

ALASBO

News Link...



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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the above address.*

President's Message: Keepin' It Real

Luke Fulp, Kodiak Island Borough SD

The Alaska Association of School Business Officials - our organization's name captures a special niche of government officials, grouped by geographic location, industry, and skill set. We're detailed oriented leaders who brave the harsh reality that is Alaska: desolate and extreme. From Kotzebue to Ketchikan, every day that we answer the call of our alarm clocks, scrape the ice off our windshields, and log in to our workstations, we're preparing to support public education in the Last Frontier.

Sounds like the making of Discovery Channel's next reality show, right? While our trials and tribulations probably won't be chronicled on a reality series anytime soon, our jobs are unscripted and very real.

This reality met a group of in February when we traveled to Juneau for our annual fly-in. We developed talking points, and stormed the

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capitol with purpose and cause. Our emphasis was centered on the need for a multi-year funding plan with increases built in for inflation. Yet, our group kept hearing the Governor's echoes about poor student performance in light of additional state aid for K-12 education. It was as if legislators wanted to hear school business officials discuss assessment data and graduation rates rather than dollars and cents.

This is when Dave Jones, Assistant Superintendent of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, was able to strike a chord with an example of how Kenai capitalized on the multi-year foundation funding plan in HB 273 three years ago. Jones illustrated how KPBSD established a strategy for targeted assistance over multiple years, and the impact additional state aid had on student achievement. His example showed improved test scores in controlled classroom environments and among schools throughout his district.

When our group concluded our meetings with 30+ legislative offices, it became clear that this wasn't about another \$100 increase to the base student allocation. It was about accountability. Lawmakers wanted to see progress and administrators taking ownership of student assessment data. Be it from one child, one cohort, one school, or one district. More than anything, it was this message of accountability that resonated with elected officials.

In Kodiak, we recently implemented a budget process that we've dubbed "Performance Budgeting." The process includes a thorough needs assessment where the district takes raw student performance data and puts it out there for the community to see. Our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are all exposed. Similar to how private enterprise employs a situational (SWOT) analysis, this needs assessment drives the conversation surrounding strategic planning. Our goal in Kodiak is simple: put money behind the initiatives that our stakeholders feel need it the most.

I encourage all of you to take the time to meet with your assessment director. Become familiar with the different performance measures, and learn how your district tracks data annually. You'll quickly find that the needs are apparent, and the budget decisions that ensue are, well, very real.



Executive Director's Message

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

The new year got off to a fast start! The Annual Conference seems like only a few weeks ago, but by now we're all entrenched in budgets, tracking the legislative session and so many day-to-day tasks in 2011.

I wanted to start with a brief recap of our very successful 38th Annual Conference in December. Numbers help tell the story:

- 133 regular conference participants (excluding vendors)
- 51 individuals participating in pre-conference, some attending multiple half-day sessions
- 32 vendor booths, our maximum trade show capacity
- 49 vendors participating as exhibitors, members, sponsors and/or attendees

The conference evaluations were very positive, and I credit this to the hard work of our Professional Development Committee on the survey done last spring, and the work at Summer Leadership to use that survey to respond to member needs with conference training sessions.

The annual conference turned a profit for ALASBO, which helps us continue operations throughout the year. Thanks to all the vendors and members who contributed to the success of our conference!

As discussed in the President's Message, our annual Legislative Fly-In was held February 9-11 here in Juneau. The event was scheduled early this year, in order to try to get some momentum going for a new multi-year foundation funding plan. Three bills have been introduced that include foundation funding increases, along with two bills regarding school meals funding increases. Only time will tell if these bills have a chance, but **now's the time to read ALASBO's Talking Points on our website (www.alasbo.org/news) and contact your legislators!** Members of the House and Senate

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Education and Finance committees also need to hear from you and from non-district employees who feel strongly in favor of additional K-12 education funding. We need to be squeaky wheels to have any hope of seeing these bills pass.



In late February, a group of ALASBO members attended the ASBO Executive Leadership Forum in Grapevine, TX, to continue our professional development through ASBO International. We'll report more on this training in the next newsletter! Working with the ALASBO Board, President Luke Fulp and I are also beginning to plan for the ALASBO Summer Leadership event to be held this July in Fairbanks.

Best wishes to all of you with your budgets. Let's keep advocating for funding and keep our fingers crossed too!

