

ALASBO News Link...



February 2012

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

Jenny Martens, Lower Yukon

Happy New Year!! Waitit's February! What happened to January? Didn't the holiday break just end? Oh, now I remember: quarterly reports, Impact Aid application, e-rate, negotiations, 1099's, W-2's, legislature, staff contracts, budgets.....!!!!!! OK, January is gone, so happy February!

I was thankful to be reminded to write my article. It made me slow down long enough to reflect on our fantastic, jam-packed annual conference in December. What a great time it was to network, re-energize, grow professionally, and visit with colleagues.

I want to thank all of you who attended the ALASBO annual conference and all of you who contributed. We missed those of you who couldn't attend and hope to see you at the next annual conference or at another ALASBO event during the year.

This year's annual conference was successful due to the countless hours dedicated by our

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Executive Director, the enormous contributions and personal commitment by vendors, and the tremendous amount of volunteer time from the Board, membership, and others who support ALASBO. It is so rewarding to be a part of the process. I encourage everyone to consider getting involved; the network opportunity supports your own growth and the friendships you gain along the way are great.

As school business officials, networking is one of the most important tools we have to help us perform our jobs successfully, no matter what position we hold. I encourage you to take advantage of ALASBO's network opportunities, which include Power Lunches, Legislative Fly-in, Summer Leadership in July, Scholarship Programs, ASBO International Conference, the ALASBO website full of valuable information, this newsletter, and of course, the liaison network!!



This year is ALASBO's 40th BIRTHDAY, so let's spend the year celebrating ALASBO's 40th by increasing participation in all the ALASBO and affiliate events. Keep this year's ALASBO theme in mind:

"40 Years of Success through Networking".

Please help me thank the new Board members for their willingness to serve on the ALASBO Board of Directors and dedicate their time to our organization: Susan Jolin from the Anchorage School District; Jimmy Love from the Kenai Peninsula School District; Heidi Reichl from the Department of Education & Early Development; and Carl Horn from the Nenana City School District. Also, thank you to Jim Farrington for serving as the ALASBO Secretary, on track to become ALASBO's President. I know the commitment you have made!

Thank you everyone for all your hard work supporting ALASBO! Have a great spring everyone!

Executive Director's Message

Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

First, to echo President Jenny Martens' message, thanks to all who contributed to a terrific annual conference! We had great

support from our 55 vendor participants, including prizes to keep the fun energy going throughout the conference. Most importantly, we had fantastic program content from our members and other volunteer presenters.

Overall, the conference success was confirmed by the positive evaluations. We do actually use these evaluations to plan next year's event, so thanks for taking the time to complete them.

Now, keep the momentum alive by making use of the ALASBO network throughout the year! The 2012 Power Lunch schedule is on the website ("events-workshops"), along with information about upcoming conferences.

I'd like to especially encourage you to keep informed on legislative activity in Juneau, and to consider attending the Legislative Fly-In, February 27-29. The agenda is on our website "events" page; contact me if you can attend!

There are already bills being heard to increase the base student allocation (BSA) and to change pupil transportation funding. As you know, I send out regular updates and alerts when testimony is most needed. Legislators need to hear the stories from school districts and community members about the impact of potential funding cuts and the successes that have resulted from past funding allocations. We also need your help from time-to-time gathering data; thanks for your responsiveness!

On February 10, four ALASBO members were invited to present their district budgets to the House Education Committee. The purpose of this session was to educate house members about school district budgeting and to build awareness for the very real financial challenges districts are facing. The presentations and Q&A sessions were excellent. Thanks to Bruce Johnson for coordinating this opportunity and to our school district representatives: Luke Fulp, Kodiak; Laura Hylton, Lake & Peninsula; David Arp, Sitka; and Mike Fisher, Fairbanks. The Powerpoint presentation is available on our website in the "news" section, and you can watch the session on the Gavel-to-Gavel archive.

Also on the ALASBO website, you'll find the ACSA Joint Position Statements in a nice brochure format in the "news" section. This document was approved by ALASBO membership at our annual meeting. After the Fly-In, our updated 2012 Talking Points will also be posted. On the "resources-downloads" page,

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I've posted the document emailed a few weeks ago with tips on how to keep up with legislative activity. There are some nice new technology tools to help!

In other news, I'm working with Treasurer Robin Mullins and our ALASBO Board to implement a change to the ALASBO fiscal year. The FYE of December 31 was no longer appropriate, since our conference was moved years ago from April to December, and we ended up with a lot of conference payables and receivables in January. So, we're currently in a "stub" year for January-March, and we'll start a new full fiscal year on April 1, 2012.

