Who Better to Guide the 28th Legislature?
by Dr. Dave Herbert, ACSA President; Superintendent, St. Mary’s Schools

It is an exciting time for education in the State of Alaska and many changes are on the horizon. Some of these changes include the adoption and implementation of the Alaskan version of the common core standards, the newly adopted teacher and principal evaluation regulations, and the critical issue of education funding. With these and many other changes ahead of us there is no better time than the present to ensure that you are active in your respective associations, within your districts, and within the state to help shape these inevitable and imminent changes.

The 28th Legislature is now underway, and the only manner in which we as educators will be able to help mold the future of education in Alaska is to make sure our voices are heard on important topics such as standards adoption and implementation, teacher and principal evaluations, education funding, and many other initiatives that are currently being vetted. We have a choice to make: we can decide to moan and complain about all of the necessary changes we are facing and how difficult it will be to make them, or we can become proactive and help with the formulation and direction of some of these regulations and policies that will directly affect us as educators and the students we serve. Many times we will not get instant gratification, but if we stay focused on how we can positively and effectively help direct change, we will be much better off.

I am urging all of you to become active in the process and to make a sincere effort to educate yourselves on the various agenda items that will play out before us in a very short time period. By becoming educated on the real issues facing our state, we will have a clear voice and a solid foundation of knowledge from which we will be able to base our discussions and our initiatives. We can no longer afford to sit idle on the sidelines, waiting for someone other than Alaskan educators to enact educational reform in this state. There are many thoughtful legislators, Department of Education employees, and other individuals who truly have the best interests of Alaskan children in mind when formulating policies, procedures, and regulations. However, they may lack information and insight that can only be gained from those of us who are actively working in the district setting. Who better to help inform them and help guide them than the great educators of our state?

Let’s work with them and become directly involved in these initiatives in order to help educate, inform, and guide these individuals and entities in a direction that will promote high quality educational reform, that is feasible to implement, and that will eventually benefit all students in the great State of Alaska.

Sharing Our Increased Capacity to Utilize Funds
by Dr. Steve Atwater, Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District; 2013 Alaska Superintendent of the Year

Throughout my career there have been several seminal events that caused me to recognize that my instinct for how to deal with a situation was wrong. One such event occurred four years ago at a borough assembly meeting in Seward when I testified on my district’s need for full local funding. Up to that point, the borough had always funded our schools to the cap. I naively thought that by strongly stating the district’s case, the nine members would be swayed to vote yes on maximum funding.

What I encountered, however, was that a majority of the members were resolute to end this trend, and furthermore, annoyed that I was asking for yet another increase in local funding. I distinctly remember the scowl of a few members as I stepped away from the microphone. Later that evening they voted to set a funding level below the cap. On the ride back to Soldotna I was struck by the irony of what happened. I pride myself on pushing our district to improve, to think outside of the box. But ironically, my effort to secure funding was predictable; it was Continued on page 7
What’s Great in Your School?
by John Pothast, AAESP President; Principal, Redoubt Elementary School

This has been an incredible year for our school. We have a school full of students who are engaged in learning and teachers who are committing themselves to quality instruction every day. Our students are excelling in the classroom, our newly implemented Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports philosophy is finding great success and is making us a model program in our district, and we have great community and parent support for our school!

Throughout this year our staff has been engaged in professional development activities to improve their technology skills, content area knowledge and proficiency with national, state and district expectations. They’ve been engrossed in conversations and activities to refine and improve both our school and our district.

On a bigger level, I was honored earlier this year by meeting and talking with the Alaska Teacher of the Year finalists, and I was inspired by their passion for kids and mesmerized by their creative ideas for teaching and learning. I’ve worked with groups of teachers and principals from around the state as we wrestle with our newly adopted state regulations, defining a new evaluation component to include student learning data in all teacher and principal evaluations.

In short, I have spent the year working with an outstanding collection of educators who have committed themselves to addressing some of our biggest challenges, while at the same time making our districts and schools bastions of caring and excellence. We have people in our educational community who believe in our students’ abilities, have made a conscious decision to simply believe in what can be, and are working hard to make it so.

