Simple But Effective Ways to Market Your School or District
by John Pothast, President, ACSA and AAESP; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

Without a doubt, accountability has been pushed to the forefront of our everyday practice in schools. From our parents to the state legislature, and from the federal government to our greater communities, we are under scrutiny from a multitude of angles. I believe that if we approach this accountability from a reactive position, we’ll forever be on the defensive in answering for what we do in our schools. We need to get out front, be proactive with our communications, and begin setting the tone in the messages we send to our communities.

Like it or not, “marketing” of our schools and districts has become a necessary part of our jobs. In many respects we work in a service industry, providing valuable services to our “customers”—our students and parents—in an ever-increasing competitive market of home school, private and charter school options.

The following ideas for marketing our schools and districts come from Jane Milner, Director of Communications for the Elizabeth Forward School District in Pennsylvania.

Provide Extra Service: Ask questions and ask your parents/students if there is anything else you can do to help them. How could a riled-up parent walk out of your office dissatisfied if you offer that simple extra service? It may only take a few more minutes of your time to be empathetic and hospitable, but it is well worth it if you are helping to market your school or district.

Be a Better Listener: Often when people have a concern or express a complaint, they just want to be reassured that their concern is valued. Look directly at them, and take a few extra seconds to really listen before formulating your reply. You may hear more than just the question you are being asked.

Speak Your Parent’s Language: This one is difficult at times because educational lingo can be complex and so ingrained in our vocabulary. When using technical terms, keep in mind you need to make your explanations as “low-tech” as possible. If using technical terms is the only way to provide an answer, then you will need to educate your parents as you proceed. It’s always a good idea to ask a few questions to test their understanding of your explanation.

Manage Your Telephone/People Skills and Those of Your Employees: The person who answers the phone or greets the parents, students and community

Continued on page 9

Emergency Education, BSSD Style
by Rob Picou, Superintendent, Bering Strait School District

In my career, I have never met a mother who did not want her child to be successful. I have unfortunately met many mothers who did not have the tools to help their children achieve success, and I have met far too many students who are failing because they have not learned the critical skills of reading and math in the primary grades. The Bering Strait School District is capitalizing on partnerships with the Department of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Staff Development Network in our efforts to help students gain the skills in reading and math that provide the necessary foundation for academic achievement. With funding from a School Improvement Grant and from a Graduation and Academic Improvement for Native Students Grant, we are implementing Response to Instruction (RtI) and AIMSweb. While we are only in the initial stages of implementation, preliminary results indicate that we are on the right path and that more of our students are experiencing success with critical skill development.

RtI is the process of organizing the adults in a school around the academic and behavior needs of children. AIMSweb is a universal screening and progress monitoring tool that provides the information teachers need to immediately make instructional decisions, before it is too late because a child has already failed. At the base of the RtI process is a solid, core program that is taught with fidelity: a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Continued on page 11
The Joy of School

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

My favorite day of the entire year is the first day of school. There is excitement in the air. The school’s physical plant is ready and clean, the staff is refreshed, and students are eager to return to their familiar routines, learn new things and see old friends. Parents want to know how we are going to help their children learn and thrive. Optimism, promise, and enthusiasm abound.

Every school in Alaska strives to do its best for the students it serves, and the educational leaders of the state’s schools are the ones who champion these efforts. The start of the school year is the perfect time to celebrate past accomplishments and share plans for improvements. Parents, community members, visitors and of course our students can share in the celebration, and make renewed commitments to continuous improvement. If we start the year by celebrating accomplishments and recognizing improvements, we set the stage for a positive school year.

As principal it is important to balance positive news with acknowledgement of challenges ahead and strategies for meeting these challenges. Did your school make AYP, or improve results in any areas? Was attendance improved? Did new programs benefit kids? Did your school receive other recognition or awards? Communicating a positive message is important. Whether we host an open house (an ideal way to share the school’s good news and continuing efforts), hang posters and banners, put our message on a Web page, or send the good news home in our first letter from the principal, the public will support our efforts and appreciate the hope in a positive message.

When we lead with the positive, we can also set the stage and establish expectations for the coming year. Share your goals for the year and remind all stakeholders of your commitment to continuous improvement. This is the prime time for us to convey to everyone who walks through our doors that we will continue to grow, and will strive to do great things for kids. In this way we build pride in stakeholders, add to the warm, fuzzy feeling of the first day of school, and kick off the year the right way.

