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

Stanley Ferrard once said, “You are not responsible for what people think about you. But you are responsible for what you give them to think about you.” When we think about celebrating education, we need to remember that everything we do and say contributes to setting the tone of those celebrations. In the February issue of this publication I highlighted two features on the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District’s website that celebrate the contributions and success of our schools’ students, staff and programs.

While electronic communication is an essential way to reach many people, an even more important and effective means of communication is personal contact with others. Very often sharing what’s happening in our schools helps build our school cultures. Within our schools it is important to get away from e-mail, get out of our offices, and get into the classrooms. E-mail is certainly an effective means of communication, but it’s vital to balance it with a “personal touch.” Our teachers and staff need to see us regularly and interact with us face-to-face.

Within our communities we have a similar opportunity to engage with our parents, businesses and civic leaders. Taking two extra minutes to stop and ask that parent in the hallway how they are doing is invaluable “PR” for us and our schools. Also, taking five minutes out of our day to visit a local business simply to thank them for their support can pay huge future dividends. Likewise, whether you’re talking to a city council member, the mayor or your state legislator, there is power in the stories you have to tell. The leadership of our respective state associations often communicates with our political leaders, but your personal contact with those people carries a tremendous amount of weight and appreciation!

Richard DuFour says that “the culture of an organization can be found in the stories it tells itself.” I absolutely believe that we have the power to shape people’s perceptions of our schools and districts through the stories we share with others. Let’s make sure to reach out and tell our great stories to those around us in a personal and meaningful way. Our stories help create our culture, and it’s important to get out and tell them because our silence will very often tell a story all its own, and it may not be the story we want others to judge us by!

Alaska’s Diversity Means Differing Approaches
by Jenny Martens, ALASBO President; Director of Budget and Finance, Lower Yukon School District

The great State of Alaska—full of beauty, diversity, and resources. This vast state spans more than 591,000 square miles, providing an abundance of wildlife, varying climates, and scores of different geographical landscapes. You could spend a good part of your life trying to learn all there is to know about Alaska and still come up short.

With all the greatness our state provides come many challenges. One very important challenge has been discussed for decades: how to provide quality and equal education in a state that is so diverse and so enormous. This challenge has been debated by all levels of decision-makers, from the Office of the Governor and Office of the Commissioner of Education and Early Development to the local boards of education and supporting boroughs or municipalities.

We could argue that there is no other state that faces the number or nature of challenges that Alaskan schools face every day. I contend that most Alaskans working on behalf of our children do not possess a full understanding of all the varying regional challenges.
Fund Public Education Before Private Vouchers

by Adam Mokelke, AASSP President; Principal, Burchell High School

This year I embarked on a new principalship at an alternative school serving at-risk youth. Under the No Child Left Behind Act the school has been labeled “failing” for not meeting Annual Measurable Objectives. From day one I chose to take a no-excuses stance and focus on improving student achievement while continuing the mission of the school. Based on experience, I know it takes a lot of hard work to improve student achievement, to lead a school to Safe Harbor and to make AYP. It can be done, and while it is difficult, it is fulfilling, worthwhile work. Despite the many flaws in the law, NCLB holds schools accountable and keeps us striving to improve for the sake of the kids we serve. Focusing on the core academic areas, implementing RTI, improving instructional practice, streamlining school processes, and fostering shared leadership and a positive school culture are just a few of the ways principals can lead change and school improvement. Although a difficult challenge, a focused, dedicated and hard-working team of educators, parents and community members can turn around a failing school and improve student achievement.

What if there were shortcuts? What if a school could choose not to take the groups that struggle the most: students from low income families, special needs students, English Language Learners? Test scores would look vastly different. However, public educators rarely stop to consider this, if ever. Why? Because the beauty and magic of public education is that we educate all students the day they arrive on our doorstep, regardless of race, sex, religion, language or disability. Every child in our nation is entitled to a free and appropriate public education, and educational leaders make it their mission in life to provide the very best education possible for all students they serve. None of us would take shortcuts; in fact, we work diligently to make sure we meet the unique needs and challenges of each group of students while celebrating their diversity. Such is our mission. Such is the nature of public school.