Chuck Swindoll once commented: “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than

Continued on page 7

It Takes A Community—A Statewide Community!
by Cheryl Stickler, Principal, Haines Borough Schools

As a member of our learning community—the Alaska State Public Education System—your contributions are essential to attain and maintain standards of excellence and high student achievement. Alaskan educators believe that every child deserves access to the “good stuff” in education. We want 100% of our students to attain standards of excellence. We know that shared leadership and 100% engagement from every member in our learning community is essential. We understand that what we believe, what we want, and what we know determine what we do.

In this era of accountability, we collectively heed the messages residing within regular assessment. Let us remember that the assessments that guide and direct instruction are formative. These assessments do not simply reveal what was taught, but more importantly how, what, and when students are learning. By tracking levels of achievement, we gain timely feedback on the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Our teachers and principals wish to avoid being “DRIPs” (Data Rich, Information Poor), so a variety of data analyses spurs effective instruction and adjustments.

Data, however, does not paint the whole picture of what makes our Alaskan schools successful. Our collective strengths that promote success include:

• parent and community support;
• talented teachers committed to student success; and,
• student desire to achieve at high levels.

Each one of us is struck by the power of Alaska’s diversity, yet common beliefs emerge from that diversity, such as the value of the individual and the value of community.

We applaud your willingness to serve as a member of our learning community and for adding your voice to ensure our state’s future and our children’s success. It indeed takes a village, a community, every Alaskan to attain excellence for and with our children.
The Three Rs for a Long, Dark Winter
by Adam Mokelke, AASSP President; Principal, Burchell High School

A leader I greatly admire used to educate his staff about the highs and lows we experience throughout the school year and how to be cognizant of those. My “Back to School” article this year was about one of these phases—the start of a school year. Educators start the year with energy and enthusiasm, and a sense of promise and renewal that is special in our profession. Just as our spirits soar with the promise and excitement of a new school year, they can decline with the temperature and daylight hours during the mid-winter months.

We are in the middle of the long, dark Alaskan winter, both figuratively and literally. December, January, and February is the stretch of time when daylight is minimal, temperatures can be bitter cold, and people tend to stay indoors and become inactive. It is a difficult time for many individuals. Sometimes we label it “cabin fever” or Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Whatever we call it, the lack of light, the cold, inactivity and other factors foster depression, lack of energy, and irritability.

In addition to these factors, education is a high stress field. Educators carry enormous responsibilities: teaching our children, maintaining a safe learning environment, meeting state and federal requirements, attending to parents and the community, continuing programs with decreased funding, and innumerable other issues. Effective teachers and leaders pour their lives into this work, putting in countless hours and constantly striving to do great things for kids. Dedicating our lives to children is one of the noblest endeavors. Doing it well, consistently over time, can also wear down and tire out the best of us. It can be difficult to stay fresh and to maintain energy and enthusiasm through January and February, but as we all know it is critical to be at our best to serve our students. One important way to combat burnout is by taking time away from school to refresh. This is an often overlooked but critical part of our profession.

Before the winter break, our staff joined together for a potluck lunch and gift exchange. I took the opportunity to address the staff and to thank them for their hard work and dedication to kids. Additionally, I told them the most important thing they could do was to intentionally use the break to rest, relax, and recharge their batteries—the “other” three Rs. It sounds simple, that with time off people will rest and relax. However, sometimes it is not. Sometimes unwinding and decompressing takes an active effort and it is one we all need to make time for. While resting and relaxing looks similar for most of us, the other things we do to recharge our batteries can vary greatly. Whether this is making time to exercise, to enjoy the outdoors and snow sports, to be creative, or to spend time with friends and family, it is critical to engage in activities that we often don’t have time for while school is in session.

