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Every Student, Every Story: AASB Annual Conference Preview



TIFFANY JACKSON

FROM the PRESIDENT

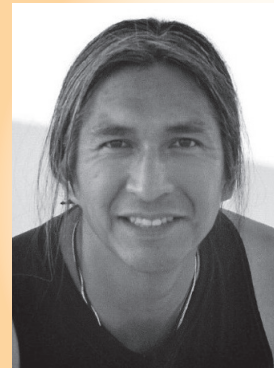
I hope this issue of the Commentary finds you all well, and the school year off to a great start! The Association of Alaska School Boards is gearing up for our Annual Conference, and we hope to see you all there. The theme for the conference, selected by

our Board of Directors, is "Every Student, Every Story," a recognition of the importance of individualizing education.

We recognize your time is valuable, and when you choose to come get professional development as a school board member, it's taking away from your time at home. We have worked hard to make sure the programing we've put together for this year's annual conference is of high quality, and worth the time you've taken to join us. We need you to be the best school board member you can be so collectively, we can make sure Alaska has the best public education system anywhere!

On November 10th we'll kick off the Board Room Bootcamp and the Academy for Experienced Board Members, as well as the Resolutions meeting. I've mentioned it in the previous Commentary, but the Resolutions meeting is so very important. The Resolutions we pass at the annual conference gives the Association our guiding directions for the work we'll be doing in the upcoming year. If there are issues you feel strongly about, the Resolutions meeting is where you want to be on Thursday to make sure it gets addressed.

If you were at the 2015 annual conference, you may remember how well received Gene Tagaban was



Gene Tagaban



Thomas Alsbury

by the Youth Leadership Institute. We're excited to remind you, as promised at our conference last year, Mr. Tagaban will be kicking off our conference at our General Session on Friday! The rest of Friday's sessions and snapshot sessions will inspire you, and hopefully help provide you with tools to help you increase your skills as a board member. Friday will windup with one of our favorite events of the conference, the June Nelson Memorial Scholarship Fundraiser. This highly anticipated event incorporated generous donations from school board members and districts from around the state, our talented youth attending the Youth Leadership Institute, and an AASB run auction to support the June Nelson Memorial Scholarship. I hope EVERYONE considers coming and supporting this great event.

Saturday kicks off with Professor of Educational Leadership, Thomas Alsbury. If you've heard Dr. Alsbury speak before, you know why we're excited to have him at the AASB conference, if you haven't heard him speak before, you won't want to miss him at our second general session. Mr. Tagaban and Dr. Alsbury will both host followup sessions on Saturday. Satur-

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day is also when we hold Roundtables. This is one of my favorite events of the weekend as we take time to speak with other board members from around the state, and even better, with other students from around the state to discuss what's going on in our districts. I always learn so much from the students participating in our Round Table discussions and I'm sure those of you who participate will too! Saturday night wraps up with our annual banquet and awards night, where we recognize the hard work districts and board members are doing around Alaska.

Finally, on Sunday, we wrap up with the business meeting. You've heard me say

it before, but this meeting is SO important! It's where we vote on resolutions, and AASB takes our marching orders from these resolutions. If a legislator comes to us asking what AASB's position is on an issue, we consult the resolutions passed at Sunday's meetings. If we don't have a resolution addressing that particular issue, we don't take a position. This business meeting is where you have a voice in the direction of the association. After the business meeting, we'll have our final sectionals, and wrap up with our closing luncheon, where the Teacher of the Year will be announced. I hope you stay through this luncheon, and join us in celebrating the hard work our teachers do!

Finally, this is the last Commentary you'll be hearing from me as President of AASB. It has been a wonderful year advocating for public education and the work of school districts across the state. I think over the past year we've done some good work. I know we've faced (and continue to face) difficult times, especially when it comes to the fiscal reality of the State. As you all know, the work we do as school board members is work of the heart. We do this, advocating for students and public education, because we're passionate about doing everything we can to provide the best possible education program for ALL students! Thank you for allowing me to do this work with you over the past year. It has been an honor.

Tips for Attendees

By Timi Tullis, Director of Board Development and Field Services

Look through all the material.

If you would rather view things on our conference app go to the app store on your digital device and search for **AASB2016** to download. You will receive a hard copy booklet at the conference that also includes a detailed schedule. Read through each sectional and see what interests you the most before choosing your path.

Once you have your schedule listed out, meet with others from your board and **share what you plan to attend**. This way you can ensure that each of the sectionals during a breakout time is covered by at least one member of your board.

Be punctual. This year we have changed the schedule around, shortened session lengths and opened up more time to visit with other board members from across the state. By doing this we hope you will be at sessions when they begin and honor the speaker's time. Room space can be tight so be sure to grab a seat early!

