

ALASBO News Link...



February 2016

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

Mark Vink, Bering Strait School District

I would like to thank Amy Lujan, Robin Mullins and all of the people who have helped build this organization into what it is today. This has happened from all of the work and effort put in for ALASBO. I hope to carry your efforts forward in the next year.

ALASBO had an excellent annual conference in December. All of our guest speakers did a fantastic job and our speaker on Wednesday, Pat Pitney, the Director of Office of Management and Budget was quite insightful regarding the budget challenges facing Alaska.

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I am looking forward to a little different twist for our Fly-In this year. We will be having our Fly-In in conjunction with the superintendents, February 20-23. We will be participating in the Alaska's Heart through Student Art reception on Sunday, February 21st at the Juneau Arts and Culture Center. We are hoping to unify our voices in our contacts with legislators. We all know there will be tough decisions made in this session, but in the best interest of our children we need to fund education so that our kids will have a chance for a better future. I know it is not easy to get away, but if you are able to participate, your presence at the Fly-In would be very helpful.

Amy Lujan, Holly Holman and I will be attending the ASBO Executive Leadership Forum in Las Vegas this month from February 18-20, prior to the Fly-In. We will be attending sessions put on by executives from Caesars Place and Zappos, along with sessions by other ASBO members. I attended the Leadership Forum last year and found the topics discussed to be relevant to our work. It was good to see many of the same issues that we face and how they are dealt with from a different perspective.

I am hoping to see the ALASBO Improvement Model – AIM further implemented this year. I feel that the topics in AIM are important, and the AIM tool will help all of us be able to perform our jobs better.

I am looking forward to the coming year and representing ALASBO. The financial challenge we are facing at the state level is significant. We have been asked in the past to provide input and data for various topics at the local, state and federal level. Some of these topics are district budgets, various state studies and Impact Aid. We will continue to be a resource for the decision makers for the benefits of students statewide. **That is why “Stepping up to the Challenge” is my theme for this year.** There will be many challenges facing us this year, and I look forward to all of us being able to face them together. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

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

Executive Director's Message

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

Really hard to believe it's February already!

We're still buzzing from the December **annual conference**. We had strong attendance this year, and I think it's because of the excellent program put together by our volunteers. Thanks to all those who helped organized and present this year! Thanks to our vendors for their support and fun door prizes. And who will forget our first ever ALASBO karaoke, added to the casino night? Many presentations from the conference are posted on our website, www.alasbo.org. Type “December 2015” into the search field to find them.



Evaluations for the conference were very positive, with some constructive feedback and good ideas as well. The average rating overall was 8.9 on a 10-point scale. Congratulations to Jim Farrington, who won the \$50 Visa gift card!

We're now getting ready for our February events, the **ASBO Executive Leadership Forum** in Las Vegas (Feb 18-20), followed closely by the joint **Legislative Fly-In** to Juneau (Feb 20-23), with the Superintendents Association, ASA. The programs for both events look fantastic. You can always check the Events page on our website for dates and registration information for upcoming meetings.

Legislative activities in Juneau are off to a fast start, as legislators seem to understand the urgency of responding to the state's fiscal shortfall. I hope you've retained the excellent information delivered during our Wednesday general session at the annual conference from OMB Director Pat Pitney, along with the encouragement from Dave Jones and Lisa Parady to get involved this session!

I will continue to send out email alerts, post resources and launch discussion topics on Ed Connector. Talk to your legislators, and encourage your friends and neighbors to do so as well! They need to hear how education in Alaska and specific individuals will be affected by the decisions they make.

I've seen in many hearings how testimony from Alaskans can have a big impact! If you can't

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attend or call in, write an email. There are suggestions on how to keep track of what's going on and provide input in my updated "2016 - Following Legislative Activity" guide; just enter "legislative" in the search box on our website to find it. You can even comment on cuts, savings and efficiencies through a new toll-free number, 1-844-414-5949! The majority caucus will receive copies of these comments. Through Twitter and Facebook, comment using hashtag #AllAboutTheBudget.



During the **Legislative Fly-In**, we hope to deliver a positive message about what's going on in education around the state. The new reception and art exhibit will provide a time to socialize with legislators and talk informally. Along with the Superintendents, we will participate in panel discussions and hear presentations on key issues. We will visit legislative offices both with the Superintendents and in ALASBO teams, as we've traditionally done. It's important to get the message out that ALASBO is prepared to assist with analysis of policy proposals, as needed. We also have specific suggestions for ways legislators can help school districts perform more efficiently at little or no cost, and we welcome your input. Please join us in Juneau if you can!

