

ALASBO News Link...



November 2011

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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*Would you like to receive this newsletter by print,
rather than e-mail? Send a message to Amy Lujan
at the above address.*

President's Message

Luke Fulp, Kodiak Island

With conference planning coming to a close, it's become clear that we have another great conference slated for December 4-7 at Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage, Alaska.

As many of you are aware, the annual conference is a result of countless hours of planning. In acknowledging that effort, I would like to thank ALASBO's Board of Directors, our Executive Director, and all the volunteers who stepped forward to present topics or otherwise assist in the planning process.

This collaborative effort is a great example of our theme: **Strength in Numbers**. Conference

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planning began in July when the Board convened in Fairbanks, Alaska for Summer Leadership. Board members poured over every evaluation from the 2010 conference. With continuous improvement in mind, the Board tried to identify exactly what our membership was looking for in the way of professional development. Given this deliberate effort, I hope that you'll find value and relevancy in our agenda.

With that said, there are some highlights within our conference's general session agenda that I would like to draw your attention to....

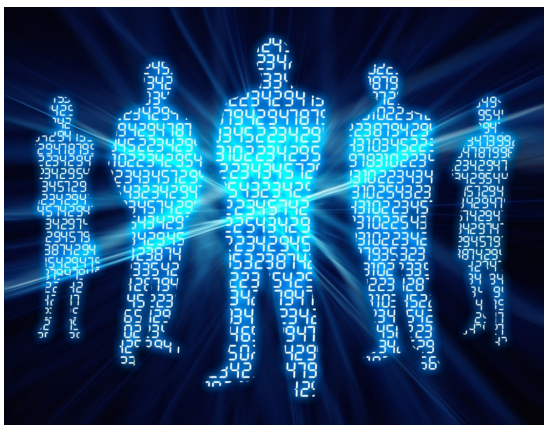
We'll be kicking things off with a "bang" when John Sedor greets us with his arsenal of legalese and case law discussion on Monday morning.

On Tuesday, the general session has been designated for our keynote speaker, Garrison Wynn. Garrison is a motivational speaker that uses blunt reality with a dose of comedic humor to unveil the truth behind success. You won't want to miss this high-energy presentation.

Also, I'm pleased to report that ALASBO will continue to offer the Executive Forum during Wednesday's general session. The spotlight in this year's Executive Forum will be on Anchorage School District Superintendent, Carol Comeau and her notable career in public education.

If you haven't done so already, make sure you register for the conference today. This is an ALASBO event you won't want to miss!

Strength in numbers



ALASBO Annual Conference
December 4-7, 2011

Executive Director's Message

Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

I'm sure many of you enjoy reading the Member Spotlight feature as a regular highlight of this newsletter. One thing I've noticed is that there's a common theme to the answer to the questions about advice to new school business officials, and the benefits of ALASBO; see if you can pick it out:

- "I encourage you to attend the annual ALASBO conference and don't hesitate to call on other business officials. They are always willing to help when you need it." – Martha Morgan, Kuspuk SD
- "Be sure to attend the Annual Conference in December & don't hesitate to email/call a fellow ALASBO member for assistance." – Yodean Armour, Klawock SD
- "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." – Karen Peterson, Lower Yukon SD
- "Membership in ALASBO has allowed me to learn more each year by attending the conferences and finding out what other districts are doing. Every year I learn something new at the ALASBO conference." – Verna Reedy, Cordova SD
- "When I started in this position I had a very strong financial background but knew nothing about school business. The ALASBO community has truly held my hand and helped me be a success at this job. Thank you all so much!" – David Arp, Sitka SD

To summarize: the ALASBO conference is not to be missed! The information and networking contacts you'll gain will serve you all year long, providing the essential tools you need to get your job done.

Don't miss out! If you're not already registered for the annual conference, register online now:
www.regonline.com/alasbo2011annualconference

At our registration website, take a look at the complete schedule, to begin planning your info-gathering strategy for this year's conference.

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Also, don't miss the pre and post-conference sessions, offered on Sunday, December 4 and Thursday and Friday, December 8-9. It is not too late to add a pre-conference session to your registration! Let me know if you have difficulty with this in the registration system. For post-conference sessions with EMA and ACB Solutions (Excel training), you must register directly with those organizations.

I'm certain you'll enjoy our vendor show, keynote speaker, evening receptions, Casino Night, student music, and seeing so many friends and colleagues from across the state. I look forward to seeing all of you in Anchorage!

In other news, twenty-seven ALASBO members returned recently from the ASBO International conference in Seattle. Once again, it was a great conference and a pleasure to be a little bit closer to home. **Thanks to American Fidelity** for sponsoring our attendance at a Mariner's game – they won!!



Also in September, a sub-committee of the ALASBO Board worked hard to gather and analyze data from districts across the state, in order to respond to a request for information about FY13 funding needs from EED Commissioner Mike Hanley. This was a joint project with the Superintendent's Association (AASA). Thanks to the strong response from districts around the state, we were able to prepare a report to initiate this year's conversation about school funding, which is available on our website under "news".