After making an effort to communicate to staff about the importance of personal wellness, we must be sure to take care of ourselves. Principals, Superintendents, and educational leaders are notoriously hard working, putting in countless hours, arriving early and staying late, and always on call. Leaders need to find balance in their personal and professional lives as well, and model these behaviors for those they lead. If we take time for physical activity and eat well, we will be healthier and have more energy for the jobs we love. “To keep the body in good health is a duty. Otherwise, we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear,” Buddha said. We must engage in hobbies and activities we enjoy, take time to exercise, to enjoy the outdoors and snow sports, to be creative, or to spend time with friends and family, it is critical to engage in activities that we often don’t have time for while school is in session.

Returning from winter break, a staff that has intentionally gotten the rest and down time they needed, and participated in the activities they enjoy, will be refreshed and ready to give their best. The time between winter and spring break is long. Staff have personal leave days, and as we know, our most driven and dedicated educators rarely use them. It can help to say in a staff meeting in early February that it is okay to take a personal day on a Monday or a Friday for a three-day weekend to rest and recharge. We are all in this profession to serve kids, and we cannot serve others unless we take care of ourselves first. Winston Churchill said, “Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.”

“A healthy attitude is contagious, but don’t wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier.”
—Tom Stoppard
Building Leadership In Others With What You Have
by André Layral, Executive Director, AASSP

In preparing my second ACSA Bulletin article for this year, I spent time reflecting on where we have been in the first half of the year. In December the State Board of Education adopted new cultural and performance standards for students, as well as changes to how teachers and principals will be evaluated. All school districts in Alaska, like others nationally, have also been reviewing the adequacy of their school safety and crisis response plans. Students, parents, school staff and policy makers view these items—and their relative importance—differently.

The perceptions of students are often overlooked when faced with the challenge of implementing change and new procedures. In 2010 and 2011, the Association of Alaska School Boards asked many student focus groups, “What makes school a place where Alaskan students want to be and want to do well?” Not surprisingly, in their report, Alaskan Schools: What Matters to Students, the areas of school life identified by students in the focus groups were Supportive Adults, Physical and Emotional Safety, Student Centered Teaching Approaches, Opportunities to Learn and Engage, and Food Quality. Note that curriculum and performance standards were not mentioned, and all but food quality have more to do with relational trust, personalization and a caring staff. The same focus groups identified a number of school quality have more to do with relational trust, personalization and a caring staff. The same focus groups identified a number of school factors (and factors outside the control of school) that contribute to low achievement and dropping out of school, while offering suggestions for what adults in schools can do to connect with and help students succeed.

Quit Pointing the Finger—Step Up and Take Some Responsibility!
by Rod Morrison, AASSP President-elect; Principal, Gilson Junior High School

Whether it is adequate school funding, school performance, student behavior and discipline, ensuring teacher quality, underfunded and over reaching federal laws, school safety, or preparing students for college and career readiness, education today faces plenty of finger pointing and blaming others for perceived problems. Both outside of education and among educators themselves, finger pointing and blaming contributes nothing that supports public education.

It seems a favorite pastime of the news media to bash public education as a precursor to introducing perceived needs for reform. Some reports on education contain misinformation, others contain little actual truth or reality, information is taken out of context, or they’re just plain spin. In addition, if you have ever listened to a publicly broadcast school board meeting or talk radio, you know that some who call in use a public forum to contribute to the misinformation that schools are failing our students. It is common for some who know little about what educators face each day in public schools to cast education in a negative light. Have you ever sat in a coffee shop and overheard the conversation behind you? It might be a student, parent or fellow educator overheard blaming parents, students, a teaching peer or administrator. A little less finger pointing and blame would be welcome, as would a little better and more accurate information.

Educators tired of being blamed often have no real avenue to constructively rebut education critics. Worse yet, they may even sound defensive or protectionist when they do respond. We in education have not done as much as we could to inform the public about positive steps the school is making. In my role as President Elect of AASSP, I encourage our membership to take advantage of the SaC website and to visit successatthecore.com.
about the good things happening in schools, or to describe what actually occurs in public schools. Certainly we can do more to help others understand how much our educators care about students and student success. Having a communication strategy would go a long ways toward setting the record straight while educating the community as a whole about what goes on in our schools.