So why, then, would I bring this up? In this year’s legislative session, HJR16 was introduced, a bill that would require an amendment to our state constitution. The bill’s intent is to allow state funding of private school vouchers. I have no issue with private schools, which meet the needs of a certain population and serve select groups of students and their families. I do, however, take issue with state funding for these schools. We are in a time where funding from our great state is in question, and we are looking down the barrel of a three-year gap in the Base Student Allocation and another shot of one-time money, a Band-Aid on a broken leg. How can we fail to properly fund public education—an institution that strives to educate every child in this state and to improve their education each and every day—while funding private schools that are by nature non-inclusive?

Back to No Child Left Behind and school accountability. Most educational leaders will tell you they believe in holding schools accountable (as long as it is done in a fair and equitable way), and state testing is currently the main indicator of school success. We teach state-adopted standards and assess these standards with state tests. Private schools, however, do not have to follow state standards. They do not have to administer the Standards Based Assessments and the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam to measure their progress or issue diplomas. Is it fair for these schools to receive public funds without the accountability and standards to which public schools are held? Is this a level playing field? Would this amendment mean that private schools receiving vouchers would have to administer SBAs and the HSGQE? Would private schools adhere to state standards? It is one thing while they are privately funded, but it is quite another if these schools receive state funds.

The introduction of a voucher bill should serve as a notice to Alaskan educational leaders. We need to respond to questions from the public on this topic, as it may very well reappear. We must continue to speak up, and to educate our lawmakers and the public on the good we do and how state dollars are spent to benefit all children. Funding is already a major, ongoing concern as districts brace to make cuts to vital programs and services. In the spirit of serving our students we are all preparing to do more with less, to continue striving to improve student achievement, and to provide the best education possible with each dollar we spend. We just cannot afford to move towards school vouchers, and see state funds spent on private institutions without a level playing field. This only serves to further drain public education funding from where it is needed most.
All of us have seen print and television ads during the past several months by groups in Alaska addressing the need for greater incentives for oil companies to attract meaningful investments in oil production. There is an urgency in these messages that implies time is running out because oil production is on the decline. Each time I hear these ads, I’m reminded how effectively their messages have been influencing the public. There is a lesson to be learned here for those who work in public education, particularly principals: that we can and must do more to contribute to the important local and statewide conversations about supporting public education.

Sharing positive stories, big and small, about our daily work and progress in our schools serves to counter many of the negative and inaccurate attacks on public education. Each contact we make with families, students, neighbors, partners, community and political leaders is an opportunity to help others understand the importance of K-12 public education by sharing something positive about our schools, our students, and the role we play as educational leaders.

Perhaps at no time in Alaska’s history have our public K-12 schools been under so much scrutiny. We have heard calls for greater accountability this year on several occasions from political and business leaders in talks related to education funding. What is driving this perception that schools are not accountable enough? Quite simply, there is either not enough positive public information about our schools, our students, and the role we play as educational leaders.

Miracles are happening everyday in our public schools! We must have meaningful conversations with others so Alaskans are conscious of these miracles at this time when education seems under attack. We must increase public understanding, trust, and support for public education, or misinformation and negative messages may erode what we have achieved.

Following the path of two former Alaska principals, Anchorage principal and AASSP member Denise Greene-Wilkinson was handed the President’s gavel from Past President Ken Griffin to lead the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2012-2013. Fifteen Alaska principals were on hand in early March to celebrate this occasion at the closing keynote address of the NASSP Breaking Ranks K-12 Conference in Tampa, Florida.

Denise follows in the footsteps of two other Anchorage principals who have served as NASSP president: Alaska State Board of Education Chair and the first woman to serve as NASSP President, Esther Cox of Anchorage’s King Career Center (1994-95), and the late Keith Taton of Anchorage’s Central Middle School of Science (2003-04).

At a President’s Reception held at the Marriott Tampa Waterside Hotel, Denise thanked the NASSP Board of Directors, NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti, her colleagues in Region VII, her AASSP colleagues in Alaska, her staff at Polaris K-12 School in Anchorage, and her husband Greg for the support she received on her journey to become NASSP President.