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.



Report on ASBO 2011 Annual Meeting & Expo

Carl Horn, Nenana School District

I attended my first Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) in Seattle September 16-19. I am always worried that a conference will be useful and productive. My accountant brain was wondering if the substantial cost of the travel and time away from the office would be time wasted. From my first pre-meeting workshop on Friday afternoon until the closing session Monday morning, it was a constant stream of high quality training, networking and information gathering.

I attended a pre-meeting workshop Friday afternoon "How to Prepare a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report." It was a well-presented class, providing a complete review of the requirements for our annual financial reports. I wanted sound data to confirm we are doing it right and whether our district should move to the next level of preparing a comprehensive annual report. At the end a complete presentation of the various financial reporting awards will help me evaluate if we should submit our statements in future years.

Seattle was wonderful City to host such an event. I was whisked from Sea-Tac Airport to downtown on the very modern and clean light rail system. The convention facilities were first rate and world class, with large comfortable meeting rooms and almost flawless audio-visual equipment projecting the presenters' material onto 20-foot screens. The organization of the convention program was almost shocking for an Alaskan with sessions starting on the minute. An electronic ID card was issued, providing for paperless attendance logging to provide a record for Continuing Professional Education credits.

One clinic table session (a short 20-minute format) stands out on 403(b) compliance regulations. These are the elective deferred compensation plans provide by most districts for employees. The presenter was Bob Architect now working for VALIC. Bob recently retired from the IRS and had been part of the team which rewrote the regulation which overhauled the 403(b) system. I think I stayed for 3 sessions; where else could one get their questions answer from such a source?

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In big crowds on the social scale I fall to the introverted side, yet I was amazed at the networking and even casual collegiality which developed during the conference. This included talking with presenters over a quick lunch and bumping into a friendly business manager from Tennessee again and again, each time having a friendly laugh.

The vendor hall was huge with well over 100 exhibits. Many of the vendors are familiar and others are not. There were so many great take away ideas for almost every area we may be dealing with, such as financial services, student transportation, facilities, food service, energy savings, and more.

My expectations for the Annual Meeting & Expo were exceeded. And I do feel it was valuable time well spent. The payback has been immediate with plans and actions take as a result of the trip. While I likely will not make it every year, I would recommend that everyone take advantage of this professional development opportunity as often as possible.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at our own Alaska December conference.

ASBO Recognition for Alaskan Districts

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

Some of the most popular programs administered by ASBO International are the Meritorious Budget Award (MBA) and Certificate of Excellence (COE) programs. Both of these programs involve peer review of budget and financial statement documents against rigorous standards.

David Means of Juneau School District currently serves on the MBA review committee. To find out more about the programs, visit the ASBO International website, www.asbointl.org.

We are proud to have several award recipients in our state for the most recent review periods:

Meritorious Budget Award FY11

- Kenai Peninsula Borough SD

Certificate of Excellence FY10

- Anchorage SD (25th year COE!)
- Bering Strait SD

- Fairbanks North Star Borough SD
- Kenai Peninsula Borough SD
- Matanuska Susitna Borough School District

Kudos to the school business officials in these districts for achieving this level of excellence!!

Impact Aid Updates

Mark Vink, Bering Strait School District

There will be a number of changes with the Impact Aid program this year. The first and biggest change is that you will have to file the report with the G5 Department of Education system. If you are not registered with this system, you will be required to register. For users who are already in the system, you will have to update your profile to include Impact Aid to receive the forms pre-populated as in prior years. The Department plans on doing webinars this fall to explain the new process.

Another change is the payment schedule. It is anticipated that the maximum that the Department will payout for the 2011 year will be 98% of LOT. Many of the rural districts are 100% LOT districts and they will not see full funding for this year. The Department has paid out 90% of LOT with 8% still due. They have not indicated when the additional payments will be made. In past years, many 100% LOT districts had their full payment for the year prior to the start of the next school year. You may request an early payment, which will be evaluated based on need due to limited available funds.

For 2012, the Director of Impact Aid informed us that due to the federal budget delays, the current plan is to make an initial payment of 65% of LOT, plus \$700 for eligible special education children (CWD). Once the budget is passed, additional payments will be forth coming. This potentially could have an impact on districts that are tight for cash and use Impact Aid funds in the year received.

It is also anticipated that as federal dollars become tight, the gap to fully fund the Impact Aid program as a whole will increase. For 2012, the level may be as low as 85% of LOT.

I would recommend that you contact your congressional delegation to work to increase the funding for this program as well as pass the budget so that we receive the dollars as soon as possible.

ALASBO



Member Spotlight

Isabelle Harrington, Iditarod School District

Tell us about your school district

Iditarod Area School District is located in the middle of the state. The district office is in McGrath, about 225 air miles from Anchorage. Our district was named for the gold mining town of Iditarod that is approximately halfway between our Yukon River villages and our Kuskokwim River villages. A mountain range divides our district. The Iditarod Sled Dog Race passes through all but one of our villages on the southern route. Currently we have seven schools open.