If you have questions about any ALASBO program, please do not hesitate to contact me at alasbo@gci.net, or 907-500-9086. You'll also find useful information at: www.alasbo.org.



ALASBO Website Updates

If you have a question or are looking for something, www.alasbo.org is a good place to start for updated information! Here are some of the **recent updates** and where to find them:

- Power Lunch schedule for 2011 and materials from recent Power Lunches: events-workshops
- Updated Board and Committee rosters: about ALASBO-Board and resources-committees

- Latest news on ALASBO activities, including newsletters, legislative letters and Fly-In talking points: news tab
- Presentation materials from 2010 Annual Conference (still adding to this page): resources-downloads
- Current award and scholarship applications: opportunities tab
- FY05-09 Financial Stmts: about ALASBO
- Updated Bylaws, reflecting change at 2010 Annual Conference: about ALASBO-bylaws
- Programs and sponsor lists for past annual conferences: events-conferences-past
- Membership form for anyone in your district who is not yet a member (it's just \$75!): membership tab

Let me or anyone on the Services Committee know your suggestions for making the website more useful!

Congrats to Certified Administrators of School Finance and Operations (SFO's)

ASBO International has announced the names of 100 individuals who are the first to become certified with the new Administrator of School Finance and Operations credential! These school administrators sat for the exam during the beta test period last fall. The ALASBO members who can now put "SFO" next to their names are:

- Melody Douglas, Honorary Member
- Luke Fulp, Kodiak Island Borough School District
- Cindy Reilly, Yukon-Koyukuk School District
- Leslie O'Connor, Yukon Flats School District
- Chad Stiteler, Anchorage School District

Thanks also to ALASBO members Dave Jones, Jenny Martens and Dennis Niedermeyer, who volunteered on ASBO committees that helped create the credential program.

You can now apply to take the SFO exam at any time. Find out more at: www.asbointl.org/certification.



How High Are Your Chips Stacked?

Mark "Tenacious" Towers

Editor's note: Mark Towers was the keynote speaker at ALASBO's Annual Conference in December 2010. He truly enjoyed his visit to Alaska and the chance to meet so many of our members. Perhaps this article was also inspired by ALASBO's Casino Night?

Recently, I was watching one of those poker tournaments on television. I noticed a key difference between those players with lots of poker chips stacked high vs. those players with fewer poker chips. The players with more chips were able to take more risks and eventually became very key players in the tournament.

I got to thinking about that and I created a comparison. Poker chips are akin to "self-esteem" chips. Possessing more of these self-esteem chips enables you to take more risks in the workplace, create more lasting results and make yourself not simply valuable to the organization . . . but essential. Below are some specific suggestions for creating a stack of "self-esteem chips" and using them to become a high-impact player in your workplace:

1. Everything cannot be measured. Find and stay focused on the "critical few" numbers of the only four things that can be measured . . . quality, quantity, cost and timeliness. If these measurable numbers are positive/upbeat, blow you and your team's horn about them. If they are not so good, take ownership of them. Then take bold action in regard to bettering them. Document your small victories (stack those chips!) and stay focused because big victories are soon to follow.

2. Promise a lot and deliver more. Your stack of self-esteem chips will get higher when you go the extra mile. I was watching some crabs in a glass enclosure at a seafood market one day. As one crab consistently tried to climb out of the tank, the others pulled him back into the tank. It reminded me of how average performers in an organization always seek to bring a top performer back to their level of mediocrity. Like a great boss from my past once noted, "Don't be an average performer. Be ambitious, but don't wear it on your forehead."

3. Whining, griping and complaining is never a recipe for success. Mother Teresa once said, "I want two things from the people who work for me. I want them to be committed and I want them to be joyful." Pile your self-esteem chips

higher by positioning yourself as "low maintenance" employee who can be counted upon to joyfully execute the tasks in front of you.

4. Peter Ueberroth observed, "Empowerment is twenty percent given and eighty percent taken." Decisiveness is a highly valued commodity. History is filled with examples of magnificent people who made decisions and then made them right! Be one of them.

5. We are all people of great strengths and weaknesses. Surround yourself with people who play at what you find difficult to do. Your pile of chips will grow when you build relationships and teams that nurture, support and celebrate this concept . . . none of us is as smart as all of us!