As a school leader I choose to step up to the plate and accept responsibility for the students in my school. It is a job I signed up to do. As a former coach I never had the opportunity to “pick” my team members or set a budget for my sport. I was expected to coach the players I had, with the resources I had, and to prepare them to represent our school and community in the best fashion possible. As a coach I owed it to my players, their families and the community to “coach them up” to be stars.

Some students come to us with problems and deficiencies, but many do not. Therefore, we must focus our efforts to make sure we are successful with all students using the teachers we have. When a student is four years behind grade level, we do everything in our power to ensure they have academic growth. If I have a teacher who is struggling, then it is my job to support, motivate and provide him or her with tools to better serve our students. Just like coaching a team, it is a principal’s role to prepare our players to perform at the highest level. If extra practice, different methods, or adjusted plans are needed to help the student or teacher be successful, I do whatever is necessary.

It is our job as educational leaders to be promoting education as positively as we possibly can. We need to be excited that we have the students we have in our schools. We need to use the tools we have in place to evaluate, to motivate, and to celebrate everything we have in public education. We would all like a larger budget, top performing teachers and staff, more advanced students, and nicer buildings. The bottom line is that educators cannot point the finger and blame others for the problems we have in education. We must take responsibility for what we have and what we do. We can more frequently celebrate publicly the successes we have in public education. If we accept our responsibility to do these things, we can hope others will start taking more responsibility for their roles to support public education, including our elected officials, communities and parents.

Quit Pointing the Finger—Step Up and Take Some Responsibility!

We must take responsibility for what we have and what we do.

Briana Randle—2013 Alaska Assistant Principal of the Year

The Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals selected Briana Randle, Assistant Principal of West Valley High School, as Alaska Assistant Principal of the Year for 2012-13.

Randle is responsible for the freshman Ignition Program, an ongoing, comprehensive transition program that uses upperclassmen as mentors to welcome freshmen as they move into high school. Randle takes pride in knowing the students she serves, looking for the good in each student and providing them with positive and personal learning opportunities while teaching responsibility and accountability. She enjoys the opportunity to influence students and teachers daily and is driven to be the best she can be at what she does.

Randle’s colleagues describe her as an “effective and hands on leader,” someone with energy and enthusiasm, someone who is constantly striving for personal excellence for herself and others. Others describe her as a skilled communicator and team player. West Valley Principal Shaun Kraska cited Randle’s efforts to bring out the best in each student and the staff. Randle knows almost every student in the school by name and she has a unique ability to understand students’ strengths and goals, constantly providing encouragement while conveying her belief that they’ll do the right thing.

As Alaska Assistant Principal of the Year, Randle is now eligible for consideration as a candidate for recognition as the 2013 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year. Randle will also attend the State Assistant Principal of the Year Forum and Awards Banquet in Washington, DC on April 10-13, 2013, where all state Assistant Principals of the Year will share their expertise among peers and national leaders in education.
Give In? Give Up? Never!
by Dr. Robert Thomason, AASA President; Superintendent, Petersburg City School District

Author’s Note: This article is based on “Boosting Staff Morale” by Nora Carr, published in the American School Board Journal, June 2012.

The cycle continues. Increased expectations for student performance, flat or reduced funding to do the job. Many school districts in Alaska face budget woes as details of the 2013/2014 state budget for education emerge. Correspondingly, national reports indicate that teacher job satisfaction is at its lowest point in two decades.

Common sense and available research confirm that all employees perform better when they feel appreciated for the work they do. Simply holding onto a job—with the threat of more layoffs hanging over their heads—is not enough. A recent MetLife Survey of the American Teacher indicated that teachers with high job satisfaction feel secure in their jobs and are more likely to say parents, students, district officials, and others treat them as professionals.

A key finding in the MetLife survey is how greater job satisfaction translates into higher levels of teacher optimism about what students can achieve, as well as more positive interactions between teachers and parents. Since teacher expectations and parent engagement impact student learning as much as educators’ content knowledge, classroom management, and skill in using diverse instructional strategies, addressing morale is important.

One way out of the current morass of increased expectations and reductions in financial commitment is to find common ground among groups (administrators, teachers, unions, classified staff) and develop a common platform for advocacy and communication. When public school critics split boards, parents, teachers, and administrators into warring factions, they achieve their objective. When educators and those concerned about education unite around a shared concern about the best interests of children, a powerful force for change is created.

