

ALASBO News Link...



August 2013

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 in print,
rather than e-mail? Send a message to Amy Lujan at
the above address.*

President's Message

Laurie Olson, Kenai Peninsula Borough

My first trip to Juneau last month (after 23 years in Alaska) was great! I was joined by a dedicated group of colleagues who worked hard to get the business of the association accomplished, and we also enjoyed the beautiful weather!! We split into teams and worked through the various parts of the Management Review rubric document. We reviewed the work of the committee and tried to determine which best practices and issues are most important during the review. We made progress and will have an update to share at the December conference.

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In addition to work on the Management Review project, we worked on planning the December conference. The popular School Business Academy for folks new to the field will be offered as a full-day session on Sunday. We have the same general format as the last few years – additional preconference sessions on Sunday, Roundtables, Discussion Groups, Sectionals and speakers for the General Sessions. Timely topics are scheduled, such as updates on GASB and changes to health care due to the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. In addition to learning about the latest issues, it's not too dramatic to say that contacts made and friendships forged between attendees can last a lifetime. Registration will be available October 1, and make sure you register by the end of October to get the Early Bird deal.

Additionally, think about registering for the ASBO International fall meeting, which will be held in Boston, October 25-28. I have been fortunate to be able to attend several of ASBO International's fall conferences. I have found that one of the benefits of attending the Annual Meeting and Exposition (AM&E) or "ASBO", as we ALASBO members commonly refer to it, is the opportunity to spend time with other folks who do the same things we do, but in different environments... other states, other countries, other sized districts, other tax structures. They all provide the chance to look at our tasks and problems with different glasses.

Learning new ways to handle common issues is a huge benefit I gain from my involvement in ALASBO and in ASBO. I hope you'll be able to participate in the conferences too.

"Let us not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give us the determination to make the right things happen." - Horace Mann

Executive Director's Message

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

Summer Leadership in Juneau was fantastic! It was a pleasure to welcome everyone to my hometown, and to show it off with great weather. I'm so grateful to the ALASBO members who took time out of their busy summer schedules to participate. We also greatly appreciate the

support of our vendors, who made the event possible at a very low cost to our members: Frontline/AESOP; American Fidelity; GCI SchoolAccess and Horace Mann. All of these vendors had representatives at Friday night's opening dinner and also participated in Saturday and Sunday events.

The Dick Swarner family and National CooperativeRX played a role in bringing more ALASBO members as first-time attendees to the event once again this year, through sponsorship of the Shaping the Future Leadership grant. Recipients of this \$500 grant were: Karen Quitslund, Petersburg City Schools and Jenny Myhand, Lake and Peninsula Borough School District. Darlene Morgan of Kuspuk School District was unable to attend at the last moment.

During the Leadership Conference, we broke into small groups to work on the Management Review best practices rubric. Then we plunged into planning this year's annual conference. Once again, we'll work together to produce one of the best annual conferences ever!

In the meantime, another great opportunity is still available for ALASBO members to attend the ASBO International Annual Conference in Boston, October 25-28! The conference presents a fantastic opportunity for some of the best professional development available for school business officials. In addition, you can benefit from the networking opportunities with your ALASBO colleagues, and school business professionals from other states and countries! There are networking events planned for some really fun venues in Boston – possibly even Fenway Park (depending on playoffs...!) Thanks to American Fidelity, we'll once again have a chance for a fun event with our ALASBO colleagues, details TBA. So, register now for the conference at www.asbointl.org!

I know that ALASBO members are busy preparing for the new school year, and likewise ALASBO leadership is working on preparing to support you in the upcoming year through professional development and legislative efforts.



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.

Reflections on a School Business Career

Martha Morgan, Kuspuk School District

When I first started working for the Kuspuk School District, I had no idea that I would be where I am now. Thanks are due to Kuspuk's current Assistant Business Manager, Darlene Morgan, who hired me 20 years ago. Wow, where did all the years go?

I started in the business office as a Purchasing Assistant, moved on to be Purchasing/Accounts Payable Clerk, Payroll Clerk, Assistant Business Manager and I am currently the Business Manager of Kuspuk School District.

I have worked under three different Business Managers before I took the job myself. I am happy that I had the chance to work with Amy Lujan when she was the Business Manager here at Kuspuk School District. Amy is a big part of who I am today as a business official, with the good communication, encouragement and positive attitude she gave me while she was my supervisor. She was always encouraging her staff to learn new things and to challenging ourselves. As the current Business Manager, I give the same type of encouragement to my staff.

