



A newsletter publication of Alaska Association of School Business Officials

ALASBO News Link
is published for the members of the Alaska
Association of School Business Officials
and its affiliate members.

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www.alasbo.org

For publishing information, contact:

Duane Guiley

e-mail: guiley@gci.net

Editing and layout by

Amy Lujan, Nome Public Schools

stanandamy@aol.com

Production by

Cindy Reilly, Matsu School District

Cindy.Reilly@matsuk12.us

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President's Message

Cindy Reilly, Matsu

Happy New Year, everyone. It's hard to believe we're well into February already. But we are off and running on a new year, another chance to make the world around us a better place to be. When you paid that membership fee to join your professional organization of school business officials, you laid a foundation that will help you in this quest.

Please remember however that the ALASBO connection is a two way street.

Most of you probably joined ALASBO because you recognized the value of networking with others who are in your shoes. ALASBO gives you several opportunities to learn and grow as a business professional. This year, the Professional Development Committee has

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President's Message (Continued)

already announced plans for 12 Power Lunches over the next year on topics from the Chart of Accounts to Grants to Audit Preparation and Payroll issues (see page 7). Any member can call into these one-hour sessions and learn from professionals who are well versed in their topic. They are held during the workday. You have opportunities to ask questions, or you can just listen in. If you have more immediate questions, you can send an email to Laura Hylton, our secretary, asking her to poll the membership, and she will send a mass emailing to all members with your question. I did this a few weeks back, asking a question about per diem, and was amazed at the overwhelming response I got from people all over the state. Finally, ALASBO offers you opportunities for Professional Development in the form of a national conference in the fall, and our annual state conference in December. I hope you will consider taking advantage of both of these.

Street ALASBO does go the other way too. It is made up of us, the members. A Power Lunch means nothing if there is no one participating. Emails from a business official with a question do not answer themselves. Conferences do not just happen. They take many hands and heads to pull together and be valuable experiences for all.

ALASBO – The Next Generation



Annual Conference December, 2008

My theme for this year, ALASBO, The Next Generation, is aimed at reminding you that YOU are a valuable piece of the whole puzzle. Eight years ago, when I was a brand new business manager attending my first ALASBO conference, I was so impressed with the people I saw up front speaking, running the sectionals, and being elected to office. In my mind, they were highly trained, highly educated, and more qualified to share their knowledge than I could ever hope to be. Many of these leaders are at or near retirement now, and "the next generation" of us is being called on to pick up the reins. While I still believe these ladies and gentlemen walk on water, I find myself now trying to fill their shoes as a leader in ALASBO.

Please allow me to let you in on a secret...I don't walk on water! And despite an

accumulation of several years of experience in school business, and conducting myself as a qualified professional, there is still much to gain from the experience of others. When I share with you from my knowledge base, I am looking to you to share with me from yours. We need one another. Our membership is what makes ALASBO a valuable asset. What will you bring to ALASBO, The Next Generation?

Executive Director's Message

Duane Guiley, ALASBO Executive Director

Many thanks to all who participated in the Annual ALASBO Meeting and Exhibitor Show; not only to those who worked so hard behind the scene planning and facilitating activities, but also to individual members who seriously took advantage of the staff development and networking opportunities during the meeting. The pre-conference trainings provided by David Means and Tammy White, were well attended and generated positive feedback. I would like to specially thank David and Tammy, and all of the presenters for a job well done.

Immediately following our annual meeting, I was invited to attend the first meeting of the western region ASBO affiliate directors, held in Sedona, Arizona. The focus of the meeting was to share how each association conducts business. Specifically we talked about member and non-member revenues, exhibitor booth fees and privileges, keynote speaker costs, member fees and services, professional development, and utilization of technology in delivering services. In addition, we discussed opportunities for partnering in on-line course development and delivery.

ASBO International will host the annual leadership meeting in Denver, Colorado in February, in preparation for the annual November, 2008 conference to be held in Denver. Board President Cindy Reilly, President Elect Karen Goodwin, and I will attend. In addition to attending the affiliate directors meeting and other sectionals, our goal is to learn as much as we can about the hotel accommodations and proposed conference activities, so as to serve as a resource for the membership in making arrangements to attend the November ASBO International meeting.

The ALASBO Legislative Fly-in is set for February 20-22, 2008. You will find a detailed schedule on page 7 of this newsletter.

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Executive Director's Message (Continued)

The Department of Education and Early Development will provide meeting space on February 20, Alaska Public Entity Insurance will sponsor lunch, and an evening reception will be sponsored by AML/JIA. We will break up into groups and meet with individual legislators and staff on February 21 and 22 and enjoy a reception sponsored by ACSA on the evening of the 21st at the ACSA office. Currently, we have nine members signed up to participate.



