal and local levels.

If we look beyond the essential core services provided by our public schools—the education of our youth—we learn that public education is an economic driver. Michelle Rhee, a former Washington, D.C. chancellor, proclaimed, “This country is in a significant crisis in education. If you look at other countries, like Singapore—Singapore’s knocking it out of the box. Why? Because the number-one strategy in their economic plan is education. We [America] treat education as a social issue… and when the budget crunch comes, social issues get pushed aside. America needs to start treating education as an economic issue.”

Thomas Friedman, in his recent book That Used to be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back, adds to this notion by stating, “We need our education system not only to strengthen everyone’s basics—reading, writing and arithmetic—but to teach and inspire all Americans to start something new, to add something extra, or to adapt something old in whatever job they are doing.” In short, Mr. Friedman advocates that public education is crucial to America’s future, and our economic growth demands that our education system prepare graduates for the next step of education or skill building. Without this preparation, individual graduates achieve less and America’s economy falters.

What does this suggest for Alaska? Now is not a time to hold funding stagnant and cause districts to ratchet back programs and lay off staff. Most people recognize that our teachers and principals are critical to student success, and particularly to students on the “margins.” Most of our districts have used recent increases in education funds to target programs and services for students on the margins who, for a variety of reasons, don’t seem to function well within our mainstream programs. Alaska’s schools are making great progress with many of these students, and eliminating these opportunities will inhibit them from achieving their potential and from ultimately becoming part of a workforce that will strengthen Alaska’s economic engine.

At a time when increased rigor and accountability for public school students and employees is sweeping our country, it seems unfathomable that a reduction in education funding will yield the desired results. In Alaska, if funding levels remain stagnant and inflationary costs take away the capacity to realistically increase rigor and hold everyone more accountable, it is probable that these initiatives will be shortchanged.

Finally, we need to be cognizant of the destructive nature of the budget process that will be occurring in many Alaska school districts over the next several months as school boards, employees, and constituents wrangle over how to slash budgets. These debates cause families to fight for the needs of their own children, pit teachers and administrators
Preparing for the Future in Times of Plenty

against the board, and most of all create such a distraction that everyone loses their focus on educating students.

Is Alaska’s financial situation so bleak that we need to put our school districts through this ordeal? I don’t think so. Instead, I would hope that we could use these “times of plenty” to fund public education appropriately. This will require hard work and the courage to do what is in the best interest of Alaska’s youth and the state’s economy.

Alaska Council of School Administrators 2012 Joint Position Statements

Each year, through a committee process representative of all ACSA members—principals, business officials and superintendents—position statements are developed to support our legislative advocacy efforts. Seven statements will guide ACSA members in 2012:

Adequate Funding: ACSA strongly encourages the Legislature to ensure adequate operational and infrastructure funding for school districts. Without adequate funding support, school districts cannot deliver the quality education services required by Alaska’s students, citizens and the State Constitution.

Early Childhood Education: ACSA believes early childhood education should be a priority for all Alaskans who desire to increase and improve educational opportunities for all children, and it supports the funding of programs that will offer early education opportunities.

Career and Technical Education: ACSA supports adequate and equitable funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) in order to ensure K-12 students have access to the tools, training, and programs to prepare a future workforce for Alaska. Educational leaders need to be involved in the process of identifying existing rural and urban programs for improving and expanding workforce development opportunities for our children.

Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators: ACSA encourages the development of a comprehensive statewide program to prepare, attract and retain quality educators in our schools.

Prior Year PERS Retirement Billings: ACSA recommends that the legislature take action to revise the provision in AS39.35.255 requiring an FY08 funding baseline for all future PERS retirement payments.

ESEA Re-Authorization: ACSA calls upon Congress to complete the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2012 in order to prevent costly and irreparable damage to school reform efforts.

Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act (Forest Receipts): ACSA endorses the continuation of the 100+ year partnership that was created between the Federal government and rural communities to compensate counties affected by the placement of timber into federal ownership. This partnership stipulates that 25% of the revenue derived from the U.S. Forest Service activities—e.g., timber sales, mineral extraction and grazing fees—be returned to impacted counties.

Note: The complete ACSA Joint Position Statement document is available at www.alaskaacsa.org.
BUSINESSES ARE CHAMPIONS FOR ALASKA’S SCHOOLS!

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.

2012 Educational Association Events

ASBO International Executive Leadership Forum—
Lake Buena Vista, FL
February 16–18

AASA National Conference on Education—Houston, TX
February 16–19

ALASBO Legislative Fly-in—Juneau, AK
February 27–29

AASA Legislative Fly-in—Juneau, AK
March 4–6

NASSP Annual Conference—Tampa, FL
March 8–10

AAESP & AASSP Legislative Fly-In—Juneau, AK
March 19–21

NAESP National Conference—Seattle, WA
March 22–24

AASB Legislative Fly-In—Juneau, AK
March 24–27

Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair—Anchorage, AK
April 12–14

27th Legislative Session Ends
April 16

NSBA 72nd Annual Conference—Boston, MA
April 21–23

ALASBO Summer Leadership—Location TBA
July

AASA/DEED Summer Meeting—Juneau, AK
July 29–30

AASA Fall Meeting Pre-Conference Site Visit—Glennallen, AK
September 26

AASA Fall Meeting—Valdez, AK
September 27–29

ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo—Phoenix, AZ
October 12–15

46th Annual Principal Conference—Anchorage, AK
October 14–16

ALASBO Annual Conference—Anchorage, AK
December 2–5