I first went to ALASBO when Amy was my supervisor. She insisted that I attend, although I didn't know what to expect while I was there. It was my first trip on behalf of the district and I was very shy, and I still am, but I quickly realized that many who attended are doing the same things we are in our own district. Realizing there are many business officials in other districts who do just about the same job just made it more interesting. I wanted to find out how other districts did certain things and to my surprise, no matter the size of the district, a lot of it was similar.



Attending ALASBO is a great way to meet many other business officials and get help when you need it, by just picking up the phone to call or email someone who is familiar with what we do as business officials. It's great to know they are there and always willing to help. The ALASBO Annual Conference is a great way to get updates from state officials and about different regulations that apply to the job we do.

I also have had a chance to attend the ALASBO Summer Leadership Conference in Fairbanks a couple years ago, with the help of the Swarner grant that I was awarded. The Summer Leadership Conference was very interesting, with everyone helping behind the scenes to make the ALASBO Annual Conference possible. Currently I am also supporting ALASBO as a Board member.

I encourage all business officials to attend the ALASBO Annual Conference, Summer Leadership Conference and other events. It's well worth your time and money to attend, to support the job you do in your district.

Management Review - Payroll

Jimmy Love, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

The ALASBO Board has been reviewing a service that Texas and Massachusetts ASBO state affiliates have in place, the Management Review. These organizations have developed materials that provide a general guide on how to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of management practices with the goal of improving overall related service and delivery within the district. The Texas materials are very detailed and cover about 15 different areas. Our ALASBO Board created an ad hoc committee to review the materials from the other state affiliates, to see if something of this nature would benefit the districts within our state. The committee created a Business Plan for an ALASBO Management Review that was presented to the Board for additional review.

During the initial review of the Management Review project, the Board knew they had to create something that was applicable to our unique districts. A handful of people volunteered their time to create a rubric to help "grade" the different areas of the management review. For example, a best practice would be identified, such as regular reconciliation of the payroll register to the general ledger. Descriptions of best practice are developed to grade a district on this element, from 1-4. This step took a lot of devotion, thought, and time to create a working draft rubric. At our Juneau Summer Leadership meeting, we discussed the various areas of the model and began completing our Management Review guidelines.

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There are many pieces to this model, but I will be discussing the payroll aspects. I will try to convey the difficulties we encountered through the process and where we ultimately ended up. The biggest hurdle we face, as I am sure other state organizations do as well, is the sheer differences in size of the various districts around our great state. During this process we broke into smaller groups to discuss in further detail and narrow the guidelines that were applicable to our state. As you can imagine, payroll is not a popular section, but I did manage to encourage (bribe) two brave souls to take this journey with me.

Our first objective was to review the criteria to determine its validity to the module. The biggest obstacle we encountered was keeping in mind the various differences in our districts. We thought maybe there should be a rubric for districts that were within a range of student populations. So, we thought we could create a rubric for districts that were less than 1,000 students, another for 1,001 to 4,999 students, and one for student populations 5,000 or greater. We realized, through further discussion, that there was no easy way to create a tiered rubric based on varying districts. We decided it would be best to use the rubric in its original form, but expand the rubric descriptors to capture all possibilities.

There were 21 criteria upon our initial review; however, we decided that one of the criteria needed to be split into 2 separate criteria. The next step in our process was to determine the rubric descriptors (rating) for each criterion. This step proved to be a little more challenging than one would think. We had a rating of 1-4, with 4 indicating the district has the required pieces in place and 1 meaning there was lots of room for improvement. Generally speaking, determining the descriptor for 1 and 4 was relatively easy; however, the difficulty was determining what the descriptor would be for ratings 2 and 3. The range of possibilities is truly endless, but to have the descriptor coincide with 1 and 4 was taxing.

Our group was able to complete about a fifth of the criteria during our work session. There is still a lot of prep work to do; however, I think we have a bead on the descriptor process and will have the rubric completed for Board review soon. The rubric promises to be an excellent tool for helping districts move toward best business office management practices.



Register now at www.asbointl.org;
early bird deadline is September 6th!

Power Lunch Teleconferences

*11 AM to noon, the 3rd Tuesday of
each month via teleconference;
call 218-844-3377, code 252726#
(spells ALASBO!)*

August 20	FMLA
August 27	Grants Administration
Sept 17	Unemployment
October 15	Digital Grant Reimb
Nov 19	Indirect Cost Proposal
Dec 17	1099's and W-2's

School Business Official of the Year Nomination

The nomination form for the prestigious School Business Official of the Year award will be available very soon on our website and via email. Nominations will be accepted through October 31.

The School Business Official of the Year award is a peer recognition program. 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 recipient is announced at the ALASBO Annual Conference in December. Penair has agreed to sponsor the award for the 14th year! The recipient will receive two roundtrip tickets on Penair, a \$500 check, an engraved plaque, and well-deserved accolades from ALASBO colleagues and the general public

Please consider nominating a deserving colleague for this award. Contact Amy Lujan if you have any questions, alasbo@gci.net!