As you will recall, this past summer a joint legislative task force met to consider revisions to the current funding model. The task force adopted a draft recommendations bullet list for purposes of committee discussion. The group decided to break issues into short and long term recommendations. The draft short-term list included:

- (a) 50% ISER implementation in statute in FY09, with the remaining 50% phased in over four subsequent years;
- (b) funding intensive needs students at 9*BSA in FY09, 11*BSA in FY10, and 13*BSA in FY11;
- (c) creation of a step-down hold harmless provision for declining enrollment;
- (d) review and re-calibration of contractual pupil transportation amounts based on FY07 audited costs;
- (e) passing a stand-alone K-12 public education appropriation bill by the 60th legislative day, with continued set aside of surplus revenues in Public Education Fund; and
- (f) requiring the University of Alaska to submit an annual report to the legislature documenting their efforts to attract, train, and retain qualified public education teachers.

The results of this discussion were the basis for a final written report to the Governor, which can be found on our web site. Although there are differences, this report influenced the Governor's 2009 budget recommendations and funding bills,

which will be reviewed and discussed with Eddy Jeans, Mary Francis, and Carl Rose during the Fly-in.

We have secured a block of rooms at the Kodiak Inn, Best Western Hotel for our ALASBO Summer Leadership Training for the weekend of July 25-28, 2008. Due to the seasonal nature of tourism, rooms will have to be booked by May 25. Please block out your calendars to attend. This is a great opportunity to be involved on the front end of the annual meeting planning and take advantage of additional staff development with your association board and committee chairs. More information will be available as schedules are firmed up. If you need additional information before hand, please contact your board liaison or me via e-mail at, guiley@gci.net.

Melody Douglas Receives Alaska School Business Official of the Year Award

Laurie Olson and Jenny Neyman, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District; Amy Lujan, Nome Public Schools

Congratulations to Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Chief Financial Officer Melody Douglas, who was named the Alaska School Business Official of the Year on December 5 at ALASBO's annual conference. Candidates are nominated by their coworkers, and the ALASBO board chooses one winner a year. Long-time members of ALASBO know that Melody was chosen for her overall reputation for excellence, as well as her contributions at a state and national level to the school business profession.

Melody started at the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District in 1978 as a Fixed Assets Specialist and worked her way up through the ranks to become Chief Financial Officer in 2001. Her association with ALASBO started in the 80's and she became a Board Member in 1989, Treasurer in 1991, Secretary in 1992, back to the board in 1993 and 94, then President-Elect in 1995 and President in 1996. Following her year as Past President in 1997, she accepted the Executive Director position in 1998 and worked in that capacity until 2003. During her time with ALASBO, Melody coordinated the development of Policy and Committee manuals for ALASBO and initiated the statewide newsletter that we all enjoy today, which she

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SBO of the Year Award (Continued)

edited from 1995 - 2000. She also coordinated and encouraged district participation in the ASBO Meritorious Budget Award program and the ASBO and GFOA Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting Award programs. Another project, ALASBO hiring a paid executive director to assist ALASBO volunteers in "growing" the organization, came to fruition in 2007.

As Melody grew in ALASBO, she also made the leap to participation in ASBO International, first as an Affiliate Executive Director, then on the Board of Directors and finally her election to Vice President in 2004, which led to Presidency in 2006. Through her association with ASBO, benefits for ALASBO have come from member participation at the International conferences, visits to Alaska and ALASBO from ASBO members and leaders and, most recently, the opportunity to join with other ASBO affiliate chapters in the P-Card program offered by Illinois ASBO.

ALASBO members have been proud and energized to watch Melody's ascent into ASBO International leadership and inspired by her contributions. She is clearly very well liked and respected by her colleagues at ASBO International, as well as her peers in Alaska.

In her spare time, Melody has worked within the state on the Alaska School Cost Study, the Chart of Accounts Review, the Data Dictionary Review, the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the Medicaid Work Group for School Based Services. This past summer, she also testified at the Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force. She also is a member of the Alaska Government Finance Officers Association, Government Finance Officers Association, Soldotna Chamber of Commerce, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Women's Investment Group, Kenai Peninsula Soroptomists, and Kenai Pioneers Auxiliary.



Douglas received an engraved plaque, two round-trip tickets on Pen Air and a bouquet of flowers from KPBSD representatives. The award presentation included a photo slideshow and

comments from ALASBO members. Surely there's nothing like hearing from your peers, "When I grow up I want to be just like you!"

Congratulations, Melody, on this well-deserved honor!