Educational leaders in Alaska know that school success is largely dependent on the relationships between the leaders and their stakeholders, staff, students, parents, and colleagues. Be present! We can’t build positive relationships without leaving our office chairs. If we are out front, in the hall and at the front office, shaking hands and greeting people, we can take advantage of the excitement of the start of school and begin to build connections and networks that make our schools thrive. Each connection is a strand in the web, connected to so many others, thrumming with energy. Each strand makes the web stronger.

Think of each positive interaction as a deposit and each negative interaction as a withdrawal. The beginning of the year is the time to make deposits in emotional accounts and establish positive interactions. This gives a leader a positive balance in each child’s and adult stakeholder’s account. With those positive balances established, it is easier to share difficult information or to ask things of others. Later this year, when challenges arise, we may need to make some withdrawals and depend on our strongest allies. Now is the time to build up those emotional accounts by building relationships, communicating, and facilitating positive interactions.

This year, the issue of federal and state school funding looms large. There will be plenty of talk about sequestration, NCLB waivers, new standards, new evaluation tools, and more. There will be days when it appears that the sky is falling. But today, let’s enjoy the start of the school year, stay focused on our priorities, and exciting things will happen for our students. I wish all our AASSP members a positive year as we make a positive difference for kids.

What Matters Most at the End of the Day?

by Rod Morrison, AASSP President-elect; Principal, Gilson Junior High School

“Kids know when you care. They also know when you don’t. Kids aren’t stupid.” —Jim Burgett

As school administrators, we face many challenges every day: school budgets, enrollment, student achievement, federal mandates, collaboration, climate, technology, instructional leadership, and balancing home life with school. When I asked several of my students what they thought was the most important role of the school principal, they responded, “Knowing your students and caring about them.” If you ask the board of education, business leaders, or our elected officials in Juneau, “What is the most important issue Continued on page 3
Building Leadership In Others With What You Have

by André Layral, Executive Director, AASSP

Like many of you, I always look forward to the new school year with much hope and optimism. This year is no different. With school now underway, AASSP is playing an important role in sharing a new resource with our members called Success at the Core. This free, online, professional development toolkit is aimed at developing the leadership capacity of school leaders and leadership teams through effective teaching strategies that hold promise for raising student achievement. Leadership teams are not new to schools, but when they are focused on effective teaching strategies, leadership teams can play an important role in improving student achievement.

Much of my time the past few weeks has been spent working with the planners for the 2012 Alaska Fall Principal Conference, and I believe the program will meet the many different needs of the principals, assistant principals and aspiring principals in attendance. Outstanding keynote speakers include Yong Zhao, Jamie Vollmer and George McKenna, and a Rural Panel Discussion will address different success strategies used by school leaders in small K-12 schools that are helping students experience academic success and prepare for college and careers. DEED Rural Education Coordinator Chris Simon will be among the panelists. The conference will also continue the highly successful Commissioner Conversations, begun two years ago, in which members can learn more about the Alaska NCLB Waiver, new academic success and prepare for college and careers. DEED Rural Education Coordinator Chris Simon will be among the panelists. The conference will also continue the highly successful Commissioner Conversations, begun two years ago, in which members can learn more about the Alaska NCLB Waiver, new

What Matters Most at the End of the Day?

faced by public schools today?” they might have a different perspective, even though their overall goal is to help students.

It would be really great if caring about kids were the only concern for a school administrator. Most of us can remember when we made the commitment to be an educator, and understood that we would not get rich or famous doing it. The specific reasons for becoming an educator vary with each individual, and I am positive we all did it to assist students along the road to positive we all did it to assist students along the road to

“If you don’t love kids, love your job, and love the field of education, quit. Liking isn’t enough when it comes to children’s lives.”

—Jim Burgett

it be great if every student in our schools knew that an adult cares enough about them to at least know his or her name? We meet students in the hallways, shake their hands, and welcome them to our schools every day, not just the first day of school.

This year, let’s visit each classroom, ask for a seating chart, and get to know every student by name. Even if our positions reside in the district office, let’s visit each of our schools and get to know the students. It matters to them! Let’s develop a checklist with every student’s name—I call it a positive-reinforcement checklist—and make a concerted effort to positively recognize every student individually in some way, checking them off the list so no students fall through the cracks.

School budgets, federal mandates, enrollment, and all those other details of our jobs will become that much easier to face when we get back to the basics of caring about kids and making a difference in their lives. Patience, kindness, confidence, high expectations, and putting students first can work wonders when establishing a successful environment for learning.

Alaska Performance Standards, and proposed plans for teacher and principal evaluations.