P-Card Update

Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

In June 2013, the IASBO P-card program distributed over \$2 million in rebates, and \$138,000 of that went to the ten participating Alaska school districts!

Rebate amounts for the top three participants were: Kenai - \$45,067; Matsu - \$34,825; and NW Arctic - \$25,072. Four other districts received rebates of \$4,000 or more. *This is not small change.* Why should your district miss out?

What's a P-Card?

P-card stands for procurement or purchasing card. In this program, it's a Mastercard controlled by your school district that can be issued to a person or a department. The district administrator can also control the daily, weekly and transaction limits, and even the types of items that can be purchased on each card. This program is designed with school districts in mind, and it gives the program administrator much more control and many more options than a standard credit card program.

How is the Program Set Up?

Illinois ASBO (IASBO) originated this program and has allowed other state affiliates such as ALASBO to become involved. IASBO provides assistance with setting up the program and with issues that arise. Bank of Montreal, which owns Harris Bank in Chicago, is the card issuer.

By participating in the IASBO program, Alaskan districts take advantage of the negotiating power of a group of hundreds of districts. The rebates are larger than districts could receive on their own.



There are NO annual fees! Rebates come through IASBO annually, in the spring. They're currently 1.1% or more of transaction volume, depending on the billing cycle selected. ALASBO retains a portion of the rebate, which

starts at 25% and decreases as district purchasing volume grows.

District administrators are trained in Details Online, a system that enables them to monitor card activity in real time. Since we've continued to grow our ALASBO use group, we're able to support training in Details Online during our annual conference, as well as a helpful Discussion Group session and sharing among our members to maximize the program.

What are the Benefits?

In addition to the rebates, the p-card program can save money. Management studies have shown that purchase orders and high check volumes are extremely costly. Many districts also struggle to deal with vendors that don't accept PO's, small dollar purchases and last-minute items for maintenance, travel, and special events. Properly managed p-cards can solve many of these headaches and save costs, with fewer PO's, fewer checks, and real-time monitoring of expenditures.

If your district already has a credit card, why not switch to a p-card, with no annual fees and a rebate?

Alaskan districts that can pay utility bills and even a few other large-volume vendors with the p-card can generate large rebates quickly, with even a limited program.

How Can I Sign Up?

Further information and links are at www.alasbo.org, under resources-downloads. The application process does require a Board resolution (since you are applying for credit) and several weeks for bank approval, so get started now! There will be several sessions at the Annual Conference in December for those interested in starting a p-card program.

New Honorary Members

Congratulations to recent retirees Rene' Spracklen and Pam Chenier, who were approved as ALASBO Honorary Members in July! Rene' served on the Board, Committees, and as ALASBO President in 2007. She received the School Business Official of the Year Award in 2010 and was a frequent conference presenter. Pam served on the Board and Committees and was a frequent conference presenter. ALASBO now has 15 Honorary Members, and two more are deceased.

ALASBO



Member Spotlight

Karen Quitslund, Petersburg School District

Tell us about your school district

Petersburg School District is located on Mitkof Island, in the southeast panhandle of Alaska and in the heart of the Tongass Rainforest. Petersburg is rich in Tlingit and Scandinavian heritage and is considered Alaska's Little Norway. The school district serves approximately 440 students, kindergarten through twelfth grade and employs 43 licensed staff and 51 support staff.

How long have you been in school business?

In July 2011, I was hired as the Finance Director for the Petersburg School District.

How did you get into this business?

It is all about timing. I remember the position being advertised when Jenny Martens left the Petersburg School District to take a position in Nome. At that time, I was interested but my daughter was young, I was home schooling my son and was in the midst of finishing out my BA in Business at UAS. I recognized that it would have been too stressful on my family and me to pursue this opportunity. I knew that living in a small community, jobs are hard to come by and I may have missed my chance. In the meantime, I started a private practice working with both non-profit organizations and businesses while taking classes at UAS. I also enrolled both of my children in the Petersburg School District and was focused on finishing out my classes and determining my career path.

In my analysis as a businesswoman, I determined that I should not be self employed because I did not want to charge adequate compensation for my time. So I took my resume to the school district because what better place to work than where my kids were? I knew the chances were slim but I asked for a call if a position opened up in the business office. I received that call two months later and after a

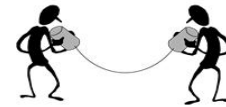
lengthy interview, I was offered the position and accepted.

What do you like best about your job?