For far too long, educators have allowed others to set the public’s agenda for public schools. Understandably, many feel beaten down by the unproductive anti-teacher, anti-board, anti-school administrator rhetoric and legislation sweeping across the country.

Giving in or giving up is not an option! At the very least we must set the record straight and stop letting inflammatory and inaccurate statements about public education go unchallenged. Doing this strategically doesn’t mean engaging in an online war of words or uncivil debates during board meetings. Setting the record straight can be as simple as issuing corrections and clarifications to supporters and posting statements of fact online.

Any experienced teacher, custodian, principal, counselor, or instructional assistant who has worked in a high need school will confirm that the work is harder, more difficult, more complex—and for those with the requisite skill and passion, more rewarding! When school officials, parents, and community members show teachers and instructional assistants they care, children and young people benefit. In the zeal to transform public schools into private, for-profit enterprises, reformers have lost sight of a key business school lesson: Every organization’s success rests more on its employees than its strategy, board leadership, cash flow, shareholder value or CEO.

Treating employees well makes good business sense, and education is nothing if not a people business!

2012 National Title I Distinguished Schools Recognized

Delegations from Delta Greely and Haines elementary schools recently returned from a national awards ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee, where both schools were recognized as National Title I Schools of Distinction. This national recognition highlights schools across the country making significant improvements for their students.

Delta Greely staff notes the positive correlation between their school’s academic achievement and exceptional student test scores and the combined efforts of physical fitness, music appreciation, math intervention and reading involvement. This is newsworthy because it is occurring in a Title I school in rural Alaska that has a 30% English language background.

Continued on page 7
Sharing Our Increased Capacity to Utilize Funds

the old way of doing business. Our borough assembly was not impressed by my plea.

For the past couple of years the state’s education community has found itself in a similar predicament: we recognize that our efforts to seek an increase to the base student allocation are mostly being met with indifference. It is clear that it is time to rethink how we work with our legislators. While I believe that all legislators want the best for Alaska’s children, I sense that few are confident that a BSA increase will lead to improvements. We must counter this skepticism by sharing that we have worked hard to increase our capacity to do more for our students. In sum, we must convey that we are stronger districts than we were five years ago. Each district needs 3-4 talking points to show why this is the case.

I can share that our students’ experience at school has been enhanced by improved instruction that is the result of our teachers’ job-embedded learning and our more sophisticated approach toward teacher evaluation. I can also state that our processes to support our struggling learners are far better than they were. These improvements did not require a lot of funding, but they did require that we change our way of doing business. In doing so, we increased our capacity to better meet the learning needs of our students.

By definition, the structure of education and inflation cause an annual overall increase in costs. We must acknowledge that this is why we need more money, but also emphasize that our school districts are not the same as they were five years ago. Let’s avoid the predictable approach of “We can’t live without more money,” and instead stress our increased capacity to utilize the needed additional funds.

What’s Great In Your School?

successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company or a church or a home.” I would suggest that an optimistic attitude for education in general, and our schools in particular, will lift our ability to reach more students and their families. Swindoll continues, “The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day. We cannot change our past: we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play the one string we have—and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you—we are in charge of our attitude.”

Our schools’ successes, in great part, come from the collection of statewide educators who know what’s good for kids and are willing to work hard, overcoming obstacles with positive attitudes, to make great things happen! It truly is our collective attitude that makes education in our state so great. Thank you for your many contributions to our students across the state!

2012 National Title I Distinguished Schools Recognized

learner population and a 22% special education population. Education goes beyond academics in the Delta Greely schools, where students created a coin drive for hurricane victims and contributed to the American Cancer Society, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, and a local charity, Project Christmas, raising nearly $4,000. These efforts all help to create compassionate, grateful students who understand that by helping to make the world a better place, even small communities can make a difference.