Help Me Help You: Customer Service through Communication

Luke Fulp, Kodiak Island Borough School
District

In our jobs, not only do we need to obtain the technical skills required to work within the accounting field, but we also need to develop skills necessary to educate educators. I can't remember the last day, in the past few years, when I haven't had to address questions regarding business department procedures and internal controls. Most of the time, individuals are seeking justification as to why the business department is making them jump through hoops for what many view to be menial tasks (i.e. authorizing signature, documentation for after the fact purchases, obtaining prior approval on reimbursements). On a regular basis, I am forced to defend the importance of our internal controls.

While this constant defense can become tiresome, the key is to not counteract it with an escalating argument. Rather, these daily, sometimes hourly, sessions should be viewed as an opportunity to educate. Taking this stance requires more patience; however, I've found this tactful approach to be well received. It's allowed me to get more out of people by getting them to understand the challenges that my department faces.

How can you deliver this message to educators in your school district? I've outlined three approaches below that have worked well for me.

Avoid the Rulebook

An automated response by business department employees is a copout. We have an obligation to do more than restate policy when someone has genuine concerns about what they're being asked to do.

In an article addressing customer service within public organizations, this point is emphasized. "Some employees may hide behind

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Customer Service (Continued)

rulebooks... They might have experienced pain in the past for making 'mistakes'; they may be looking for the easy way out, or they may just like being authoritarian. Anyone can learn a rulebook and quote from the commandments. But both management and front-line employees are paid to think, use common sense, and make reasonable judgments." (*Doug Clark. PM. Public Management. Washington: Dec 2004. Vol. 86, Iss. 11; pg. 6, 4 pgs.*)

Listen to What is Being Said

More often than not, when someone takes the time to visit or call, they have a rational thought process. Try to identify where the confusion is coming from. By understanding their way of thinking, your explanation can be modified to maximize the effectiveness of your response.

Be Ready to Hold the Line and Hold People Accountable

Once you've taken the time to listen, you can effectively determine whether or not the person has a valid concern. It is important that you also are able to 'hold the line' with those people who have called just to vent, or take their frustrations out on someone. You are not the district's doormat, and it is important that you make this point clear. By responding appropriately, the person will know that they can call back once they've cooled down.



New Editor for ALASBO Newslink

I am pleased to announce that Susan Edwards of Lake and Peninsula School District has "stepped up to the plate" to take on the task of editing this quarterly newsletter. She will begin with the May edition!

I have truly enjoyed these past seven years in this role. I believe that the Newslink is an important communications tool for ALASBO, and my role as editor has helped me keep in touch with my colleagues around the state. Thank you all for your contributions. Keep on reading!

- Amy Lujan, Nome Public Schools

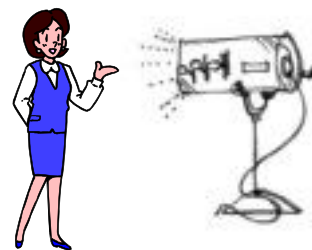
Member Spotlight: Laura Hylton

For this quarter's edition of the "Member Spotlight" feature, Mike Fisher has picked Laura Hylton for the spotlight!

Tell us about your school district

The Lake and Peninsula School District

- serves about 417 students K-12
- encompasses 26,000 square miles (roughly the size of Tennessee)
- has schools sized from 10 to 75 students
- has 14 school sites, all off the road system
- has an annual operating fund budget of about \$12 million



How long have you been in school business? *8 years. I started as Accountant for the Lake and Peninsula School District in August 2000, and became the Business Manager in July 2003.*

How did you get into this business? *Well, I moved to King Salmon and Dennis Niedermeyer found out there was someone local with an accounting degree. And the rest is history!*

What do you like best about your job? *I like the diversity of tasks that fall under my job description. Being able to provide support that enables our teachers and kids to be their best is truly rewarding.*

What advice do you have for those new to school business? *The workload and range of tasks is often daunting, so take one thing at a time. Focus on the kids; their accomplishments and success is our mission.*

Reach out to your ALASBO colleagues with questions, problems or for someone to listen. Share your knowledge and expertise with others. ALASBO is an amazing network of individuals who were all new once too.

How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO? *ALASBO is an opportunity to learn, teach and grow. The community of ALASBO is*

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Member Spotlight (Continued)

awesome. Through being active in ALASBO, both on committees and the board I have grown professionally and personally. Participating in an organization that strives to improve the education of all children in our state is exciting.