Very soon you will be hearing from me about re-starting the working group to continue edits to the **ALASBO Improvement Model (AIM)**. Participation in this process will enable you to find identify ways to improve your district's processes immediately, and the resources to make those improvements! We will be working on the Budget & Planning section. Please contact me if you'd like to participate.

We are also planning to start a new SFO Certification Study Group this spring. If you're interested in working with the group toward your **ASBO Certification** and the chance to get the certification for ****FREE****, please read the separate article below! Reminder – if you've already participated in at least five of the eight sessions of the study group in a previous year, you're eligible for an application fee waiver from ASBO and reimbursement of test fees from ALASBO, thanks to sponsorship by Melody Douglas!

Finally, if you have a colleague who missed the annual conference and has not yet renewed **membership for 2016**, please encourage your

colleague to visit the "membership" page of our website. Membership is just \$75, and it's an easy way to keep informed about school business topics through the ALASBO network throughout the year!

If you have questions about any ALASBO program, please do not hesitate to contact me at alasbo@gci.net, or 907-723-7415. Our website address is: www.alasbo.org.



Laurie Olson Named ALASBO School Business Official of the Year

Congratulation to Laurie Olson, Finance Director of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District who was named the Alaska School Business Official of the Year at ALASBO's December 2015 annual conference in Anchorage. Candidates for this prestigious award are nominated by their colleagues within the Alaska school business profession. 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 the past seventeen years by Penair. The recipient receives roundtrip travel certificates, a check for \$500 and an engraved plaque.



THE SPIRIT OF ALASKA

Laurie Olson's supervisors and co-workers commented on her kindness and steadiness of character, in the face of increased workloads and requirements over the years. They commended her tireless determination to

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support all classrooms across the diverse Kenai school district. She is willing to take on the “elephant in the room” and try new solutions, rather than let problems grow. These skills have greatly contributed to the stellar reputation of Laurie’s department for management of the district’s finances.

Though surprised by the award, Laurie graciously and appropriately gave credit to her staff, crediting them with helping make her success possible.



Laurie Olson has been active in ASBO International and ALASBO since 1999. She was the ALASBO’s President in 2013 and has served in numerous other Board and committee roles, as well as frequently presenting at ALASBO professional development events. Laurie has earned ASBO International’s Certification in School Finance and Operations, and she has contributed to her district’s qualification for the ASBO Certificate of Excellence in Financial Report (25+ years) and Meritorious Budget Award programs.

For more about the award ceremony and kudos for Laurie, visit:
<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/communications.aspx?id=35184>

Congratulations, Laurie on this well deserved honor!

Nominations for the 2016 SBO of the Year award will be accepted next fall with an October 31 deadline. Nominations are accepted from ALASBO members, immediate

supervisors and local board of education members. Application forms are available on our website, www.alasbo.org, under Resources-Awards.

Apply now for the **Freeman Professional Development Grant** to attend the ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo, September 23-26 in Phoenix! CORE Inc., will sponsor \$2,000 toward the cost of attendance. Hurry – the short application is due 2/29/16! Find the application on our website, www.alasbo.org, under Resources-Grants & Scholarships.

Innovative Program: Grandparent Engagement

Amy Lujan, ALASBO Executive Director

One of the benefits of attending national conferences is the chance to hear about innovative solutions from our colleagues in many other districts. Though Alaska is “different”, we do find many instances where we face similar challenges. I am constantly amazed by the grit and determination of school business officials, to find ways to improve their districts’ performance in challenging times.



This past year, ASBO International awarded a Pinnacle award to Amy Kohl in Greenfield, Wisconsin, for a program called STEP, which I found to be truly innovative in connecting seniors to their local school district.

STEP stands for Senior Tax Exchange Program. In this program, social security-eligible citizens who own a home and reside within the school district are given the opportunity to work in the schools, in exchange for property tax relief. Examples of STEP assignments include: reading to a child; listening to a child read; playing math games; assisting with computers; helping in the library; helping with art; clerical work; preparing bulletin boards; and interpreting.



The STEP program provides seniors with tax relief, a firsthand look at the schools, intergenerational experience and an opportunity

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to share their talents. Students have the benefit of additional adult role models, and they gain an appreciation for the value of the seniors in their community. Staff gain support from senior community members and an opportunity to demonstrate the positive things happening in the schools.