Far to the south, Haines Elementary School students finish their classes and make their way to a myriad of activities in a community that upholds high expectations for student success. Through community involvement, district leadership, passionate teachers, and student desire, over 90% of the students are advanced/proficient in reading and writing; nearly 85% are advanced/proficient in mathematics; and 100% of the 3rd grade students demonstrated proficiency in reading! Haines teachers serve a student population that is 25% Alaska Native, and approximately 54% of the students come from homes that qualify as low income. Haines Elementary School’s 100% commitment to continual improvement and to every child having access to the “good stuff” in education results in all students flourishing academically.

Congratulations to everyone in Delta Greely and Haines who have helped support these learners, and a special “hats off” to principals Michelle Beito of Delta Greely and Cheryl Stickler of Haines, who support and lead these outstanding schools.
Collaborative Budgeting
by Laurie Olson, ALASBO President; Director of Finance, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

This time of year, our district’s stakeholders spend quite a bit of time discussing the upcoming school year’s budget. Districts around Alaska and the rest of the U.S. are enduring similar conversations. We’re all looking for the same thing: accurate estimates of revenues and expenditures, clear goals, and confidence that our decisions will make the hoped-for differences so we can feel sure we are spending our funding in the most effective way. In other words, “How do we best support the students in the classrooms?”

One watchword for our district is sustainability. Since the majority of school district budgets are spent on salaries and benefits, staffing is always a big part of the discussion. Increases to staffing through hiring are undertaken when we have a reasonable assurance that we can sustain the employment. Both hiring and layoffs affect the lives of employees and their families.

We also strive for efficiency and stretch each dollar as far as possible. With extreme diversity from school to school, pupil-to-teacher ratios (PTR) are a place to start, but not the final answer for staffing.

Our district has embraced the Langford Method for Quality Learning and some of the techniques have been applied to areas besides instruction. For example, using the Plan-Do-Study-Act Improvement Process has helped us with budgeting for desired results.

Four years ago, our district benefitted from additional funding as the Legislative Task Force recommendations were implemented and changes were made to the District Cost Factor and other components of the Foundation Funding formula. Our District Instructional Team researched how best to help the students. Research indicated that if students who needed additional help got it at the right time, they would be more successful (Plan). Instead of putting all of the funding into reducing the PTR, we implemented some other changes to staffing that were targeted in certain areas (Do).

So far, according to testing results (Study) the students appear to be gaining ground. We continue to monitor the students’ progress and have continued funding these positions (Act). This Plan-Do-Study-Act model gives us more confidence in our assumptions.

Using our resources efficiently and effectively by keeping funds as close to the classroom as possible is the best method we have found to help students. Because continuous improvement applies to budgeting, too, we continue to look for ways to refine our processes and provide for our students and staff to the best of our ability.

Dave Jones Named ALASBO Business Official of the Year

Congratulations to Dave Jones, Assistant Superintendent with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, who was named the Alaska School Business Official of the Year at ALASBO’s December 2012 annual conference in Anchorage. Candidates for this prestigious award are nominated by their colleagues in the Alaska school business profession. Annually, a panel of previous recipients selects a deserving individual from the nominees submitted based upon their outstanding service, innovative plan design and implementation, and use of exemplary business practices in school business management.

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

Dave came to Alaska in 1997, having previously served as a school business official in Montana and Wyoming districts. From 1997-2007, he was Director of Finance for the Kodiak Island Borough School District. In 2003, he received ASBO International’s prestigious Eagle Award for Service to the Community in recognition of his work with the Kodiak football team.

Dave has been active on both ASBO and ALASBO committees. He served as ALASBO President in 2002 and currently chairs the Legislative Committee.

Dr. Steve Atwater, KPBSD Superintendent, said, “KPBSD is thrilled that Dave is being recognized for his long and distinguished career in school finance. The District joins ALASBO in applauding Dave for receiving this award.”

Congratulations, Dave, on this well deserved honor!
One of the main hobbies that my husband Stan and I enjoy is traveling internationally. We are pleased to have found an organization that includes school visits on each travel itinerary and provides sponsorship to schools around the world.