2012-13 may emerge as pivotal year for education, in our country and particularly in Alaska. Outcomes of the November elections and the potentially historic federal education cuts of sequestration could have far reaching consequences for the work we do as school leaders. Whether Congress will reach a budget agreement to avert sequestration has many asking how education reforms currently underway will be funded. Sequestration can be avoided only if Congress passes another budget deal that would achieve at least $1.2 trillion in deficit reductions.

As school leaders you will be expected to figure out how to do as much as possible with what you have, with greater accountability, for a diverse student body during difficult economic times. I have faith that each of you will strive to provide the best education for your students, and will find solutions to meet the challenges you will face this school year. I encourage you to share the story of your ambitions as a school leader, of how you are meeting the needs of your students and working collaboratively to develop the capacity of others in your school to help students succeed. Help others understand how you are using the resources that are within your control. Use data to tell the story of your progress, and how and why you target precious resources where they are needed most.

Have a great school year!
Happy 40th Conference, ALASBO!
by Jenny Martens, ALASBO President; Director of Budget and Finance, Lower Yukon School District

As we celebrate ALASBO’s 40th year, I would like to share with you a brief history of an organization that has provided hundreds of school business officials across the state opportunities to grow, network, and lead as professional members of the school community.

The Alaska Association of School Business Officials, better known as ALASBO, was founded in 1974 by Lowell Thomas “Tom” Freeman along with Richard “Dick” Swarner, Duane Oliphant, and John “Jake” Rogers, all of whom are now honorary members of ALASBO. Tom Freeman, after being promoted to Finance Director of the Anchorage School District, recognized the need for Alaska districts to work together to deal with the many challenges of school district administration. Having been a member of the Washington Association of School Business Officials, he knew the importance of an affiliate organization in Alaska that could provide professional experiences and networking opportunities to Alaska’s school business officials.

Led by current honorary members between 1975 and 1977, ALASBO built a professional organization by electing officers, adopting bylaws, establishing committees, incorporating, and appointing a treasurer. ALASBO was soon included in the Department of Education and Early Development directory, which recognized the trust ALASBO had built in a very short time.

The first official ALASBO meeting convened in November 1974. Fifty-seven people participated from 25 of the 31 school districts. The Anchorage mayor and superintendent were among the attendees. Superintendents and board members from around the state praised ALASBO and sent a common message that they would support the future attendance of their school business office staff. After nearly 40 years and several years of schedule changes involving double conferences, we will arrive at our 40th annual conference in December 2012.

As Alaska increased the number of school districts in the state, the Commissioner of Education supported ALASBO, knowing the role it would play in the vital professional development for all the new school business officials. ALASBO has continued to provide leadership through the years, often collaborating with the state and other organizations to make positive changes to educational operations.

ALASBO has established a strong presence at the national and international levels through its affiliate organization, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO International). Over the years, an impressive number of ALASBO members have been appointed to regular and special ASBO committees and have received awards and recognition for their commitment to their profession and to their districts. Most notably, with full support of ALASBO, Melody E. Douglas from the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District was elected to the ASBO International Board in 2004, became president-elect in 2005, and served as president in 2006 and past president in 2007. Melody’s service to ASBO and the respect she gained nationally was pivotal in the history of ALASBO, as it recognized the hard work and professionalism of its members and the organization as a whole, and opened doors for Alaska’s school business officials.

P-Card Update
by Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

In June 2012, the Illinois ASBO (IASBO) P-card program distributed nearly $1.8 million in rebates, and $92,996 of that went to the eight participating Alaska school districts! Why should your district miss out?

What’s a P-Card?
P-card stands for procurement card. In this program, it’s a Mastercard controlled by your school district that can be issued to a person or a department.

The district administrator can also control the daily, weekly and transaction limits, and even the types of items that can be purchased on each card.

How is the Program Set Up?
IASBO originated this program and has allowed other state affiliates such as ALASBO to become involved. IASBO provides assistance with setting up the program and with issues that arise. Bank of Montreal, which owns Harris Bank in Chicago, is the card issuer.

Continued on page 5
COOP and Disaster Recovery Planning
by Sue Jolin, Controller, Anchorage School District

Recently I had the pleasure of participating in a research group consisting of finance managers associated with the Council of Great City Schools. Our mission: review, present and discuss various issues facing urban school districts around the country. The focus included topics such as working through organizational silos, strategic planning and performance budgeting, total cost of ownership, communications, and continuity of operations (COOP) and disaster recovery planning.