Demographics tell us that the number of seniors in our communities is growing. These seniors are a huge resource of talent and energy that community organizations can tap into. Some are very involved in raising members of the youngest generation, while others find themselves far removed from the school scene. Yet we need their support, as community advocates and as voters.



Can STEP help provide the right incentive to bring seniors into schools in greater numbers and gain their support? Could a similar program work in your community? For more information, visit:

<http://www.greenfield.k12.wi.us/Community/STEPforSeniors/tabid/38139/>



ASBO SFO Certification Study Group

Amy Lujan, Executive Director

Thirty ALASBO members have participated in our study groups over the last two years! We currently have nine SFO's in the state, plus three more who earned their SFO and then left the state. ALASBO has one of the highest percentages of SFO's among its members of all the affiliates, and we want to keep improving on that to blow the other affiliates away!



Our SFO's were recognized with beautiful plaques at the December annual conference, sponsored by the Horace Mann Companies. They also get to wear blue capes, as our "SFO Super Heroes"!

We are planning to offer another Study Group this spring!

Between the ASBO Study Group Fee Waiver and sponsorship funding from Melody Douglas (DBMS), **we can offer the certification FREE** to the first two study group participants to get their SFO certification in 2016, and at a significantly reduced cost for other study group participants!

WHY STUDY FOR ASBO SFO CERTIFICATION?

Participation in the study group provides professional development in the essential elements of your job as a school business professional, even if you never take the test! Obtaining your ASBO SFO Certification has these benefits, among others:

- enables you to demonstrate your professionalism and dedication to the school business profession
- provides a way to be recognized for your professional knowledge, which builds your own confidence and the confidence of your colleagues and members of the public
- increasingly, job announcements across the country for school business officials are noting ASBO SFO certification as a "preferred" qualification

Find out more about the certification process on the ASBO International website:

<http://asbointl.org/learning-career-development/certification>.

HOW WILL THE STUDY GROUP BE STRUCTURED?

We have adopted a curriculum that has been used successfully by ASBO and by other state affiliates. Sessions will be led by current ALASBO SFO's. We plan to cover the curriculum in 8 1-hour teleconference sessions, meeting approximately every two weeks. Some sessions may run as long as 90 minutes.

Note that after just the first TWO study group sessions, you will have completed the curriculum for Part 1 of the exam! There are currently 16 test sites in Alaska, located in Seward, Kotzebue, Anchorage, Nome, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Fairbanks, Palmer, Juneau, Sitka, Dillingham, Skagway and Bethel.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY GROUP?

The study group will help keep you motivated and on track to review the material for the exam. You will learn from your colleagues and have a chance to discuss their real-world experiences.

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After you've completed the Study Group, you'll qualify for a waiver of the exam application fee, a \$150 value for ASBO members (\$225 for non-ASBO members)! In order to qualify for this waiver, you must attend at least five of the eight the Study Group sessions.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR STUDY GROUP SESSIONS

Test prep materials is available on the ASBO website, and on the ALASBO website, www.alasbo.org under Resources-Certification. It is recommended that participants review the material prior to each study group session to formulate questions for discussion with their colleagues, to enhance the value of the study group.

I hope we'll have many participants in our Study Group! Please **contact Executive Director Amy Lujan (alasbo@gci.net)** if you're interested in participating. Let me know if you have questions.

The ALASBO website, www.alasbo.org, is a great source for the latest news and updates. Check here for ALASBO information, such as newsletters and applications, to register for an ALASBO or ASBO event or to download materials or listen to a recording of a training you may have missed. You can also connect to ASBO's Network (GSBN) and Ed Connector to ask questions and get feedback on the latest issues from your colleagues!



ALASBO



Member Spotlight

Cassee Olin, Sitka School District

Tell us about your school district

The Sitka School District is a K-12 public school district serving about 1,300 students who live in Sitka, Alaska. Sitka is one of the top five largest cities in Alaska with about 9,000 residents. Sitka School District has two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one alternative high school. Sitka is located

on the western edge of Baranof Island and faces the Gulf of Alaska. All Sitka's schools are connected to each other by road, but a person must fly or take a ship to arrive into Sitka. Picturesque and welcoming, Sitka has a strong sense of community and commitment to our students. We live on a rock at the edge of the Pacific Ocean, and we know what is important in life!

How long have you been in school business?

I began my career in school business as a staff accountant with the Des Moines Public Schools in Des Moines, Iowa, in the spring of 2007. I was laid off in the fall of 2009 when the recession was happening in the Lower 48. I looked for another job in school business in Iowa and found not much of anything. I was searching online one day and came across a job in Kodiak, AK, as the Accounting Supervisor, and so my adventure in school business in Alaska began.