Finally, I'd like to encourage you to become involved with an ALASBO committee, if you have not already signed up for this year. The ALASBO Committee Manual explains the function of each committee and can be found on our website under "about ALASBO-Policies & Procedures". The 2012 Committee Chairs are:

- Audit – Chad Stiteler, Anchorage
- Awards – Liz Hayes, Kenai
- Bylaws – Rene' Spracklen, Copper River
- Legislative – Dave Jones, Kenai
- Nominations – Luke Fulp, Kodiak
- Professional Development – Luke Fulp, Kodiak
- Services – Yodean Armour, Klawock
- Sponsorship – Amy Lujan, ALASBO

Please contact me, or the Committee Chair if you would like to serve on one of these committees!

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.

Did you know?

ALASBO's financial statements through 2010 are available on the ALASBO website under about-ALASBO!

Report on ASBO International Conference

Nancy Hollis, Denali Borough

I attended the annual Association of School Business Officials' International (ASBO) in Seattle in September of 2011. It was the first time that I attended a conference held by ASBO.

I found the conference very beneficial and well worth my time and effort. Part of the cost of attending the conference was paid by a grant that I won at ALASBO.



I started the conference out by attending the orientation workshop and a Friday morning workshop on "How to Create an Award Winning Budget". This workshop provided me with ideas on what types information would go into a budget document that could be submitted for recognition. I realized that as a small office, that this would be an enormous task to take on. The budget document is a great tool and resource for the public.

On Saturday and Sunday I spent time in various workshops: Healthcare Reform, Negotiations, FMLA, and understanding the change in the duties and responsibilities of the Business Manager. All these sessions were very valuable and the information has been already used and shared with my staff and board. We are in an ever-changing environment, and by attending conferences and obtaining valuable professional development, we will be able to become better business managers.

Of course, we had time to spend as an Alaskan delegation on some fun-filled nights in Seattle. One night we all went to a Mariners baseball game and the next night we went out to dinner. It was the first time that I attended a professional sporting event and it was well worth it and something that I will remember for the rest of my life. The only thing I regret is not allowing more time in Seattle to see the city.

I would highly recommend that you take advantage of the national and state conferences. They provide a great opportunity to meet other professionals in your industry, pick other business manager's brains on issues that you are concerned with or need clarification on and form some long lasting relationships.

Although this was my last year to attend the conferences, since I will be retiring this fall, I came away from the conference with renewed energy and a new vision of the role of a school district business manager and how critical our knowledge is to each of our districts' successful operation.



Division of Retirement and Benefits Seeks Our Help

Jimmy Love, Kenai Peninsula Borough

I was given the opportunity to attend the Division of Retirement and Benefits conference in Juneau this last November. It was a difficult decision due to budget cuts, timing of conference in relation to our payroll cycle, and the weather possibly hampering my return trip home. However, we thought it was important enough to attend, even considering the potential risks. This was another great opportunity to build our relationship with our state contacts and provide our thoughts and opinions in an open forum.



In Kenai, the relationship we have with our Retirement & Benefit payroll contacts is as strong as our relationships with our school secretaries. This is not something that has happened overnight, but with time, patience, understanding, listening, and communication. We certainly do not agree on every situation, but we eventually come to an understanding and solution to the situation that satisfies all parties involved. It is this relationship that I would like to expand on, as well as other enhancements that the division is undertaking.

I believe a lot of districts have encountered conflicts, issues, and/or frustration when dealing with the Division of Retirement and Benefits. However, this year I received a positive vibe from the staff while attending the conference. The biggest message delivered at the conference was "we need to know what is not working for you and how can we help". I know that we have heard a similar comment in the past, with little or no change. This year, however, I heard this message from the director, supervisors, and staff. This was a message that was used throughout the conference by all the departments in the division. In Kenai, we take full advantage of this every time there is an issue or question.

I think the greatest news that we heard was that the IT department was working closely with accounting to make sure E-reporting is a user friendly tool. Those that use this on a regular basis know how frustrating it can be at times. Although there was not a specific list of fixes, they did emphasize that enhancements are being made. Any changes made to E-reporting would be published in the Employer's Edge. If

you are not currently receiving this newsletter, notify your payroll contact and get signed up.

They also need us to contact them when we are encountering issues, not just with E-reporting, but everything. If you have suggestions on improvements, again notify your payroll contact, R&B Specialist Amanda Ireland, or Payroll Supervisor Erika Burkhouse. This is another opportunity to voice your suggestions or ideas. The message that they delivered was, "Please provide us feedback, positive and/or negative."

The division is also heading to more web based trainings using Web-Ex. Roberto Aceveda has been developing a number of different training videos that can be located and viewed directly from their web page. I believe there are 8 different videos out there right now for your viewing pleasure. I also noticed that each video presentation also has a printable version. This enhancement will allow counselors the opportunity to meet with employees and/or clients from their personal computers. This will assist in getting information to those remote sites much quicker, not to mention the savings due to reduced travel. Although there was no direct commitment to spreading the use of Web-Ex trainings to other departments, it would certainly be a step in the right direction.