Don't be shy. You are going to have to introduce yourself to individuals at the conference. Other district board members will become a valuable resource to you

and the friendships may continue for a lifetime. Sharing your concerns, questions, and frustrations with other board members from other districts will help you gain some insight to the challenges! Nametags can be helpful, but just reach your hand out and say hi, you never know what will come next.

At the end of each day **make notes on what information you found most valuable**. This will help you when you report out to the entire board upon your arrival home. You will be surprised how much you learned in such a short time. By members
ing shar-



the variety of things they learned, everyone will grow into better board members.

Make sure you **introduce yourself to the AASB Board of Directors (BOD) and staff**. The BOD is a 15-member board consisting of 11 directors and four officers that govern AASB. The Board, elected by membership at the Annual Conference, represents all regions of the state.

Check in with the exhibitors. More than 20 exhibitors are at the conference on Thursday and Friday and they hope to meet with you. Take some time to visit with them, as they are big supporters of education and of our conference.

Please take time to **fill out the sectional and overall conference evaluations**. AASB staff uses this information to plan the future conferences and your input is absolutely necessary. Some of the changes this year are a direct result of comments from the surveys last year.

Take what you learn home! Be sure to report out to the board and public what you learned at the conference.

New Board Members: Orientation Saves Time and Builds Better Boards

By Lon Garrison, Coordinator for School Improvement

“We need to improve our new member orientation”

is a comment I hear during every board self assessment workshop I conduct (more than 25 in the past year). As we head into the time of year when most boards welcome new members it is timely for boards to think about a systematic, planned out introduction for new members on their new role. If oriented successfully, new members will better understand the workings of the board, and this in turn will help them in making decisions. The first meeting can then be the beginning of a positive working relationship for everyone on the board and a start to an effective team.

Boards should consider inviting the newly elected board member to sit with the board in all of its meetings after the election, even if it is prior to their swearing-in and first official meeting. Take advantage of the new members' interest by asking them for their thoughts about the current board goals and district strategic plan. This is a great way to hear their input AND get them to see the direction the team is headed and allows the other board members to share how these goals were developed.

Most districts rely on AASB to orient their new members by attending the Board Room Boot Camp during the fall Annual Conference. This program provides attendees with a basic introduction to the roles and responsibilities of school boards. Though this is an important training, it is only the beginning and NOT where the training should end!

AASB has developed a comprehensive list of information that new members said they wish they'd known about when they first got on the board. The New Board Member Information Sheet is available at <http://aasb.org/board-development/> Once the form is filled in (typically by the board secretary/superintendent executive admin) and completed, it simply needs to be updated annually and can be used yearly as a starting point to getting new members up to speed on your district. Interestingly veteran members have said how they too would like to receive the form each year to see any changes that might have occurred in the district.

During the orientation process important aspects to highlight include:

- *Explaining the culture of your board and how the board works together, how to get items on agenda, when board members get to talk about issues important to them, how board members give direction to the superintendent, can we as members visit the schools, what is the difference between work sessions, meetings and executive session and what can be talked about in each of these?*
- *Provide access to the policy manual (or a printed copy if you haven't gone to an online version). Explain the impor-*

tance of policy in general, but suggest they read the 9000's first as it explains the roles of the board.

- *Share your board time lines and schedules. Describe your schedule for review of instruction and curriculum, student achievement data, policy review, budget preparation, AASB trainings, and most importantly Board meetings. To have all these things on a master calendar helps everyone plan accordingly.*
- *Describe Board Standards and how they guide the work of boards. Explain how these standards are shared with other districts in the state. When preparing professional development for board members, AASB develops all their training using these standards as a starting point.*

Most importantly be patient. Think about pairing a veteran member with a new member as a mentor. Your new colleague, most likely, won't know as much as you do. They may not yet be aware of the board goals and the district strategic plan, but they hopefully will share a commitment to your schools and community. They may also bring a new energy and perspective to the board. Help them begin to make their contributions as soon as possible.

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS



Calendar

OCTOBER

19-20 AASB Maintenance Directors Workshop – Anchorage, AK (Wed/Thur)

NOVEMBER

10-13 AASB Annual Conference – Anchorage, AK (Hilton)

14 AASB Board of Directors Meeting – Anchorage, AK (Hilton)

DECEMBER

TBD NSBA Pacific Region Winter Meeting - TBD

8-9 AASB Secretary Workshop – Anchorage, AK (Thurs/Fri)

9-10 AASB Winter Boardmanship Academy – Anchorage, AK (Fri/Sat)

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