



Newsletter

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Supporting Alaska's Principals – Advocating for Alaska's Children

An Affiliate of NAESP

SELF RENEWAL

By Ruth Michalscheck, AAESP President

Webster's dictionary defines attitude as, "a manner of acting, feeling or thinking that shows one's disposition, opinion etc." How is yours? Are you still feeling as enthusiastic, invigorated and as much a part of a committed and knowledgeable learning community as you did in August? Or are you perhaps feeling the weight of paperwork, evaluations, and frustration at not being in classrooms as often as you believe an effective educational leader should? If the latter description fits you then you may be entering what is known in the mentoring world as the Disillusionment Phase or to others as the Educational Doldrums.



This is an educational malady that usually occurs around this time of year. Previously it was considered a problem suffered solely by new teachers, but it is now believed to cover a much broader spectrum of our community, including principals. The reason for its onset is simple. We begin the year with great expectations, high energy and a passionate belief in success for all students. Over the next few months the needs of personnel, procedural dictates, and the daily grind of building minutia may have eroded our energy and expectations. The euphoria of August may be seriously depleted!

Take heart! Of course you still possess all the best attributes of an educational leader. It's just time for an attitude adjustment, and the upcoming holiday vacation presents the perfect opportunity. It's painless, and only requires some time for reflection, a promise to be realistic,

and a strong sense of resolution.

Your attitude has a huge impact on the everyday experience of all members of your learning community. Your enjoyment and love of your job is reflected in the attitudes of all the stakeholders in your school. As educator and author Jonathan Kozol, said, "The principal represents the heart and soul of every public school in America."

In order to sustain a school with great heart and soul therefore we resolve to:

- ☞ acknowledge everyone's successes, both large and small.
- ☞ never forget our mantra, "What's best for kids?"
- ☞ take time to network with our colleagues
- ☞ find occasions, many occasions, to laugh
- ☞ acknowledge that principals alone cannot perform all the complex tasks of a school
- ☞ develop leaders among our staff and give ourselves permission to delegate
- ☞ find ways to ensure that everyone in our school has a connection to someone significant
- ☞ never take ourselves too seriously
- ☞ be receptive to new ideas
- ☞ take time to refresh ourselves, to do whatever calms us and gives us happiness
- ☞ remind ourselves daily that we have the greatest job in the world
- ☞ NEVER lose our passion

So, if you think the Doldrums might have arrived, review your resolution, adjust your attitude, and believe in your ability to foster a welcoming and dynamic learning environment. You are indeed the heart and soul of your school.

Happy Holidays

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RESOLUTIONS 2006

Over three hundred principals from all over the state attended the State Principals' Conference held in Anchorage. These resolutions received unanimous support from the Alaska Association of Elementary Principals (AAESP) and Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP) members present. AAESP and AASSP have a combined membership of approximately 500 representing K-12 principals from all over the state of Alaska.

Many of these resolutions are also supported by ACSA, an "umbrella" organization that includes superintendents, principals, and school district business managers. Over the past few years these groups have worked toward coordinating their efforts to impact education legislation. *These joint resolutions effectively bring a clear and united voice to education issues in Juneau and Washington, D.C.* Many thanks to members of the resolutions committees of all member organizations for their hard work and to Dr. Mary Francis, Executive Director of ACSA for her strong leadership in this process. The resolutions from the superintendents can be found at www.alaskaacsa.org.

For additional information about these resolutions please contact AAESP Resolutions Chair, Sandy Hill at shill@dgsd.k12.ak.us or Tim Doran at tdoran@northstar.k12.ak.us. The full text of these resolutions can be found at our web site: www.ak-principals.org.

Resolution 06-01 Supporting Parent/Guardian Participation

Resolution 06-02 National Professional Development
Legislation

Resolution 06-03 Increased Funding for Federal Education
Programs

Resolution 06-04 Oppose Unfunded Mandates

Resolution 06-05 Support School - Business Partnerships in
Alaska

Resolution 06-06 A Call for Full Accountability

Resolution 06-07 Changes and Funding for PERS/TERS

Resolution 06-08 Waivers for High School Graduation

Our Resolutions stay in effect for 3 years. You can access full copies of the 2004 and 2005 resolutions by going to our web site: www.ak-principals.org.