Although the emphasis was on larger urban districts, I believe the discussions and lessons learned apply across districts of all sizes and geographic locations. The area of COOP and recovery planning is something we all hope we never have to put into action. However, of all the topics discussed it seems to be an area that is often overlooked. It is easy to become so consumed in the day-to-day tasks that we fail to ensure our COOP and recovery plans are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Some of us may not know all aspects of our plan, or even worse, we don’t have one at all!

COOP and recovery planning is not only for the unthinkable—major natural disasters such as the 1964 earthquake or life/safety issues like Columbine or an influenza pandemic—but should also include contingencies for those situations that are closer to realization than they may ultimately appear. These considerations may include how to handle the loss of a school or facility due to fire, flooding or other unexpected incident. What to do when there is a sudden loss of key personnel within a district, the loss of a major supplier of goods or services, or something some of us experience on a more regular basis, major system outages or technological disasters. What do you do? Who’s in charge? What are everyone’s responsibilities? How do you continue to provide services? At what level can those services be provided? How do you get back to the status quo? These are some basic questions to answer when considering a COOP and recovery plan or when reevaluating or testing an existing plan.

One of the first steps in developing the plan is to determine the risks. What are the potential events that could trigger the need to put a continuity plan into effect? Identify those risks for all areas of your organization, from district-wide to the school or departmental level, then decide what mission-critical activities must be carried out. The next step would be to determine when and how those activities would be carried out and who would be involved in that process—the plan. Then the plan must be tested, reworked, and tested again until the best course of action is identified. Once the plan is established, it must be communicated at all levels of the organization, maintained, updated and practiced, so that in the event it is put into action it is effective.

Based on my research and discussions with the council group, we at the Anchorage School District feel that we have a very effective Emergency and Security Preparedness plan. However, we also believe that more work could be done in establishing a comprehensive COOP and recovery plan that is communicated at all levels of our organization. Part of that effort would be to re-evaluate the planning within my own department to identify current risks and develop a more up-to-date COOP and recovery plan that could be incorporated into a district-wide effort. If anyone is interested in sharing ideas or their continuity plans, please contact me; I’m very interested in hearing from you.

Have a great start to the new school year!

P-Card Update

By participating in the IASBO program, Alaskan districts take advantage of the negotiating power of a much larger group of districts. Many aspects of the program have been customized to school districts.

There are NO annual fees! Rebates come through IASBO annually, in the spring. They’re currently 1% or more of transaction volume, depending on the billing cycle selected. ALASBO retains a portion of the rebate, which starts at 25% and decreases as district purchasing volume grows.

District administrators are trained in Details Online, a system that enables them to monitor card activity in real time.

What are the Benefits?

In addition to the rebates, the p-card program can save money. Management studies have shown that purchase orders and high check volumes are extremely costly. Many districts also struggle to deal with vendors that don’t accept POs, low-dollar purchases and last-minute items for maintenance, travel, and special events. Properly managed p-cards can solve many of these headaches and save costs, with fewer POs, fewer checks, and real-time monitoring of expenditures.

If your district already has a credit card, why not switch to a p-card, with no annual fees and a rebate? Alaskan districts that can pay utility bills and even a few other large-volume vendors with the p-card can generate large rebates quickly, with even a limited program.

How Can I Sign Up?

Further information and links are at alasbo.org, under resources/downloads. The application process does require a Board resolution (since you are applying for credit) and several weeks for bank approval, so get started now! There will be several sessions at the Annual Conference in December for those interested in starting a p-card program.

Continued from page 4
Last month, approximately 130,000 students returned to school in 54 Alaskan school districts. No Alaskan student deserves to feel “Just Average.” Each student has gifts, talents, skills, dreams, wishes, and desires. Each student is important and unique. Young people get just one shot at their educational experience. In the history of our nation, each generation has a social contract to educate the coming generation. As Alaska moves toward convening the 28th Legislature, it is incumbent upon all decision-makers—Governor Parnell, senators, representatives, Commissioner Hanley, school boards, principals, business mangers, and superintendents—to remain focused on the primary goal: Success for All Students. When dealing with issues of complex funding, legislation, facilities, and curriculum and instruction, decision-makers must not lose sight of the “kid on the ground” and those who teach that kid, aiming for success.

Some well-intentioned critics look to other nations and compare their educational systems to the U.S. system. Many may remember when Singapore was the comparative nation of choice. Recently, Finland has been suggested as the example to follow. The United Nations produces an Education Index that measures the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment information (GER) of nations. The adult literacy rate gives an indication of the ability to read and write, while the GER provides an indication of the level of education from kindergarten to postgraduate education.