6. Be a human search engine. Find and share "distilled wisdom" with your colleagues that will help them become better in regard to their technical, organizational and people skills. Indeed, to teach is to learn twice. Nothing is better than helping others stack their chips higher while simultaneously doing the same for you. As John F. Kennedy shared, "A rising tide lifts all boats."

7. Don't let daily "curve balls" let you lose sight of the big picture. Albert Einstein said, "There are only two ways to live your life . . . one is as though nothing is a miracle, and the other is as though everything is a miracle." Staying focused on your big picture and its daily miracles is one way to keep stacking those chips!

Life is a game played between the ears. Keep playing the game by stacking those self-esteem chips higher. As you do so, you will take more risks and expand your sphere of influence. Then your co-workers will remark: "Wow, are we lucky to have you working with us!"

© Mark "Tenacious" Towers - Phone: 817-421-4744



Rene' Spracklen Named SBO of the Year

Congratulation to Rene' Spracklen, Accountant with Copper River School District who was named the Alaska School Business Official of the Year on December 8, 2010 at ALASBO's annual conference in Anchorage, Alaska. Candidates for this prestigious award are nominated by their colleagues within the Alaska school business community. Annually, a panel of previous recipients selects a deserving individual from the nominees submitted based upon their recognized outstanding service, innovative plan design and implementation, and the use of exemplary business practices within school business management.

The award has been sponsored for more than a decade by Penair. The recipient receives roundtrip travel certificates, a check for \$500 and an engraved plaque.

Rene' Spracklen first became a member of ALASBO in 1991. In her twenty years with the Copper River School District, she has played a key role in building a highly efficient business office, based on a high level of professionalism and integrity. She is known for her quiet demeanor and "limitless patience" when assisting employees.

ALASBO is fortunate to have had Rene' serve as a presenter for numerous conference sessions over the years. Her payroll expertise has become well known in our organization, and she has mentored many colleagues through difficult challenges. Rene' served on the ALASBO Board and as its President in 2007. She has also volunteered in her community on several local boards.

Congratulations, Rene' on this well deserved honor!



Reflections on ASBO International Conference

Lee Ann Andrew, Southwest Region Schools

ASBO in Orlando, September 2010... Picture the experience of going from a bush community to ALASBO in Anchorage, then picture going from the bush to Orlando, and not just Orlando but Disney World. What an experience! It was ALASBO on a grand scale.



Before I applied for the Freeman grant, I wondered why I should go to the national conference, when I have so many local issues to deal with. How could they have anything that applies to me in an Alaskan bush community? I was wrong to think that.

I have to admit it was hard to make myself go to the sessions with the warm weather and the pool calling my name, but I went. ASBO has many of the same sessions we have at ALASBO: food service, construction, student accounts, risk management, ASBO certification to name a few. They all operate similar to ALASBO's format, and there are experts from all over the world.

However, as great as the information was, the most amazing part of ASBO was the camaraderie with the other ALASBO members. The time we spent together helped me feel more a part of ALASBO. Because of their experience with ASBO, I was introduced to members from all over the world. The social activities were fantastic. ASBO and ALASBO members know when to work and when to play.

What a group - we are all in this together with the same goal: educating the children.

I am so glad to have received the Freeman grant that enabled this experience; it solidified my desire to become more involved with this great organization. If you are not already planning on going to ASBO in Seattle in September 2011, you should seriously consider it. This year it's close to Alaska and the cost should be attainable.

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Legislative Fly-In Report

Yodean Armour, Klawock City Schools

On February 9-11, 2011, eight ALASBO members from school districts across the state, along with Executive Director Amy Lujan met in Juneau for the ALASBO Legislative Fly-In.

On the first afternoon of the Fly-In, ALASBO attendees met with EED, ACSA, and AASB Executive Directors and staff to receive legislative updates. After the updates, ALASBO attendees discussed the various talking points to be shared with legislators. ALASBO members split into teams of 3-4, and the next two days were spent visiting with various legislators about who ALASBO represents, thanking them for the current three year BSA funding plan, and discussing upcoming education funding challenges.

ALASBO's major talking points for the Fly-In were as follows:

- 1) We are thankful to the Legislature for investments in education in recent years;
- 2) We're here to advocate for increased K-12 funding;
- 3) We would like to encourage a new multi-year funding plan (SB73, SB84, HB143);
- 4) Most districts subsidize school food service programs; we are in favor of state funding to ensure these programs continue for the benefit of students (SB3, HB132);
- 5) The need for capital improvement funding across the state remains large and is growing annually; we would like to continue to see this addressed.