On our recent trip to Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, we visited a school in Laos for several hours, and we were also able to interact with students at a Cambodian floating school. These countries are still recovering from the traumatic wars of the 1960s and 1970s. Both have GDP/person below $2,800, compared to the U.S. at $48,000/person. Education for youth is required in both countries, but one gets the idea that there is little enforcement of the requirement and that there are no schools available for some students. In Cambodia, teachers work two four-hour shifts a day, plus they provide extra tutoring sessions, and they still make less than workers in the garment factories. The extra shifts are necessary in part because teachers were persecuted during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975-1979. In both countries, Buddhist monasteries are still a source of education for up to 60% of young men.

In Laos, we drove to a small village outside Luang Prabang that includes Hmong minority and Laotian people, living in harmony. We visited a local toolmaker who was using bomb casings to make knives (“the best metal!”), met the Hmong shaman, and had lunch at the home of the village chief. Most of the families in this village are farmers. Some have been resettled here to move them out of clear-cutting and opium growing activities.

At the school, we were warmly greeted by a group of first and second grade students. Thirty of these students are taught in a single classroom by one teacher. Fortunately, they have solid desks, a large blackboard and cheerful visual aids on the wall. Donations from travelers like us have recently provided ceiling fans and toilets, so the kids don’t have to run into the woods. The classroom had no lighting, but there appeared to be adequate light from skylights. A library is next on the wish list for this school.

We brought books to donate, and the students were eager to interact with us, review the books, and repeat back English words! Most could count to at least ten and could recite the English alphabet. After their songs and math demonstrations, they did their best to follow us in spirited renditions of “Hokey Pokey,” the alphabet song, and “BINGO.”

In Cambodia, our boat ride to a floating fishing village on Tonle Sap Lake near Siem Reap took us by a floating school, sponsored by a Catholic relief organization. We didn’t get to visit the school, but it was most amusing to watch the students rowing home. In each boat, several students rowed and several bailed with water bottles! At the suggestion of our guide we had saved toiletries from our hotels, and they were eager to come alongside to receive these gifts! Sadly, we learned that twelve percent of youth in this village do not survive to age five due to the lack of sanitation and drinking water.

These school visits are a poignant reminder of the tremendous resources we have in the United States. We are also reminded that young students everywhere are eager to learn. What a waste if we do not do as much as we can to make sure that each student has the resources s/he needs and takes advantage of these opportunities to succeed.
The Legislative Table Is Being Set
by Dr. Bruce Johnson, Executive Director, ACSA and AASA

As the new year begins and the 28th Legislature debuts in our Capitol City, there is an air of excitement and, in many ways, an opportunity for a new beginning. Throughout January, we begin to understand the complexities involved with running state government and gain appreciation for those in the legislature and executive branch who must make sense of highly complex issues, including oil revenue projections, Alaska’s budget lifeline. As this column is prepared, the news media is filled with concern for dwindling oil production and suggestions that Alaska’s era of large capital budgets and “rainy day” reserve contributions may be over. Still, as Legislative Finance Director David Teal recently commented to House Finance members, “This isn’t really gloomy from my perspective. You (the legislature) can afford an average capital budget—sizeable, $875 million capital budget. You’re not forced to reduce the operating budget—you may want to restrain the growth—and you have the luxury of having large reserve balances if you decide you want to spend more money than the current-year revenue.”

So as we enter into 2013, Alaska’s financial well-being may be moderating due to many factors including declining oil production and potential undetermined reductions at the federal level. Yet Alaska has a significant savings account that the legislature can access prudently to maintain essential government services, including PreK-12 education. With a projected deficit of $410 million in FY13, many veteran legislators will be experiencing a new phenomenon, borrowing from reserves rather than adding annually to reserves—a first since FY05.

The ACSA membership appreciates the complexities of government and budget development, knowing our elected officials have the best interest of all Alaskans at the center of their deliberations. We also understand that many elected officials desire more and better results for their significant investment in public education. Challenges to do more and to do it better are coming from many fronts, including Governor Parnell, House Finance Co-chair Bill Stoltze, and Senate Education Chair Gary Stevens.