It is true that Finland produced an index of .993 for the United Nations Education Index in 2009, the latest data year. Four other nations were tied with Finland for first place: New Zealand, Denmark, Cuba, and Australia. That year the United States was listed at 21st place with a score of .968. Coming in last (181st) was Niger with an Education Index of .282. Singapore, once highlighted as the epitome of a successful education system, was ranked at 53rd place in 2009 with an Education Index of .913. Clearly there is a significant difference between developed and developing nations!

Why bring up the United Nations Education Index? While some point to Finland, Cuba, Australia, Denmark, and New Zealand as having an education system that is superior to that of the United States, data of this sort are not related to or helpful in assessing our situation. This index is simply a compilation of selected data. To compare the index score of the United States (including Alaska) to Finland, New Zealand, Cuba, Denmark, or Australia ignores the extreme diversity and complexity of demographics, geography, and family structure/support.

The reality of the 21st century is that U.S. schools are tasked with enormous responsibilities that far exceed the traditional “3 Rs” of yesteryear. Will additional funding alone resolve the educational achievement conundrum of our students? Probably not; it hasn’t yet. Reducing funding is certainly not the answer, either.

Decision-makers at all levels continue to miss the imperative need for real systemic change in how available funds are utilized and how schools are organized. Health insurance and energy consume a disproportionate share of school funding. Children’s education will be better served if we begin to think creatively about how available funds are used, rather than continuing to decry the lack of funds and trying to do business as usual.

For example, how might the legislature help school districts to control health insurance costs? What about dedicated funds to better develop the state’s bandwidth infrastructure, particularly in remote locations? How might we eliminate or reduce some of the constraints that hamper creative thinking and action?

We can do better. We can pull together to thoughtfully and creatively examine and improve our education delivery system. This is the debate that needs to take place. Every day spent debating “how much?” is a
A New School Year, A New Opportunity
by Dr. Dave Herbert, AASA Past President; Superintendent, St. Mary’s Schools

Fall is always an exciting time of year for educators, parents and students as a new school year unfolds. The excitement that fills the air signals the start of a new opportunity to provide children with a high quality educational experience. No doubt, teachers and students have enjoyed the summer months, yet they are eager to embark on their new learning adventures. As school begins again, let’s make a commitment to educational excellence, and do everything in our power to provide a learning atmosphere conducive to high quality learning. Let’s support an educational climate that will spark enthusiasm, enhance creativity and motivate students, parents, and teachers to work together for the betterment of Alaska’s children.

All too often we are faced with political, financial and accountability pressures that can easily distract us from ensuring that each and every child has an opportunity for a quality educational experience. Although we will undoubtedly face critical issues in the areas of funding, accountability, and additional mandates, let’s commit to focusing our decisions and actions on the needs of the children we serve.

I am optimistic that if we perform better in our respective duties and rekindle the passion we all possess for providing students with a rigorous and exciting educational experience, they will benefit. There is much more to a quality educational experience than just reading, writing and math. While embracing accountability and academic proficiency, we must ensure that we are providing all students with a well-rounded educational experience. In fact, most students will excel in the areas of reading, writing, and math if the manner in which these subjects are taught creates a sense of relevancy for the unique student population being served.

Finally, I would like to extend a note of appreciation to all Alaskan educators for their countless hours spent working with the youth of our state, both within the classroom and behind the scenes outside of school, making sure the students are taken care of physically, socially and emotionally. May our daily acts of kindness continue to motivate and drive us to perform our very best. Our journey this year will include challenging times, but with the right mindset and motivation we will accomplish our goal of providing all Alaskan students with a quality educational experience. Have a great school year!

Steve Atwater—2013 Alaska Superintendent of the Year

In early September, Dr. Steve Atwater of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), was recognized as Alaska’s 2013 Superintendent of the Year. Dr. Atwater’s extensive Alaska career includes involvement with the Lower Yukon, Lake and Peninsula, and Kenai Peninsula Borough school districts. Following a successful teaching career, Dr. Atwater became superintendent of the Lake and Peninsula School District, which was distinguished by a quality schools initiative that dramatically improved student achievement. Now in his fourth year as the KPBSD superintendent, Dr. Atwater maintains his leadership focus on improving student achievement by guiding responsive instructional practices and student engagement through effective learning practices. Colleagues and board members lauded his leadership expertise. Dr. Atwater will be honored at the 2013 AASA National Conference on Education.

One Message, One Mission, One Motive

Continued from page 6
This Work We Do  
by John Pothast, President, AAESP; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

HARVEST HOME

As a former English teacher, poetry has long been an important part of my personal and professional life. As a current principal, poetry remains important to me, and I start each school year by sharing a poem with my staff, which in a way becomes our “theme” for the school year.