Details for each of these talking points can be found on ALASBO's website, in the "News" tab.

During legislative visits, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District provided a handout showing how the current three-year funding plan helped their district focus on instruction, rather than on budget cuts. KPBSD's handout outlined goals such as

hiring "coaches" to help students improve in certain subjects. The same handout showed positive, improved test results for students who were able to work with a coach.

This handout was well received by legislators, and they encouraged other districts to provide similar examples of how the current three-year funding plan enabled schools to focus their energies on instructional improvement, rather than spending time each year trying to decide what programs may have to be downsized or cut altogether.

I would encourage everyone to attend at least one legislative Fly-In. You'll find that being part of a team that advocates for education funding is rewarding.



Your Moment of EXCEL Zen

Sorting is a common task, but not all data conforms to the familiar ascending and descending rules. For example, months don't sort in a meaningful way when sorted alphabetically. In this case, Excel offers a custom sort.

Before we look at a custom sort for months, let's review the problem months presents to normal sorting practices. Below, you can see the problem. When applying an ascending sort, the list sorts alphabetically instead of sorting by month order.

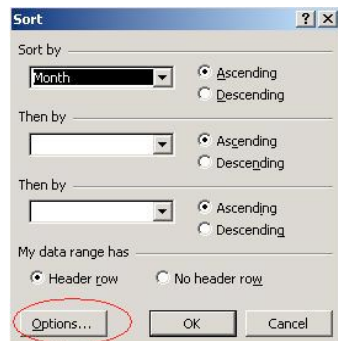
	A		A	B
1	Month	1	Month	
2	June	2	April	
3	November	3	August	
4	March	4	December	
5	January	5	February	
6	December	6	January	
7	April	7	July	
8	July	8	June	
9	September	9	March	
10	February	10	May	
11	May	11	November	
12	August	12	October	
13	October	13	September	
14		14		

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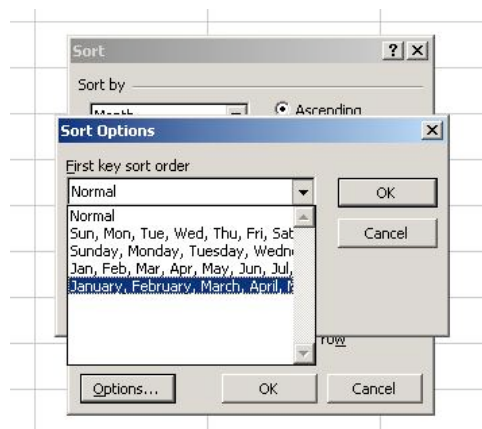
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If you want an alphabetic sort, this works great. I'm betting that most of the time, this won't be the result you want. You could use an expression that returns a value equal to the order of each month and sort by its results, but it's unnecessary as there's a built-in sort just for months. To apply this custom sort, do the following (in Excel 2003; note: instructions for Excel 2007 and 2010 at the end of the article):

1. Select the month names. In this case, that's A2:A13.
2. Choose Sort from the Data menu.
3. The resulting dialog box anticipates the custom sort. The Sort By control displays Month with an Ascending sort. If you click OK, Excel will sort the selected months in alphabetic order.



4. Click the Options button at the bottom of the dialog box.
5. In the resulting dialog box, the First Key Sort Order control displays Month. Click the dropdown arrow to display four custom sort options.



6. Choose the last option, January, February, March, and so on. By default, a custom sort isn't case-sensitive, but

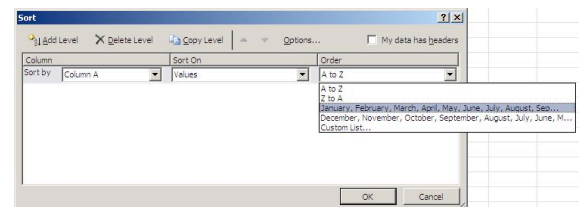
there's an option to make it so, if you need it.