Last year at the 2011 NASSP Conference in San Francisco, Denise emphasized a platform of effective advocacy, quality and timely professional development for principals, working to ensure full funding of federal mandates and to forge alliances with other national education groups for stronger impact in Washington. Denise’s selection in 2011 as NASSP President-Elect was a testament to her leadership and her commitment to public K-12, middle and secondary principals and assistant principals nationwide and in Alaska.

In her new role as NASSP President, Denise will stress the importance of the association working closely with state affiliates and regions so that NASSP can better meet the needs of its 30,000 member principals and assistant principals on the challenging issues they face everyday. Denise will bring an Alaskan perspective and voice to her work at the national level.
Over the past three years, the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International has reformatted its Executive Leadership Forum, held in February each year, to offer the highest quality leadership training available. I’ve had the privilege of attending several of these events with my ALASBO colleagues. I’ve been most impressed with the two trainings conducted by the Disney Institute in Florida. The Disney Institute uses the example of the Walt Disney Corporation, an organization that has had its ups and downs but has been a huge success in recent years, to teach leadership and management strategies. Each session includes hands-on training at Disney facilities. How is this training relevant for school business officials?

Mission Focus—Walt Disney set out to create a place where families could have fun together. I’ve had the opportunity to go “behind the scenes” at Disneyworld and Epcot, where I’ve seen how this mission is carried out by creating a positive sense of teamwork throughout the entire staff, who are all referred to as “cast members.” When touring the underground tunnel network at Disneyworld, we saw the positive messages that are delivered to cast members as they prepare to emerge into the park to deliver a quality visitor experience.

Customer Service—The needs of each type of customer are considered when planning the layout and services available at the Disney parks. For example, greeters are placed near the park entrances to help visitors find what they’re looking for immediately. A customer service building located a short distance inside Epcot offers assistance in multiple languages. Off to the side, but where people who really need it can find it, are the nursery and first aid stations. Centrally located and spaced throughout the parks are every type of money-making food and souvenir concession stand!

Continuous Improvement—Disney management is constantly reviewing elements of their program for updates and improvement. For example, when the Pirates of the Caribbean story was updated to include Captain Jack Sparrow and other new characters related to the recent movies, younger visitors expected to see these characters in the famous ride attraction, whereas older visitors expected to see the elements of the attraction they’d enjoyed for decades. Creative Disney designers worked hard to update the ride to meet both sets of expectations.

Another example of continuous improvement is the Photopass program. Taking advantage of wireless digital technology, Disney has created a program to allow visitors to have professional pictures taken throughout their visit that can be viewed instantly on the Photopass website. Visitors can then buy these professional photos in any size or on mugs, shirts, etc. A disk of up to several hundred digital photos can be purchased for one flat fee. This program greatly upgrades the typical concept of trying to sell a “splash mountain” snapshot of each family at the end of the ride.

These concepts of Mission Focus, Customer Service and Continuous Improvement are important for all leaders. Taking the time to learn from the example of highly successful organizations, and to reflect on these lessons with our school business colleagues, can only improve the quality of our professional contributions!
Alaska’s Diversity Means Differing Approaches

I have been a school business official for three school districts in Alaska. Those of us who have had the privilege to serve different districts can attest that each district, while having many of the same challenges, has a far greater number that are different.

We need to recognize these differences. We should not assume what works for one district has to work for all others. We need to refrain from believing that our solution will be another district’s solution. We should never believe that what is culturally correct in one district is culturally correct in all. We should not presume that a challenge in one region can be faced the same way in another. What is appropriate or acceptable for one may not be for another.

We need to do more to understand each other’s challenges and work together to overcome them. We need to support organizations that recognize our diversity and challenges and are committed to support and help us in the common goal of teaching our children to find their success story.