In the ideal
It is a harvesting,
This work we do—
a reaping of crops grown from ancestral seeds, 
a gathering of first fruit from vines that trace their sources beyond geography, beyond gender, beyond the bleach and blush and black of skin 
and root themselves in watery grace, in knowledge that nurtures us all.

In the ideal
our classrooms fill, like cornucopia, 
overflowing with the bounty of our grange.
Life stories, heaped among the texts, 
spill into hallways of our schools, 
crowd the sidewalks or the subways 
or ride yellow buses home, 
altering the form of knowing, 
changing heads, 
changing hearts, 
changing history, 
bringing harvest home.
—Bettye T. Spinner

I like this poem, Harvest Home, because it ties the idea of harvesting a fall bounty with the work we do everyday with our students—two concepts I probably would not connect on my own while sitting around pondering the universe!

The poem starts with some great fall harvest images, instilled with a sense of urgency, thankfulness, tradition and unity. The fall harvest used to be a time where the community came together, regardless of age, race or gender, and everyone played a part in harvesting the crops—the bounty that would sustain us through the coming winter. Living in Alaska, I like this poem even more because that sense of harvest is still very real and present in our lives and in the lives of our students, as families, neighbors and friends come together to fill our freezers with fish, moose or berries. It is a harvesting, this work we do each fall.

In the ideal, it is a harvesting work we do with our students as well. They come to us in yellow school busses with a lifetime of experiences, some similar to our own, many very different from our own. Yet they arrive, spilling into our hallways and classrooms, and we now come together, as a greater school “family”, working together to fill our minds with the bounty that will sustain us for the future.

Changing their heads: filling them with newfound knowledge.

Changing their hearts: instilling in them a passion for learning.

Changing history: altering their lives for the better by giving them the wisdom and skills to turn their talents into successful futures.

In the ideal, it is a harvesting, this work we do each fall, instilled with a sense of urgency, thankfulness, tradition and unity! Bringing the harvest home for every one of our students.

AASSP Selected as Success at the Core Partner

Paul G. Allen, philanthropist and co-founder of Microsoft, is known for creating and advancing world-class projects and high-impact initiatives that change and improve the way people live, learn, work and experience the world through arts, education, entertainment, sports, business and technology. In 2005 he posed the question, “How can media be used to make a difference in education?”

Vulcan Productions worked with the Education Development Center to discover an answer to his question. Together they concluded that media is a powerful tool when used to illustrate good practice and could inspire others to achieve the same—thus positively impacting student achievement. Success at the Core (SaC) was born, focused on leadership and teacher development.
ASDN Offers Full Slate of Fall Programs
by Kelly Tonsmeire, Director, Alaska Staff Development Network

Last school year more than 4,000 Alaskan educators participated in programs sponsored by the Alaska Staff Development Network. This fall ASDN will offer 23 webinars and more than 50 distance courses for Alaska educators. Academic credit is available for all webinars, which are presented by nationally recognized authors and presenters. Fall webinars include:

- The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners with Dr. Carol Ann Tomlinson—October 10, November 15, December 13 and January 17, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST
- Response to Intervention (RTI) 101: Getting Started with Multi-Tier Systems of Support with Dr. Rachel Brown—October 11, 18, 25 and November 1, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST
- Improve Motivation and Behavior in Your Classroom with Dr. Randy Sprick and Tricia Skyles—October 15, 22, 29 and November 19, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST
- Leading Quality Literacy Instruction for Secondary Students with Lexie Domaradzki—November 5, 12 and 26, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST
- Blueprint for RTI Implementation with Dr. Mark Shinn—November 7, 14, 28 and December 5, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST
- Using Performance Data to Increase Student Learning with Lexie Domaradzki—December 3, 10, January 21 and 28, 3:45 to 5:45 PM AST

ASDN is also offering a number of new, state-of-the-art, premium distance courses presented by leading national authors, in partnership with Solution Tree Publishing. New courses include:

- Transforming School Culture with Dr. Anthony Muhammad, 3 credits
- Pyramid Response to Intervention: How to Respond When Kids Don’t Learn with Mike Mattos, 3 credits
- Motivating and Engaging Students with Dr. Robert Marzano, 3 credits
- Formative Assessment and Standards-Based Grading with Dr. Robert Marzano, 3 credits
- Elementary Reading Intervention Strategies with Dr. Elaine McEwan-Adkins, 3 credits
- Improving Teaching and Learning with Dr. Charlotte Danielson, 3 credits

In addition, ASDN will join the Anchorage School District in cosponsoring the Second Annual Alaska RTI Conference in Anchorage, January 25-27, featuring the nation’s top RTI presenters. A preconference Institute—Implementing RTI in Small Schools and Rural School Districts with Lexie Domaradzki—will be held on January 25.