7. Click OK twice and Excel sorts the months in the familiar way you expect.

	A	B
1	Month	
2	January	
3	February	
4	March	
5	April	
6	May	
7	June	
8	July	
9	August	
10	September	
11	October	
12	November	
13	December	
14		

Excel 2007 and 2010 offer the same flexible custom sort, but getting there's a bit different:

1. Click the Sort option in the Sort & Filter group. (Don't click the A to Z or Z to A sort icons, the ones with the arrows.)
2. In the resulting Sort dialog box, click the Order control's dropdown list and choose the appropriate custom sort.



3. Click OK.

When using a custom sort, the list doesn't have to contain all of the sort elements to work. A list of just a few months will still sort by month order when applying the custom sort.



"Honestly, dad, I can't keep coming in here every 5 minutes to help you with your computer. From now on I'll be charging you \$3.00 per minute."

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ALASBO



Member Spotlight

Karen Peterson

Lower Yukon School District

Tell us about your school district

The Lower Yukon School District has 11 different school sites, all located on the Yukon River and west coastline. The schools sites are in Alakanuk, Emmonak, Hooper Bay, Kotlik, Marshall, Mountain Village, Pilot Station, Pitkas Point, Russian Mission, Scammon Bay and Sheldon Point. We serve 1958 students grades Kindergarten through High School. We have about 195 certificated employees, including teachers and administration and 250 permanent classified staff.

How long have you been in school business?

I have been working for the Lower Yukon School District for 11 years and 4 months. First I was hired as the Curriculum Secretary for eight months and transferred to the Payroll Clerk position. I have been working in the Business Department for ten years and eight months.

How did you get into this business?

I was originally applying for the Federal Programs Secretarial position when the Payroll Clerk position became available. The Human Resource Director asked if I would be interested in this position instead, since I had payroll experience from previous jobs. She gave me 24 hours to think about it and I chose the Payroll Clerk position. I have never regretted my decision.

What do you like best about your job?

I enjoy working with my colleagues in the Business Department. We have all gained personal and professional growth within the workplace. With Payroll, we have semi-monthly payroll for classified employees and monthly payroll for certificated employees. This is

always challenging for us end of each month to try to get everything perfect.

We haven't had a full-time Business Manager for 3 to 4 years. Everything is running a little smoother since Jenny Martens started working for LYSD, it's great to have someone here in the office we can rely on.

What advice do you have for those new to school business?

Become an ALASBO member and don't miss out on the Annual Conferences.

How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?

I enjoy attending the ALASBO Conference every December. It is a calming feeling to know that other school districts go through the same problems as we do. Everyone is willing to help and give great advice. This is a great opportunity for all business officials to get updated information in all areas of our work field.

What do you like to do for fun?

I have my own city league women's basketball team. We have been playing for 12 years now. We were also teammates in junior high and high school. I also enjoy reading, knitting, hunting and fishing.

If you could visit anyplace in the world, where would you go and why?

Someday, I would like to drive all over down in the lower 48. I have never been to the Bering Sea coast by boat, I wouldn't mind going down just once to whale and seal hunt.

Tell us something about yourself that most people don't know?

I love to go moose hunting and have caught 3 moose in the past 3 years. Also, I have 2 grandchildren ages 4 and 2 years.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

My proudest accomplishment is my son, Darren; he is 22 years old. Someday, I hope to start taking college courses and figure out what to do when I get older.



Mark Your Calendars!



Upcoming Events

2011 ALASBO Power Lunch Teleconference Schedule

11 AM to noon, 3rd Tuesday of month
call 218-844-3377, code 252726 (spells
ALASBO!)

March 15	Unemployment
April 19	GASB 54
May 17	ASBO Certification
June 21	RFP Bid Process
July 19	Business Ofc Inservice
August 16	Cooperative Purchasing
September 20	TBA
October 18	Health Care Reform Update
November 16	1099's and W-2's
November 22	Indirect Cost Form
December	ALASBO CONFERENCE

- **July – dates TBA – ALASBO Summer Leadership – Fairbanks**
- **September 16-19 – ASBO International Annual Conference – Seattle, Washington**
- **December 4-7 – ALASBO Annual Conference - Anchorage**

Closing Quotes

Nothing is more common than a good idea. Nothing is less common than a good idea carried out. --Will Rogers

If you're going through hell, keep going. --Winston Churchill

Today is the youngest you will ever be. Live like it. --Mark Cuban

Leadership is performance. --Peter Drucker

The seven most important words in business: I don't know, what do you think? --J.W. Marriott