In May of 2013, I moved to Sitka, AK, and I am currently the Business Manager here.

How did you get into this business?

Before working for Des Moines Public Schools, I worked for the State of Iowa in the Department of Revenue. I was an income tax auditor. Ugh!! I think that should be enough said. I saw a school district staff accountant position open, applied, and thus began my journey in school business.

What do you like best about your job?

The best thing about my job is that every day is different. There are always ups and downs and no matter what, I am not alone in my fight because I have colleagues around the state dealing with the same challenges that I do and we are all in this together. I also love the co-workers that I have become friends with and the working relationships that have helped me throughout my job.

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

The best advice that I can give to someone new to school business is that communication is the key to success. Some days I have to remember that not everyone is an accountant or a business manager, and that I need to be patient with community members, staff, and administration. The other advice I give is to talk to your colleagues. As I said before, we are all in this together and more than likely one of us

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has experienced the challenge that you are going through.

How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?

The best benefit that I have received from ALASBO is the networking with my colleagues. I have also learned to foster my leadership skills and have achieved recognition with my SFO certification.

What do you like to do for fun?

When I have 'fun' time, I love to be outside, either hiking, fishing, hunting, or camping. I also enjoy photography, sports, and cooking.

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

I would visit London because it seems like a world all of its own. I'd enjoy the historical sights, the history, the people, and the unexpected bits that will happen along the way.

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

I am ambidextrous. I eat left-handed, write right-handed, and I can ten-key with both!

What is your proudest accomplishment?

I am proud of the SFO certification that I have achieved!

The ALASBO Experience

Edith Hildebrand, Galena City School District

Hi - hoping this season is finding you all well. We've attended an awesome, engaging annual conference in December. Thank you, AMY!

We completed our audits, finished our indirect applications, worked on our end-of-year items such as W-2s... We are faced with the new filings of our 1095's. I don't know about you, but every time I look over the regulations, I feel cross-eyed. We are getting geared up for next year's budget planning. The list goes on.



In this time, remember to breathe. I think when we get busy, we tend to feel like we are alone, dysfunctional almost, fighting an uphill battle or that our situation is isolated. Well, it's not. It's at times like these, where I feel good that I can send an email or call my ALASBO cohorts to discuss certain situations that arise and talk out possible ways to work through the challenges.

Thank you so much for taking my calls or responding to my emails, even on Saturdays! I try to do the same when I get emails or calls of concern.

I'd like to remind members that ALASBO has so much to offer when it comes to advice and support. No sense in recreating the wheel if another has one spinning already.

Aside from calling others for advice, it has been a privilege to serve on the ALASBO Board. I appreciate the commitment that is shown at the board meetings and by our Executive Director. My experience has allowed me to be more aware of school finance on a whole new level, working on strategic planning, assisting with the annual conference, meeting to discuss legislative items and so forth. It's been meaningful. Wishing you all a wonderful spring.

Power Lunch Schedule

11 AM to noon, usually the 2nd Tuesday of each month via teleconference; call 712-432-1212, code 533-330-891

Mar 8	Time Management
Apr 12	Employee Classification (TRS retires, short/long-term subs)
May 10	Legislative Update
Jun 14	Grants Update
Jul 12	OMB Procurement/GAAP Hierarchy
Aug 9	Time & Effort
Sep 13	EED Issues
Oct 11	Impact Aid
Nov 8	Indirect Cost Rate Proposal
Dec	ALASBO Annual Conference No Power Lunch



ALASBO 2016 Liaison and Mentor Assignments

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

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Upcoming Events

- February 18-20, 2016 – ASBO Executive Leadership Forum, Las Vegas, NV
- February 20-23, 2016 - ALASBO/ASA Legislative Fly-In, Juneau
- July 22-24, 2016 (tentative) – ALASBO Summer Leadership Conference – location TBA
- September 23-26, 2016 – ASBO International Annual Meeting & Expo, Phoenix, AZ
- December 4-7, 2016 – ALASBO Annual Conference, Anchorage

Kidspeak



A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his tuxedo, she warned, "Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit." "And why not, darling?" "You know that it always gives you a headache the next morning."

While walking along the sidewalk in front of his church, our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his collar wilt. Apparently, his 5-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin. Feeling that proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased. The minister's son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said: "Glory be unto the Faaaather, and unto the Sonnnand into the hole he gooooes."

A little girl had just finished her first week of school. "I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write and they won't let me talk!"