Full details on these and all other ASDN programs can be found at asdn.org.

Emergency Education, BSSD Style

Room education. An intervention team consisting of the teachers, the principal, and hopefully the parents, diagnoses where the child is struggling and then provides an intervention plan that includes progress monitoring. One of the criticisms we hear of RtI and of fidelity to a core program is that it takes the fun out of teaching—to which we respond, school is no fun to a child who can’t read.

Preliminary 2011-2012 SBA Gains
1. Shishmaref: Fifth Grade Math—from 23 to 79%
2. Savoonga: Third Grade Writing—from 37 to 65%
3. Gambell: Fourth Grade Reading—from 38 to 65%
4. Stebbins: Third Grade Reading—from 17 to 50%

Graduation Rate Over Two Years: 46% to 60%
Dropout Prevention Begins at Birth!

We obviously have much more work to do in order to ensure that all students are performing at grade level in reading and math. However, we are encouraged by our preliminary results. Students who are in the bottom quartile need explicit instruction that targets their individual and specific needs. They don’t need their teachers to slow down. They need their teachers to speed up. Acceleration is the key to success with closing the gap for students performing below grade level expectations. We all want what is best for students, and Alaska has some of the finest educators. An RtI process gives teachers the protocol and the tools necessary for systemic and consistent instructional delivery that guarantees every child has an equal opportunity to learn.

The musk oxen use cooperation to protect their young from predators. When threatened by wolves, they “circle the wagons” and position themselves with their young in the middle and their sharp horns facing outward. What must we do to become like the musk oxen? How do we establish that sense of urgency, that instinct of survival? How do we protect our students? In the Bering Strait School District, we call it RtI!
Stand Tall for Alaska’s Kids
by Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA and AASA

No one can escape the overwhelming media onslaught that we are experiencing with local, state and national campaigns in full swing. Perhaps you are campaign weary by now, yet as stewards for Alaska’s children, I urge you to remain engaged. We must sort through the highly choreographed campaign ads—print and video—to find the best possible representation for PreK-12 education and the children being served by Alaska’s public schools.

At the federal level, sequestration (pass a budget or institute across-the-board cuts) looms large if Congress cannot craft a budget deal before January 2013. Failure to do so could result in federal program cuts in the 8% range, action that would create havoc with the federal program and grant supported educational offerings that have become vital in our effort to educate all students to be college and career ready.

You might be thinking, “What can I do to influence a positive outcome with the federal budget impasse?” Start by contacting Alaska's legislative delegation, Senators Murkowski and Begich and Representative Young. Don’t leave advocacy to someone else, but rather craft a personalized and decisive email message, urging our delegation to reach across the aisle to like-minded congressional colleagues to find the compromises necessary for a responsible federal budget that will help meet America’s and Alaska’s needs. Reference the unique needs of Alaskan students who depend on high quality special education and ESL services, as well as the needs of Alaska's impoverished children, the significance of Title I services, and the all important school breakfast and lunch programs that improve their chances for a productive school day.

At the state level, 59 of our 60 representatives and senators are actively seeking office, with many facing highly contested races. Now is the time to influence the outcome by helping candidates better understand the needs of our public school children. Be respectful, but don’t be shy in expressing your personal experience with the ever-increasing challenges confronting Alaska’s schools and the need for funds to sustain and grow programs necessary to make a difference for more children. Alaska’s children need legislators who place public education at the forefront, and who recognize the burdens of escalating costs despite school districts’ efforts to keep avoidable costs to a minimum.

Elected officials can make a huge difference in how public education is valued and funded. Do candidates see children as an important resource for Alaska’s future? Do candidates champion public education as an equalizer across socioeconomic lines? These issues and others can and should be raised during the campaigns to ensure that officials elected to serve their communities are committed to and understand the complexities of public education.

Over the next month you have an opportunity to impact Alaska and the lives of the state’s children for the foreseeable future. Don’t pass up this opportunity; instead, embrace the privilege that is granted to each Alaskan by studying the issues, advocating for the best representation at both state and federal levels, casting your ballot in November, and welcoming those elected into the important job they have earned. Don’t sit on the sidelines and hope for the best! Get involved and help create a positive outcome for children and public education.
Simple But Effective Ways to Market Your School or District

is responsible for the perception they have of the entire school/district. Make sure that he or she is personable and professional. Also, you may receive a lot of calls and requests for information every day. Don’t misuse the intent of the voice mail phone system by screening callers. Satisfied customers expect a fast response. ANSWER YOUR PHONE AND RETURN CALLS PROMPTLY.