LEGISLATORS & SCHOOL VISITS.

Between now and mid-January is a great time to show your legislators what is happening in your school and share our Resolutions. Print off a copy that they can take to Juneau as a reference. Become a personal resource for them to refer to and trust as they make decisions affecting Alaska's children. Give them a call once the session starts to remind them of campaign promises and their visit to your school. Your involvement helps all the children in Alaska.

READY TO READ, READY TO LEARN

By Barbara Nagengast, Past President and Task
Force Member

In September a task force report about how we help our youngest Alaskans prepare to enter school was released. The Ready to Read, Ready to Learn report offers a number of recommendations for decision makers in our state to use as they look at the importance of early childhood education. As elementary school principals we know that our kindergarten teachers can tell within a few minutes of meeting new children in their classroom which ones have had the kinds of enriching early childhood experiences that help prepare them for school. Unfortunately, our task force discovered by analyzing the mandatory kindergarten profiles that almost half of Alaska children enter school unprepared to read or learn. We must do something to address that!

Alaska lags far behind most states in addressing early childhood literacy and learning issues. The Task Force report offers recommendations in 3 key areas: In the home, out of the home in child care and early learning programs, and finally, in a long-term focus that will require state funding for early childhood. The final recommendation does not advocate an extension of our public education system being mandated to offer classes for 3 and 4 year olds. Rather, we suggest the development of a statewide system of voluntary and affordable early childhood education that meets early learning guidelines in a variety of settings.

The report and recommendations are available on the Alaska Humanities Forum website www.akhf.org encourage you to download the summary report; it is less than 20 pages and important for all of us who care deeply about children's success in school! NAESP recently published report entitled Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities is a nice complement to the task force report. Be an advocate for early childhood – the investment is worth it!

*"If you want to work on the core problem,
it's early school literacy."*

- James Barksdale (former Netscape CEO)

2006 - 2007 AAESP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the October Principals' Conference the following slate of officers was selected to serve as the 2006-2007 Board of Directors.

President - Ruth Michalscheck - Government Hill, Anchorage
Past-President - Barbara Nagengast - Spring Hill, Anchorage
Vice-President - Erica Kludt-Painter Stedman, Petersburg
Secretary - Sharon Story - Russian Jack, Anchorage
Treasurer - Kathy Beebe - North Pole, North Pole
State Rep. - Tim Doran - Denali, Fairbanks
Region at Large - Suzanne Cyr - Snowshoe, Wasilla
Region at Large - Peter Swanson - McNeil Canyon, Homer

Congratulations and Thank You for your willingness to serve!

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT ARTS EDUCATION?

Susan Olson, Arts Education Director for the Alaska State Council on the Arts

When we're struggling to find enough money to fund the most basic needs of our schools, how can we justify funding to the arts? The answer is simple: in these complex and rapidly changing times, the arts are critical to a complete education for all children. Integrating arts education into our schools is an essential factor in school reform and the benefits for our children are very real.

Why the Arts are Basic to Education

- The arts enhance student's creativity and increase creative thinking and problem solving abilities.
- The arts are integral to human development in dimensions such as use of both hemispheres of the brain, development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and learning styles.
- The arts develop self-esteem and help students gain a more positive self-concept.
- The arts improve the school atmosphere and can aid in improving student attendance and decreasing the dropout rate.
- The arts increase communication skills vitally needed in today's complex society.

More Arts Education Funding – Cultural Collaborations

Cultural Collaborations was initiated by the Rasmuson Foundation to expand cultural offerings to pre K-12 students and to encourage neighborhood based cultural programming. The program is funded by the Rasmuson Foundation and administered by the Alaska Arts & Culture Foundation, in partnership with the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Below is a brief outline of grants available to Alaska schools, teachers and organizations. **Applications and guidelines are available at: www.eed.state.ak.us/aksca** under arts education. Please read all guidelines carefully before applying as there are limitations per year for each grant.