I thought I would share some facts that highlight the enormous challenges we face in education, no matter what the region:

- Alaska has more than 591,000 square miles, is 1,400 miles from north to south, and 2,400 miles from east to west.
- When a map of Alaska is superimposed over the Lower 48 states, it extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Mexico to Canada.
- The population of Alaska is approximately 700,000, half of whom live in the Anchorage metropolitan area.
- 54 Alaska school districts educate approximately 129,000 students; the smallest district has 12 students and the largest over 48,600 students.
- 19 Rural Education Attendance Areas educate over 14,000 students; the largest has 4,200 students and the smallest 31.
- Over 18,000 special education students make up an average of 14% of the student population.
- 5 major Alaska Native Groups contribute 22% of our student population, all of them desiring, demanding, and deserving to have their cultural values and traditions play an important part of the delivery of their children’s education.
- Alaska has 33,900 miles of shoreline, more than all other states combined.
- 75% of Alaska’s communities cannot access a health facility by road.
- Temperature extremes in Alaska range from a high of 100° in the summer in one region to a harsh −80° in the winter.
- Although nearly equal to the continental breadth of the Lower 48 states, which are divided into three time zones, all of Alaska is encompassed by a single time zone.
United We Stand for Alaska’s Children
by Dave Herbert, AASA President; Superintendent, St. Mary’s Schools

The Association of Alaska School Administrators membership has done an outstanding job of coming together in its advocacy for Alaska’s youth. For the first time in several years AASA has partnered effectively with all Alaska Council of School Administrators affiliates and the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) in a united effort to ensure that Alaska’s public schools receive adequate and sustainable funding. The second session of the 27th Legislature is winding down as this article is being written, and thanks to the united efforts of all ACSA affiliates and AASB, increasing public school funding through the Base Student Allocation (BSA) has remained the focal point throughout the educational funding discussions. By the time this bulletin is published, we may know if the legislature and our governor support an increase to the BSA.

Regardless of the outcome of our advocacy—one-time funds or a longer term increase to the BSA—I would like to commend each affiliate for taking an active role in pursuing a BSA increase and for uniting on a common front. Historically, each organization has advocated for Alaska’s youth utilizing various focuses and methodologies, but often not in concert. Our united message—increased funds to the BSA—continues to resonate throughout the halls of the state capital. Thank you for your efforts and your relentless push for an increase in the BSA.

The 2012 legislative session has been very positive overall and has enriched the relationships of all ACSA affiliates. It has become increasingly obvious that the more we work together, the more productive we are with the legislature and the governor. In addition, we cannot forget the positive partnership that AASA continues to enjoy with the Association of Alaska School Boards, helping to ensure that together we are sending a clear and united message to the legislature regarding our issues. While we still do not know what form increases in education funding for FY 13 will take, it is becoming increasingly clear that the legislature recognizes our need for increased education funding.

The continued positive partnership between ACSA affiliates and other professional organizations concerned with Alaska’s youth will only contribute to greater unity and more powerful advocacy in the future. By working together to determine our primary advocacy platform, ACSA’s vision for public education unfolds, and that in turn enhances our capacity to be more productive for Alaska’s youth. I urge each affiliate leader to continue to identify primary issues that ACSA collectively can agree are critical for Alaska’s youth. Finally, my sincere thanks to everyone who played a role in creating a better future for public education this year.
The Time Is Now
by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA and AASA

Wendy Puriefoy, President of the Public Education Network, recently wrote that to make America’s schools better, the entire community must recommit to its civic investment and get involved. She states, “As a people, we recognize the economic value of education, but we under-invest in our schools, both financially and in terms of civic capital.” At the same time, she contends that Americans view education as a core value—a lifetime compact among Americans to continually renew our nation’s future, whether they have students in school or not.

Like Puriefoy, Alaskans value public education and profess that all students must have educational excellence, schools must be accountable for results, and adequate financial resources must be provided so all students are engaged, whether rural or urban, on a career track or bound for post-secondary training. If we fail to adhere to our core value of education, we will disenfranchise many children, dilute our democracy, and compromise our future.

Historically, Alaskans individually and state institutions like public education have benefitted immensely from our mineral-rich environment. Today, too many Alaskans may have grown complacent, forgetting that public education plays an important role in ensuring that Alaska’s economy remains strong. This is not the time in our history to undervalue public education. Instead, it is a time to invest in promoting life outcomes for all children, thereby building a stronger future for all. It is time for all Alaskans to pressure our public officials, as well as the institution of public education itself, to ensure that K-12 education—like other state agencies—receives sufficient resources to educate all children.