Don’t Share Internal Problems: Nobody is in favor of increased taxes, budget cuts for programs, less money for supplies and other tough decisions that districts have to make. However, what you say as a district “insider,” both around the office and in your communities, greatly affects the perception of the community about your school and/or district. In short, avoid negativism or complaining about anything, including school board members and district personnel. Our moms were right when they advised us, “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”

Get Right On a Problem: Problems don’t “just go away.” Good marketing/PR strategy only leaves a bad situation on the front burner for a matter of hours. No matter how much you are tempted to wait out a problem, hoping it will go away or blow over, deal with it immediately. The longer it spins without a resolution, the worse it will get.

Try to See the Media as Colleagues: Be available and pleasant. Reporters are just like the rest of us — trying to get our jobs done the best we can. They aren’t the enemy, although reading misinformation in articles or noticing that only “bad news” is newsworthy might make you think otherwise. A reporter friend of mine once gave me great advice: “Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel.”

Get Involved in Professional Organizations: The relationships you develop through your associations with professional organizations can go a long way in helping market your schools and districts and advocate for education.

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.” With a little extra effort, we can indeed control a great deal of what people think about us and our schools and districts.

AASSP Selected as Success at the Core Partner

From 2009-2011, SaC was piloted in Washington and was rolled out nationally in 2011. In summer 2012 Alaska was selected as one of two new State Collaborators with SaC. As lead partner, the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals is working with the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, the Alaska Staff Development Network, the Alaska State Mentoring Project and the Alaska State Literacy Association to introduce SaC within Alaska over the next 18 months.

A defining feature of SaC is the documentary quality video’s included in seven Leadership Development modules and 24 Teacher Development strategies. Each module and strategy is accompanied by an extensive set of print and online resources to accompany the videos. Independent evaluators have concluded that when SaC is used school-wide, positive gains are made in student outcomes. When leadership capacity grows and individual instructional capacity grows, the culture of the school changes to a professional learning community in which students are more engaged and responsible for their own learning.

AASSP and its partners are available to share SaC either in person or via webinar. To learn more about SaC, contact André Layral at aassp@alaskaprincipal.org, (907) 458-8880, or visit successatthecore.com.

Pictured are Greg Wohlman, 2012 Alaska Middle School Principal of the Year, and Cheryl Huber, 2012 Alaska High School Principal of the Year, at a gala event on September 20th in Washington, D.C. honoring each state’s 2012 nominees for principal of the year. Wohlman is a 5th-year principal at George Morgan Jr/Sr High School in Kalskag, Kuspuk School District. Huber recently retired as principal of of S.A.V.E. High School in the Anchorage School District. The honorees visited with Alaska’s Congressional delegation on Capitol Hill as part of the event, and Senator Murkowski traveled to the communities of Upper and Lower Kalskag early this year to honor Greg Wohlman.
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

ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo—Phoenix, AZ
October 14–16, 2012

46th Annual AAESE/AASSP Fall Principal Conference—Anchorage, AK
October 14–16, 2012

AASB 59th Annual Conference—Anchorage, AK
November 1–4, 2012

ACSA Face-to-Face Annual Board Meeting—Anchorage, AK
November 5, 2012

ALASBO Annual Conference—Anchorage, AK
December 2–5, 2012

28th Alaska Legislative Session Begins
January 15, 2013

2nd Annual RTI Conference—Anchorage, AK
January 25–27, 2013

AASB Legislative Fly-In—Juneau, AK
February 2–5, 2013

AASA National Conference—Los Angeles, CA
February 21–23, 2013

33rd Annual ASTE Conference—Anchorage, AK
February 23–26, 2013

NASSP National Conference—National Harbor, MD
February 28–March 2, 2013

AASA Legislative Fly-In—Juneau, AK
March 3–5, 2013

AASB Legislative Fly-In—Juneau, AK
March 23–26, 2013

Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair—Anchorage, AK
April 12–13, 2013

AASSP and Alaska Principal Foundation Board Meeting—Anchorage, AK
April 12–13, 2013

NSBA Annual Conference—San Diego, CA
April 13–15, 2013

28th Alaska Legislature Adjourns
April 14, 2013

NAESP National Conference—Baltimore, MD
July 11–13, 2013