In his State of the State Address, Governor Parnell said, “To keep our state strong, let us also choose a future of higher standards and high achievement in our schools.” He also highlighted that all of Alaska’s natural resources, children are unquestionably the most valuable. He challenged Alaskans to achieve a high school graduation rate of 90 percent by 2020. More recently, he outlined a basic principle with respect to public education funding: deliver results to kids and parents. He also publicly recognized the need for an appropriation to implement regulations for principal and teacher evaluations, and a willingness to examine broadband access.

Representative Stoltze suggests that there is strong support for robust, healthy schools and voices that want school reform, accountability and results. With regard to education innovation, he outlined a need for greater choice, broadening charter schools and securing debt reimbursement for charter school expansion.

Senator Stevens remarked that the state’s 70 percent graduation rate is horrible and will require lots of work if we are to meet Parnell’s 2020 goal of 90 percent. He also referenced online education and teacher training as requiring attention.

The good news: PreK-12 public education is at the forefront as the 28th Legislature convenes. We will have many opportunities to contribute and we must be credible when called upon. It is incumbent on each educational leader in Alaska to do the homework and stay abreast of the issues as they come before the legislature. Your contribution can come in many forms, including committee call-ins, written testimony, and the ever-important personal message to your legislative delegation. ACSA staff and the affiliate staff representing AAESP AASSP and ALASBO are available to assist, so do not hesitate to contact any one of us.
Alaska Council of School Administrators
2013 Joint Position Statements

Each year, through a committee process, representative ACSA members—principals, business officials and superintendents—reaffirm and/or develop position statements to support our legislative advocacy effort. Eight statements will guide ACSA members in 2013, including:

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.

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 AS 39.35.255 that requires 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 2013 and in doing so, restore state discretion on best approaches to bring about meaningful student achievement improvement.

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.

Worker’s Compensation Fee Schedule: ACSA asks that the legislature take action to return to the historical method of setting a fixed fee schedule for allowable medical fees in worker’s compensation claims. Implementation of AS 23.30.097 in 2011 has resulted in rate increases averaging 10% in FY13.

The complete ACSA Joint Position Statement document is available at alaskaacsa.org.

2013 Spring Leadership Retreat
Emerging Trends and Issues in Teacher Evaluation
with Dr. Al Bertani
Wednesday, April 10, 2013
8:30 AM to 4:00 PM
Mat-Su School District Board Room
501 North Gulkana, Palmer

Over the past three years, more than 20 states passed legislation designed to address educator effectiveness by mandating annual evaluations based in part on student learning and linking evaluation results to key personnel decisions. Much of this legislation impacts districts around key personnel decisions, including tenure, reductions in force, dismissal of under-performing teachers, and teacher retention.

Acknowledging that the quality of the teacher is the single most important factor in improving student learning as documented by multiple research studies, policy makers and the public have turned their attention to improving teacher quality. This workshop will explore the trends and issues in teacher evaluation based on an analysis of emerging models.

Register online at asdn.org.
BUSINESSES ARE CHAMPIONS FOR ALASKA’S CHILDREN!

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

---

### 2013 Educational Association Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AASB Legislative Fly-In—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>February 2–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASA National Conference—Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>February 21–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33rd Annual ASTE Conference—Anchorage</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>February 23–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALASBO Legislative Fly-In—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>February 25–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASSP National Conference—National Harbor, MD</td>
<td>National Harbor, MD</td>
<td>February 28–March 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASA Legislative Fly-In—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>March 3–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Board Meeting—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>March 7–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAESP/AASSP Legislative Fly-In—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>March 19–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASB Legislative Fly-In—Juneau</td>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>March 23–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair—Anchorage</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>April 12–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASSP and Alaska Principal Foundation Board Meeting—Anchorage</td>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>April 12–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSBA Annual Conference—San Diego, CA</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>April 13–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th Alaska Legislature Adjourns</td>
<td></td>
<td>April 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACSA Board Meeting—By teleconference</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State School Board Meeting—Soldotna</td>
<td></td>
<td>June 6–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAESP National Conference—Baltimore, MD</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 11–13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>