It is unrealistic to hold K-12 education to the premise that our school districts can do better with less, financially and otherwise. If we are to succeed in educating our children, all public education constituents must make their voices heard and act upon their civic responsibility by demanding increased K-12 education funding and robust results.

Craig Superintendent Jim Thomas was the lucky winner of the Alaska Municipal League Joint Insurance Association $1,000 scholarship to be given to a deserving 2012 graduate. Grady Fisher and Kevin Smith, AML/JIA, presented the scholarship to Superintendent Thomas (far right).

Lightspeed Technologies, Inc. representative Rick Berger (left) presented Keith Zamudio, Cordova School District Technology Coordinator, with their latest REDCAT portable sound system. Mr. Berger also graciously provided AASA with its very own REDCAT to help ensure that Association business can be conducted effectively.
As principals of elementary schools, we know we are called to provide an education so our children will be successful in a rapidly changing world. And as principals of elementary schools we are Champions of this challenge. We understand our students are learning, refining, and applying skills that enable them to:

- Critically think;
- Communicate;
- Collaborate; and
- Create.

Our students require and deserve updated instruction and learning opportunities to apply their knowledge in creative and innovative ways. Our students require and deserve principals who understand how success in the 21st century must look. What principal can provide all of the components framed within this 21st century picture by him- or herself? The short answer: none. And what principals are equipped to encourage innovative ideas necessary to fill out this picture? The short answer: the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals.

AAESP steps in and 1) provides a variety of venues, professional development opportunities, supports, and resources, and 2) ensures that Alaska’s principals have everything we need to be successful with our students. By Collaborating, Communicating, and Critically analyzing current trends and issues to Create educational settings across Alaska that meet our students’ and teachers’ needs in their own neighborhoods, home villages, and hometowns, we engage as Champions for Children.

AAESP members are a community of professionals dedicated to bringing the best to teachers and students each and every day. We are a community that is ready to partner with every Alaskan K-8 principal in an honorable profession—our calling as educational leaders. Indeed, as we journey into a changing world, together we rise to meet the challenges of the 21st century learner, educator and Champion. We invite you to join our community today.
ASDN Summer Institute for Rural Administrators

by Kelly Tonsmeire, Director, Alaska Staff Development Network

The Alaska Staff Development Network is the lead partner in the Rural Alaska Principal Preparation and Support (RAPPS) Program. RAPPS is a comprehensive, five-year effort to strengthen school leadership in sixteen, remote, high-need, Alaskan school districts, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The project serves 141 schools in Alaska.

The RAPPS Program is designed to create a new generation of school leaders for rural Alaska by preparing new principals to serve in Alaska’s high-need rural schools, and by working in collaboration with our statewide partners to provide a continuum of support for new and practicing principals. RAPPS has provided scholarships and support to 73 aspiring principals over the last four years.

In addition, a major component of the RAPPS program is professional development for practicing principals. Professional learning opportunities include the Alaska School Leadership Institute (ASLI), an intensive, annual, weeklong summer institute for over 100 administrators. Follow-up webinars throughout the school year have been attended by more than 1,200 educators.

Our 4th Alaska School Leadership Institute will take place May 29 to June 1 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage. The purpose of the institute is to build school and district leadership capacity using strategies, processes, tools and protocols for leading and supporting change. The essential question for this year’s institute is “What should effective leadership look like if the goal is to increase the academic performance of all students?”

ASLI 2012 will build on previous institute themes around collaboration and professional learning; using data to drive improvement; and aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment practices.

Our institute design will complement this content by focusing on new themes featuring actions that leaders take to transform their organizations, how leaders help their organizations survive and thrive when leading change, and when leaders decide to exercise authority and/or influence to initiate and sustain change. These new themes emerged from the ASLI 2011 evaluation results and the planning consultations convened with RAPPS partner district leaders in 2011-2012.