I think another area they are trying to build on is their relationship with us. This goes back to the message I stated earlier that we kept hearing from everyone, "Please let us know what you think." In an attempt to make things easier for everyone, someone needs to open the door for communication. The division has certainly done that and it now rests with all of us to make this relationship better for everyone.

I have always wondered why the division does not participate more in the ALASBO conference, where they have the potential to visit with a good majority of their clients in one venue over a 3 day stint. So, I spoke with Erika Burkhouse about this during our visit. Although she agrees with the concept there are some logistics that need to be worked out. However, I do believe that the division is going to consider the idea of attending ALASBO on their off-conference year. I explained to her how attending the ALASBO conference plays right into their goals for building better relationships with their clients. If the division is able to commit to attending, it would help keep channels of communication open.

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In my closing remarks, I would like to take a moment and say thanks to Courtney Oliva, Amanda Ireland, and Erika Burkhouse for all of their assistance and support over the last few years. I know that I would not have the understanding of the division without them and I think it is as equally important to know what the other side thinks and how they operate. I appreciate the efforts that the division is taking to make our jobs easier in the long term.

PASBO Electronic Resource Center

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

One of the advantages of involvement with ASBO International is that we can connect with the larger world of school business officials nationally and internationally. At a recent ASBO conference, I learned about an extremely valuable resource that is open to all: the Pennsylvania ASBO Electronic Resource Center (PASBO ERC).

As one of the largest ASBO state affiliates, PASBO has taken on the project of coordinating a document database of best practices and resources in school business management. As of September 2011, the database consisted of nearly 2,000 documents, which range from job descriptions to RFP's to budget documents to best practice articles. These documents are uploaded by ASBO members from across the country, and you may find just what you need to jump-start your latest assignment.

Some of the other large ASBO affiliates are members of the ERC, which allows them to have special search capabilities for documents originating in their home states. However, by entering "Other" on the home page under affiliation, anyone can search all 2,000 documents.

Here's an example of how to use the PASBO ERC:

- 1) Access the website: www.pasboerc.org (link available on the ALASBO site)
- 2) Select "other"
- 3) Click on Search Documents at the top of the page
- 4) A search on "Request for Proposal" resulted in over 1,000 documents
- 5) Refining the search to Category: Transportation Management; and Information Type: Request for

Proposals-Services, resulted in 21 documents, most of which could be downloaded in Microsoft Word

A second example is that I quickly found 175 job descriptions on the site and 176 evaluation tools. Among best practice topics, there are some excellent articles available on leadership and bargaining, just to name a few.

The above examples were used because I have frequently received requests for these items. While an Alaskan perspective is sometimes necessary, documents from school districts elsewhere can also help you shape your projects. I encourage you to take a few minutes to check out the PASBO Electronic Resource Center and make use of this great resource!

Power Lunch Schedule

February 21	Genetic Information Non-discremination Act (GINA)
March 20	Worker's Compensation
April 17	Facilities
May 15	ASBO SFO Certification
June 19	Food Service
July 17	Student Records
August 21	Grants Administration
September 18	Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
October 23	Health Care Reform Update
October 30	1099's and W-2's
November 20	Indirect Cost Proposal
December	ALASBO CONFERENCE

11 AM to noon

**call 218-844-3377, code 252726
(spells ALASBO!)**

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Take time to contact your liaisons with questions or just to touch base; it's a two-way street, so calls can start in either direction!

A Moment of EXCEL Zen

Did you know that the F4 function key will toggle absolute references when editing formulas? Place your cursor in the cell reference in your formula.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2						\$ 250.98	\$ 1,325.40
3			=F2+E2				
4							
5							
6							
7							

Press F4 and, Ta Da! You have made into an absolute reference with one keystroke instead of two!

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2					\$ 250.98	\$1,325.40
3			=(F\$2+E2)			
4						
5						
6						
7						

Press F4 again and the \$ reference sign toggles to the row,

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2					\$ 250.98	\$1,325.40
3			=(F\$2+E2)			
4						
5						
6						

Press F4 one more time and it toggles to the column.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2					\$ 250.98	\$1,325.40
3			=(F2+E2)			
4						
5						
6						

But wait! There's more... 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 page break and then move down a few rows and press F4. You'll notice that another page break is inserted. That's because the F4 key will repeat whatever the last action was.

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

Phoenix in October, anyone??

The deadline for the Tom Freeman grant to attend the ASBO International Annual Conference in Phoenix is February 29! The \$1,500 grant could pay most of your expenses. Pick up the simple application on www.alasbo.com, under "opportunities-grants" and apply now!

Mark Your Calendars!



Upcoming Events

- **February 16-19 – ASBO Executive Leadership Forum – Lake Buena Vista, Florida**
- **February 27-29 – ALASBO Legislative Fly-in – Juneau**
- **July 27-29 ALASBO Summer Leadership – Homer**
- **October 12-15 – ASBO Annual Conference – Phoenix**
- **December 2-5 – ALASBO Annual Conference – Anchorage**