How long have you been in school business?

I have worked for the district for almost 33 years!

How did you get into this business?

I moved to McGrath from New York. There were two position openings at the district; one in the Superintendent's office and another in Instructional Support. I ended up doing both positions for awhile, started helping in the business office then onto payroll and other human resource activities while helping out in other areas. Additional responsibilities came my way with various title changes. I've been business manager for over 25 years now.

What do you like best about your job?

I love the variety of the job. Everything is the same but always evolving. Challenges are around every corner. Sometimes it's pretty tough and other times it is overwhelming with all the different facets of the job, multiple deadlines. I like the idea of helping others, the kids, the staff, and the communities.

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

Find out as much information as possible. The first thing I did when I started with the district was read the state laws and regulations pertaining to education and then the district's policy manual. I then went onto other publications produced by the Department of

Education, the state's retirement system manuals, Department of Labor regulations, EDGAR, GASB publications and all the other regulations we need to follow.

Network with others. Go to the conferences that are available! ALASBO members are always willing to help others. Seek out someone you feel comfortable with. ALASBO's done a great job in pairing districts with a liaison. You are never alone!

How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?

The conferences have been really great to network with each other and the sectionals are always helpful and... the members are a great bunch of people you can always count on for information, help or just someone to listen to you.

What do you like to do for fun?

I like to do lots of things...I don't have any favorites. I love to travel but don't do it as often as I would like. I also do a lot of volunteer work for various organizations in our community such as our public radio station, KSKO.

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

There are so many places I would love to visit or revisit...our national parks, Washington, D.C., finding the treasures in every state, and Europe, especially Ireland and Italy.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

My proudest accomplishment is my two wonderful children, Christine and Michael.

Power Lunch Teleconference Schedule

November 22 Indirect Cost Form

December ALASBO
CONFERENCE

11 AM to noon
call 218-844-3377, code
252726 (spells ALASBO!)

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Send us your pictures!

Last chance to get your photos into this year's annual conference slide show! Send in your pictures of school sites, activities, and you, the ALASBO members enjoying Alaska! Sent them to: yodean.armour@klawockschool.com.

A Moment of EXCEL Zen Year End Miscellany

F4 4U

Regular readers of this column know that the F4 function key will toggle absolute references when editing formulas. But it's also extremely handy to use when not editing formulas. Outside of formula editing, it allows you to repeat actions. For instance, have you ever had to insert a bunch of page breaks? Try this, insert a pagebreak and then move down a few rows and press F4. You'll notice that another pagebreak is inserted. That's because the F4 key will repeat whatever the last action was.

Now know that if you need to perform some tedious menu action several times, you don't have to keep going back to step thru the menu selections. You can just go to the menu once, then hit F4 as many times as needed.

Copying Sheets to a New Workbook

If you've ever tried to copy a worksheet to a new workbook, you know there are issues with creating and/or recreating links to other sheets that formulas might refer to in the old workbook. Suppose there are two sheets we want to copy to a new workbook and the sheets have formula references to each other but no references to any other sheets.

If you copy-paste each sheet one at a time to a new workbook, the links have to be reassigned in the new workbook so they don't point back to the old one. It's not all that difficult to reassign the links, but it's time consuming. Instead, you can array-select both sheets and when you copy the array of sheets to the new workbook the links will be to the proper sheets in the new workbook.

First, array-select all the sheets you want to copy. Just hold down the CTRL key while selecting the sheets and then right-click on one of the selected worksheet tabs and select "Move or Copy". Next, proceed as you would normally to copy a sheet to a new workbook. You'll notice if you do it this way, any references between the copied sheets are maintained and you don't need to waste time re-linking them all.

Phantom Counts

There are two closely related worksheet functions in Excel: COUNT and COUNTA. The COUNT function counts all cells that contain numbers, while the COUNTA function counts all cells that are not empty. Thus, if you use COUNTA, you would get "phantom counts" if a

cell contained a space; this problem would not occur if you used the COUNT function.

What can cause "phantom counts" when using COUNT is if some cells contain the value zero. This is considered a number by Excel, so it includes that cell in the count. The confusion often pops up if you have the worksheet configured to not display zero values. Thus, the cell could appear to be empty, but really contain a zero which affects COUNT.

Look Busy in a Boring Meeting

I recently got an Apple MacBook Pro, and I found that there is quite a difference in layout and functionality with the Mac version of EXCEL. Not having been a real Apple fan, there has been some resistance in the learning curve. I did however, run across this little trick, and while it has nothing to do with EXCEL, it can come in handy if you're in need of a diversion. Go to Spotlight, type "Terminal" and hit Enter to launch it. Then type "emacs", and hit Enter. Once the new screen loads, hit Esc, then type "x" followed by "tetris," "snake," or "pong." Enjoy!

And... Enjoy a Wonderful Holiday Season!

Mark Your Calendars!



Upcoming Events

- **December 4-7 – ALASBO Annual Conference, Anchorage**
- **February 17-19 – ASBO International Executive Leadership Forum – Orlando, Florida**