What do you like to do for fun? *Fishing!*

If you could visit anyplace in the world, where would you go and why? *Costa Rica, for the fishing, of course.*

Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know? *I started my accounting career working in inmate banking at Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla. As you can imagine education is great deal different; very different types of people and no bars or giant electric doors.*

What is your proudest accomplishment? *Realizing my goal to attend and graduate college.*

Reflections on ALASBO and ASBO Conferences Past

Amy Lujan, Nome Public Schools

As many of you know, after fourteen years in school business in three Alaskan districts, my husband Stan and I are moving to Juneau to seek new and unknown challenges. Leaving school business? Who knows! **Lesson #1: Keep on good terms with colleagues around our small state; you never know where they'll pop up next!**

Looking back, I can truly say that participation in ALASBO has enabled me to be successful in school business. Attendance at the annual ALASBO conference is essential annual training to keep up with changing requirements. Though I've supervised small staffs, I've always brought along at least one member of my staff to take part in the most targeting training opportunity we have all year. It's comforting to realize that the challenges you face, as probably the only person within 500 miles doing your job, are shared by others around the state. **Lesson #2: Attend ALASBO each year to figure out what's new and changing, and to meet the folks you may need to call later for help!**

I have also been able to attend five ASBO International conferences over the years, twice with the support of the Tom Freeman

scholarship. For those of you who don't know Tom, he's our ALASBO founder and is truly one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet – a model of a person who truly cares about improving the profession of school business within our state.

As at ALASBO, one has the opportunity at ASBO International to see how the issues you deal with every day are addressed in other districts. And it's remarkable how similar these challenges and solutions are across the nation, and even internationally!

From the professional training at ASBO, I've gained practical tools to apply immediately in my district, as I do at ALASBO every year. More importantly perhaps, I've gained perspective on our profession as a whole. The keynote speakers at ASBO are top notch; they remind us of the importance of what we do and the ways we can work harder to keep on top of our game. It's inspiring to hear the stories of the Eagle and Pinnacle Award winners each year. And, through hearing the stories of others, I'm reminded that although we may not solve all the problems this fiscal year, a good school business official makes a positive contribution to students and the community every day. **Lesson #3: Attend ASBO at least every few years, to gain tools and perspective on your profession.**



Of course, the legendary partying at ASBO International cannot be overlooked! ASBO conferences are a chance to see a new city and mix and mingle in such cool places as the Pittsburgh Steelers stadium (I've SEEN those Lombardi trophies, up close!), overlooking Niagara Falls, at the tops of sky scrapers and in historic museums and breweries. I've also really enjoyed singing with the ASBO Choir, a truly talented group of business officials and their spouses, and I've collected pins from around the world without even trying! Why is all this important? **Lesson #4: Fun IS essential to life (please don't forget this one!) and it's a great way to get to know and appreciate your colleagues as individuals.**

Finally, I'd like to encourage you to get involved with ALASBO, by volunteering for a committee or to serve on the Board. This last lesson is from my Grandma Louise, and it echoes in my head every day. **Lesson #5: Be a contributor!**

ALASBO 2008 Legislative Fly-In

Please join us in Juneau on February 20-22 for the FY2008 ALASBO Legislative Fly-in. This is your opportunity to meet with your local legislators on their turf and take advantage of the expertise available to you during the fly-in. The draft schedule is as follows:

Wednesday 2/20

* 9:00 to Noon Carl Rose, Mary Francis, and Eddy Jeans provide legislative session summary

* Noon to 1:30 Lunch (sponsored by APEI)

* 1:30 to 5:00 Formulate talking points

* 5:00 to ? AML/JIA Hosts Reception-Hanger Restaurant

Thursday 2/21

* 8:00 to 5:00 Legislative appointments

* 5:00 to 6:00 Reception at ACSA with Mary Francis

Friday 2/22

* 8:00 to 5:00 Legislative appointments

Any suggested changes are welcome. Please, respond to Dave Jones at djones2@KPBSD.k12.ak.us and Duane Guiley at guiley@gci.net, 907-694-7372 (home); 907-301-3371 (cell).

We would also like to know if you plan to attend. Responding to both of us at the same time is helpful as we each have a role in making the fly-in successful. Thanks for your consideration of this worthy experience. If you need additional clarification please e-mail or call Duane.

Juneau or Bust!



2008 Power Lunch Schedule

11 AM to 12 PM, the 3rd Tuesday of each Month

	Day	Topic
January	15th	Chart of Accounts - Overview
February	19th	Chart of Accounts - Functional categories
February	26th	Ereporting
March	18th	Chart of Accounts - Objects/Equipment
April	15th	Grant Applications "Top 10 Pitfalls"
May	20th	Audit Preparation
June	17th	Taxable Fringe Benefits
July	15th	941 Payroll Tax Reporting
August	19th	Time and Effort Accounting for Grants
September	16th	Internal Controls
October	21st	1099/W2
November	18th	Grants 101

To connect, call 218-862-6100. The passcode is 252726.



**Alaska Association of
School Business Officials**

C/o Cindy Reilly
Matsu Borough School District
501 N. Gulkana
Palmer, AK 99645

Mark Your Calendars!

- ***February 20-22 – ALASBO Legislative Fly-In, Juneau***
- ***July 25-28 – ALASBO Summer Leadership Training, Kodiak***