There is not one aspect about my job that I like best because most of what I do is integrated. Intrinsically, I love being able to help and work with people from staff to community members and to be of service. For my job tasks, I get pretty excited when I discover more efficient and effective ways to get the job done.

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

Being relatively new to school business, I know that I must reach out to the individuals who had previously held my position, including Jenny Martens and Wendy Einerson.



When I don't know how to do something or am unsure, I contact the appropriate person to ask questions, whether it's DEED staff, auditors or numerous others.

I also value the ALASBO community and would highly recommend anyone new to business to access this incredible resource. I have asked a number of questions this past spring and was amazed by the number of ALASBO members who responded with excellent answers, suggestions and ideas in response to my questions.

How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?

The opportunities to grow professionally and the networking are invaluable. My initial exposure to ALASBO was during the December conference two years ago. The workshops were great to help answer questions or find better ways to do business. Interacting with vendors in person is more informative than over the phone/internet as is networking with other individuals in the profession. This July, I was able to attend ALASBO Summer Leadership in Juneau as a recipient of the Richard M. Swarner grant awarded by ALASBO. Leadership conference provides another fantastic opportunity to network with professionals and learn more about school business as well as ALASBO's role in continuing to develop and expand.

What do you like to do for fun?

I enjoy spending time with my family when I am not working. We like to go out in our boat, do some fishing, kayaking, hiking and just exploring the area we live in. I have quite a number of

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hobbies but not enough time to do them all. I enjoy swimming, reading, watching movies and I like to create jewelry and clothing. I used to make children's clothes and sell them in Seattle, Bainbridge Island and Petersburg. I have made and sold jewelry all over the US when I was in my mid-20's. I have recently picked up my beading needles again and am working on an elaborate lace inspired necklace. I also have a kiln for making silver jewelry/creations. I am a Rotarian and do voluntary bookkeeping for several non-profits in Petersburg.

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

My dream place is Italy. If I traveled to Italy, I would be obligated to do a Euro Tour and visit the bordering countries so it is hard to choose just one; however, the reasons to go are the same. The draw to this region in the world is art, history, architecture and food.



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

I love to dance!

What is your proudest accomplishment?

My proudest accomplishment beyond my children is going back to school after a 20 year hiatus and finishing my BA in Business Administration/Accounting from UAS. It took me five years of distance classes but I loved it and graduated in 2012. I was recognized by UAS as an Outstanding Graduate and received the Bob Ellis Award for Outstanding Accounting Student from the School of Management.

Send us your pictures – anytime you're traveling around the district this spring, take a photo for ALASBO! Send them to yodean.armour@klawockschool.com.

Smile and Say "DUDE!"

Longtime ALASBO supporter SchoolDude.com is distributing logo stickers and asking you to send in pictures featuring the logo in funny or unusual places. Alaskans can win this hands down! A \$1 donation for each picture up to \$2,500 will go to DonorsChoose.org. Request your sticker and submit pictures by October 31: explore.schooldude.com/stickerrequest.html.

The ALASBO website, www.alasbo.org, is a great source for the latest news and updates. Check here for ALASBO information, such as legislative reports and committee memberships, to register for an ALASBO or ASBO event or to download materials from a Power Lunch training you may have missed!

ALASBO 2013 Liaison and Mentor Assignments

Liaison/Mentor match-up's are a two-way street; contact your match today!

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Mark Your Calendars!



Upcoming Events

- **October 25-28** – ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo – Boston
- **Dec 8-11** – ALASBO Annual Conference – Anchorage

Reasons Why You Should Lighten Up (Hint: Forward to Co-Workers!)

Reprinted with Permission From Jody Urquhart's "Fed Up? Lighten Up!" Newsletter

Humor creates distance from pain and builds perspective. When you can laugh at your stress, you create emotional distance that allows you to be less attached to results and more flexible and resilient toward stress. It allows you to see situations differently, in a less threatening and more realistic light.

Humor promotes healthy emotions. Laughing instantly improves your mood because it triggers the release of endorphins that produce a feeling of well-being. Researchers have found that laughter produces a eustress state that produces healthy and positive emotions. Also, you can't be angry, stressed or sad (all those stomach-acid-producing things) while laughing.

Lightening up builds rapport. Laughter synchronizes the brain of the speaker and the amused listener. People who laugh together create bonds that restore a healthy, positive work environment.

Humor helps you let go. If you are holding onto negative energy about anyone or anything you need to let it go. The quickest way to do this is to play around with it and find the funny in it.

Humor keeps you focused. Laughing instantly and dramatically increases blood flow to the front part of the brain, which makes you more focused and productive.

Remember, humor involves finding something funny and laughter is the physical response to it. Want something to make you smile? The good news is that you can bypass humor and just laugh for no reason at all and still experience the positive consequences!

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