This content strand focuses on what leaders really do to transform their organizations, drawing heavily on the work of John Kotter, Professor of Leadership at the Harvard Business School. His framework provides a roadmap for leaders interested in transforming the performance and outcomes of the organizations they lead:

**Strategy 1—Establish a Sense of Urgency**
- Use data, feedback, and stories to build a sense of urgency
- Engage fresh eyes from inside and outside to help build urgency
- Make the status quo look more dangerous than launching into the unknown

**Strategy 2—Build a Powerful Guiding Coalition**
- Reach out to the high contact and high influence people in the organization
- Invest time and energy in learning together as a guiding coalition
- Assemble a critical mass of people that can advocate for needed change

**Strategy 3—Creating a Vision**
- Outline a vision that is compelling, simple to communicate, and easy to envision
- Help people see where all of this is leading – What will be different?
- Stress-test the vision with three- to five-minute versions

**Strategy 4—Communicating the Vision**
- Ignite energy for the vision using multiple methods and mediums
- Integrate the new vision into daily activities and interactions
- Embed the new vision across the organization by engaging a majority of staff

**Strategy 5—Empowering Others to Act on the Vision**
- Remove obstacles or barriers to accomplishing the vision
- Model behaviors that are consistent with the new direction and vision
- Recognize and reward individual and group actions that move toward the vision

**Strategy 6—Planning for and Creating Short Term Wins**
- Actively seek out and highlight progress toward the vision
- Recognize, acknowledge, and reward staff members who are moving forward
- Celebrate success and movement toward the new vision

**Strategy 7—Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change**
- Use the short-term wins to confront more complex issues in the organization
- Leverage hiring, promotion, and learning opportunities to develop more people
- Sustain energy by maintaining focus and making mid-course corrections

**Strategy 8—Institutionalizing New Approaches**
- Discuss how the new vision has changed the culture – How we work around here...
- Demonstrate how the new direction and vision has improved productivity and results
- Remember that second-order changes have to be embedded into the culture

This year’s institute will also feature a strand on vetted best school-level and district-level leadership practices from our sixteen rural RAPPS partner districts.

Visit [www.asdn.org](http://www.asdn.org) to register.
As the 27th Legislature draws to a close, it is critically important to recognize the opportunities that have been provided to ACSA that have helped showcase Alaska’s K-12 public education over the past two years. As a result of these opportunities, Alaskan school administrators and board members have been able to share their message, complete with the many successes and challenges.

First, we would like to recognize the House Education Committee—Chairman Alan Dick and Representatives Pruitt, Feige, Seaton, Cissna, Kawasaki and Peggy Wilson—which heard presentations from 40 superintendents over the past two years. In addition, the 2012 Alaska Teacher of the Year, Cara Heitz from Cordova, shared an affirming story of her transformation as a teacher into the digital age.

Second, we would like to acknowledge the House Education and Senate Education Committees for hosting a two-hour joint meeting in February 2012 to give four school district business officials from Lake and Peninsula, Kodiak, Sitka, and Fairbanks School Districts a chance to present their budgets. This allowed twelve legislators who are deeply invested in public education to gain a more complete perspective on the budgets of school districts ranging from a small REAA to a large urban center. A special thanks to Senate Education Co-Chairs Kevin Meyer and Joe Thomas and to House Education Chair Dick for creating this opportunity, and to Laura Hylton, Luke Fulp, David Arp, and Mike Fisher for their well crafted and delivered presentations.

More recently, the House Finance Committee, lead by co-chairs Bill Thomas and Bill Stoltze, provided over six hours of the committee’s time to hear budget and program overviews offered by school board presidents. These presentations were delivered with passion for the children being served. They provided the eleven members of House Finance a better sense of the critical needs facing these districts as well as an overview of progress being made. This was a great opportunity and our school board presidents rose to the occasion, offering valuable insight into their districts. No doubt, superintendents and business officials played a vital role in assisting their board presidents with the facts that enabled them to effectively share their message with the House Finance Committee. A special note of appreciation to the House Finance Committee members, board members and staff involved in carrying a powerful message forward regarding the needs of public education.

And finally, during the first week of April, Deena Paramo, Mat-Su Borough School District superintendent, shared her district’s effort to answer the question, “Are the Mat-Su constituents receiving a good return on their investment?” Among her brief highlights on student performance were the fact that nearly 98 percent of the 2011 graduating cohort passed the high school graduation qualifying exam, and the news that the overall graduation rate had increased from 56 percent in FY06 to 70 percent in FY11. In addition, she provided a synopsis of a graduate follow-up study conducted by an independent firm that examined how 2006, 2008 and 2011 graduates were faring after high school. A sampling of study results affirms that 77 percent of the graduates were or had engaged in post-secondary training or college, over 60 percent of them were employed, and 77 percent reported that their high school education prepared them for school or work after graduation. Clearly the House members were supportive of the district’s use of this study to help ascertain refinements necessary to better meet the needs of more students.

