



Supporting Alaska's Principals

Advocating for Alaska's Children



*An affiliate of NAESP*

September 2009 Newsletter

## President's Message by Pete Swanson

This has certainly been an interesting start to another school year. Some of the interesting must be because of the changes in leadership at many levels and of course the stimulus funding has provided its own level of interesting moments. Down here on the Kenai, we have a new superintendent, assistant superintendent, several new site administrators and quite a few new teachers. Those kinds of changes certainly bring their own level of interesting opportunities. As these people hit the learning curve it is good for all of us to remember the theme for this year's Fall Principal Conference, "Yes, We Can!" It has been exciting to watch our Fall Conference Planning committee work towards bringing together a great group of speakers and presenters for this year's principals' conference. I hope you all have included those October dates on your calendar and can join us for one of the only professional development opportunities for administrators in Alaska. It is not too late to register and it is always a great time to be with other administrators from across this great state. Hope to see you there!! ►



## From President-elect, Anne Salzer

Every morning, after the students are settled in their classes, my first task is to catch up on the email that came in overnight. It's a never-ending task, like sweeping up after my dogs' shedding. This morning a quick glance revealed how many different external forces shape our work as principals. In my inbox I had information regarding partnerships with parents: the after school foreign language classes, a parent meeting agenda, and a question about a social problem between two children. There was a message from our School Business Partner regarding community-wide recycling and a plan to teach a science lesson. Intermixed with these messages were headlines regarding schools' progress nationwide in meeting achievement targets on state assessments and news regarding President Obama's address to the nation's school children.

A quick check at [Ed.gov](http://Ed.gov) popped up this press release headline, "States Open to Charters Start Fast in 'Race to Top' Education Secretary Seeking Autonomy with Real Accountability for School Innovators". I don't believe expectations for public schools have ever been higher.

The bright side is that the focused attention and public interest in education has also meant that we have additional resources to draw on. At our September district leadership meetings we learned information regarding new assistance we

would be receiving in schools through Federal Stimulus funds. We also learned about assistance we would receive to bolster instruction for struggling students in literacy. Shortly our staff will begin to inventory tools we use in the classroom to evaluate students' progress and provide interventions when needed. Together these new resources will make a positive difference in how teachers can support all students by refining how they target instruction and effectively integrate technology.

Working with parents means that the quality of experiences we can provide our students is richer, making school an exciting and compelling opportunity for children. We not only include them in our planning for school goals, but depend upon their input and support throughout the year.

This patchwork of expectations, supports and resources is stitched together by school principals. It is our challenge and opportunity to put it all together everyday in a way that brings the best we have for the children. ►

## Resolutions Committee Report

### By Anne Salzer

This year the Resolutions Committee is preparing Position Statements instead of formal resolutions. The Position Statements, when approved by AASSA, AASSP, AAESP, and Alasbo, will become ACSA's shared legislative priorities. The intention is to frame our priorities in concise, readable language that will help both legislators and the general public understand our "most pressing issues."

The Position Statement committee met via audio conference on August 12 and 26. Our goal is to have statements ready for approval by each organization during their fall meetings. If you have a "most pressing issue" that you would like to see addressed,

please email Anne Salzer at [salzer\\_anne@asdk12.org](mailto:salzer_anne@asdk12.org). ►

## Report from Washington, D.C.

Several items of interest are percolating in Washington now and in coming weeks.

- **School Improvement Grants proposal.** The Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, released proposed guidance on the school improvement grants (SIG) fund. Under his direction, the funds for this program (bolstered by the stimulus bill) would now be targeted at the five percent of lowest-performing schools in the country. Among the requirements for receiving SIG funds, eligible schools must implement one of four reform models. Model one—the "turnaround" model—*requires* the dismissal of the principal and 50 percent of school staff. The other models would likely result in the dismissal of the principal and include (2) restarting the school as a charter, (3) closing the school and sending students to high-achieving schools, or (4) transforming the school by meeting certain requirements. NAESP is currently drafting comments on this proposal and encourages all state affiliates to submit comments by the Sept. 25 deadline, as well. Review the proposed guidance [here](#).
- **Education appropriations.** It is unlikely that Congress will complete work on the unfinished appropriations bills (including the education bill) before the end of the current fiscal year on Sept. 30. This means Congress will have to pass at least one continuing resolution (CR) that provides "patch" funding until the actual appropriations bill(s) is passed.

CR's almost always fund programs at the previous year's levels, and when used over time (as they have been used consistently in the last 10-15 years), result in inconsistent funding to states and local districts. When the education appropriations bill is finally adopted, it is likely to closely reflect President Obama's requests for FY10. See NAESP's funding comparison chart [here](#).

➤ **Voucher Proposals on Capitol Hill.** NAESP is a founding member of the National Coalition for Public Education (NCPE), whose sole focus is to fight the siphoning of public dollars into private and parochial schools. In recent months, NCPE has been more active than usual, combating several voucher proposals on Capitol Hill. These include expanding the \$14 million per year DC Voucher program to more children and a proposal to require a study of making private school vouchers available to children of military personnel. For detailed information on why the DC Voucher program has not succeeded, click [here](#). For information on the military-impacted students voucher, click [here](#).

➤ **Early Learning Challenge Grants.** President Obama recommended establishing a competitive grant program to help states build their capacity to increase the quality of early learning opportunities for low-income children. NAESP supports H.R. 3221, the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, which includes funding for the Early Learning Challenge grants. This is a reconciliation bill that would move the Pell student aid program from discretionary to mandatory spending, thereby "freeing-up" funds to pay

down some of the national debt and to also pay for the early learning challenge grants. H.R. 3221 is being debated on the House floor. ►

## Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Research Forum for Alaskan Leaders

October 21, 2009

#### Overview

*This forum follows the Alaska AAESP\AASSP Principals Conference on October 18 - 20, at the Anchorage Sheraton Hotel.*

**Dr. Rebecca Herman and Dr. Sam Redding**, authors of the Institute of Education Sciences' practice guide, *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools*, will present and facilitate discussions related to the four major recommendations for school turnaround:

1. Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership.
2. Encourage staff to maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction.
3. Make "quick win" improvements that are visible and important.
4. Employ strategies for building a committed staff.

A panel discussion will highlight the successes and challenges faced by Alaska principals who led successful improvement efforts at their schools. Additionally, small-group discussions will offer participants the opportunity to get individualized assistance on issues facing their schools.

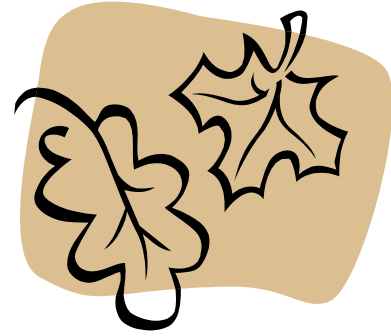
## Executive Director's Message

By John Pile

*It is a grand thing that Principals do—it is truly the "Good" work.*

AAESP, ACSA and NAESP are here to support all that you do for the young people of Alaska. I encourage your active participation in your professional associations. Your board of directors—all active, current principals—all want to be of service to you and to the children you serve.

I encourage you to get involved and to encourage new principals and "Aspiring Principals" to join your organizations and become part of a strong professional family. If you need membership forms or additional information let me know at [aaesp@gci.net](mailto:aaesp@gci.net) or visit our Website at <http://www.ak-principals.org/>. Check out the draft program for the State Principal's Conference also posted on our site. ►



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