In summary, the 27th Legislature has been a consistent focus over the past three months and is drawing to a close. ACSA would like to extend its appreciation for the many opportunities provided by the legislature for the education community to help everyone better understand and appreciate the many challenges that public education faces and the successes being experienced. We have been treated with respect and we hope we have shown our appreciation through our commitment to care for and educate every child in a manner that creates future opportunity and life-long success.
Northwest Accreditation is now AdvancED
by Mary Johnstone, Principal, Rabbit Creek Elementary School

The Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) Board of Trustees voted at its Annual Meeting in December to approve new bylaws for NWAC to officially become an accreditation division of AdvancED. The transition is in progress, will continue over the next year, and will soon affect all accredited schools in Alaska.

NWAC will continue to accredit under the NWAC name so that their brand recognition is maintained. The Northwest Accreditation Commission, established in 1917, is one of the six regional accrediting bodies in the United States and serves schools, systems, and education providers in seven states: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. NWAC also accredits schools internationally. By joining together, AdvancED and NWAC expand their capacity and resources to deliver accreditation and school improvement services throughout the network and provide added support to schools and districts committed to continuous improvement. AdvancED recently opened the AdvancED Northwest Regional Office in Las Vegas, Nevada to support the transition and NWAC state offices, as well as the education providers they serve. Leonard Paul has been named Regional Director for this new office.

The Northwest Accreditation Commission joins the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement as an accreditation division of AdvancED. With the addition of NWAC, AdvancED now serves nearly 30,000 public and private schools and districts in over 70 countries. Please feel free to contact the AdvancED/Northwest offices if you have questions about the transition and how it will impact your school. For more information, please continue to contact Stowell Johnstone at stowell@alaska.com. You are also invited to visit the AdvancED website at www.advance-ed.org.

Why Civility Matters
Sara Hacala, writing in the March 2012 AARP Bulletin, laments that civility is increasingly absent in our changing world. She starts her brief article by offering that civility is much more than polite courtesies. Instead, she suggests, “civility allows us to live respectfully in communities, enabling us to not only survive but thrive.”

Hacala implies that there is greatness in treating others with respect, compassion, kindness, generosity and gratitude. With such treatment, each of us can make a difference in the lives of many. Hacala outlines everyday “practices” that can assist in promoting civility:

• Regardless of age, make a habit of practicing kindness, generosity and gratitude.
• Nurture your social relationships by balancing Internet and telephone contact with more personal face-to-face visits.
• Seize “teachable moments” with young people you care about. Enlighten them that good social skills are a greater predictor of success than test scores.
• Promote decency and decorum among elected officials by urging civil discourse and bipartisanship in solving challenges.

Each of us can have an impact, and at the very least it is our responsibility to set an example, whether addressing a child, colleague, community official or state leader.
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.

2012–2013 Educational Association Events

- Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair—Anchorage, AK
  April 12–14, 2012
- 27th Legislative Session Ends—Juneau, AK
  April 15, 2012
- NSBA 72nd Annual Conference—Boston, MA
  April 21–23, 2012
- ALASBO Summer Leadership—Homer, AK
  July 27–29, 2012
- AASA/DEED Summer Meeting—Juneau, AK
  July 29–30, 2012
- NASSP Region VII Meeting—Las Vegas, NV
  September 23–25, 2012
- AASA Fall Meeting Pre-Conference Site Visit—Glennallen, AK
  September 26, 2012
- AASA Fall Meeting—Valdez, AK
  September 27–29, 2012
- ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo—Phoenix, AZ
  October 14–16, 2012
- 46th Annual Principal Conference—Anchorage, AK
  October 14–16, 2012
- ALASBO Annual Conference—Anchorage, AK
  December 2–5, 2012
- AASA Annual Conference—Los Angeles, CA
  February 21–23, 2013