Arts Excursion: Provides reimbursement funds to Alaska teachers, in both public and private schools to assist in transportation costs for K-12 students to an arts or cultural event. Deadline for grant submission is 30 days prior to event.
Maximum Grant Amount: \$300

Access Grant: Short-term art/cultural activities for grades K-12 during the school day. Deadline for grant submission is 30 days prior to the event. **Maximum Grant Amount: \$1,000**

Project Grant: Longer term arts/cultural activities. Events must be held outside the school day, either before or after school, or summer. Deadlines are: March 15 and July 15. **Maximum Grant Amount: \$6,000**

Arts Educator Grant: Individual grants designed to encourage immersion of arts educators in the practice of their art. Deadline is March 1, 2007. **Maximum Grant Amount: \$3,000**
For more information on Cultural Collaborations grants, please contact Susan Olson, Arts Education Director for the Alaska State Council on the Arts at (907) 269-6682 or 1-888-278-7424.

Have you seen the new Alaska Art Curriculum Website?

Alaska Arts Curriculum online at

www.akart.org/curriculum.html provides:

- » Individual curriculum by grade level (K-12)
- » Embedded links to useful curriculum documents & sites
- » Fundamentals of arts (a sequential plan)
- » Alaska Standards
- » Teacher Tips
- » Assessment
- » Glossary
- » Image bank & recommended websites

...and it's absolutely free! Check it out!

PTPC SEEKING COMMENTS PROCEDURES ON BREACH OF CONTRACT

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) is seeking input from educators on a proposed change in the current policy on breach of contract. This request stems from an increase of breach of contract violations in school districts throughout the state. The purpose of the revision would be to provide specificity.

Current procedure statement:

If the unilateral termination by an educator occurs 30 days prior to the first duty day or anytime thereafter, without persuasive mitigating circumstances, such a violation will result in a one-year suspension of the educator's certificate.

The four suggested changes would change the cut off date to June 1, June 15, July 1, or July 15.

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission asks for your input for consideration in making revision/s (or not) to best meet the needs of all stakeholders. Please respond by **February 1, 2007** via e-mail:

patricia_truman@eed.state.ak.us **OR** via mail: PTPC, 344 W. 3rd Ave, Suite 127, Anchorage, AK 99501

If you have questions, call the Professional Teaching Practices Commission office: (907) 269-6579.

The breach of contract issue has a definite impact on student education, so I urge you to share your input with PTPC. Watch for the Winter issue of the PTPC Newsletter coming soon to your school.

E-KNOWLEDGE PORTAL

The last tiny technical details of this exciting new NAESP/ERS/AAESP resource are being finalized as we go to press. The connection for AAESP members will soon be available on our web site: www.ak-principals.org For a quick orientation and "Flash Tour" go to: <http://www.knowledge-media.com/synergy/content/texpot/662/in dexstatic.cfm>

A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE

by Peter Swanson, 2006 NDP from Alaska.

Wow!! Having just returned from Washington, D.C., after being honored at the 2006 National Distinguished Principal's Award event, that is really all I can say. The NAESP officers, board members, and staff, the people from AIG-VALIC, and the U.S. DOE know how to put on a celebration.

From the moment that my wife, Lenore, and I arrived at the Capitol Hilton, the hotel where the event occurred, we were congratulated, and lauded. After two wonderful receptions, a White House briefing, and an incredible formal dinner and awards ceremony I felt truly honored and very humbled to be included in the company of such incredible educators. Many of you deserve that same recognition and more for the tremendous work you are doing as leaders at your various sites throughout this great state.

The National Distinguished Principal award is sponsored by our National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP), the U.S. Department of Education, and AIG-VALIC. It honors elementary and middle level principals from the fifty states, the District of Columbia, private schools, and Departments of State and Defense schools overseas. Nominations are made by colleagues in each state, and the selection is made by each state's elementary principals association.

It is one of those once in a lifetime kind of awards, and just being nominated by your peers is a wonderful recognition of the terrific work you do each day. It is also an award for your entire school community. My school, McNeil Canyon Elementary in Homer, well deserves the honor.

The application process does take time but it also had the interesting effect of making me stop and think about the many successful programs and activities I have guided and facilitated over the years, and the tremendous impact they have had on so many students and staff.

To nominate someone, contact AAESP Vice President, **Erica Kludt-Painter, Principal at Stedman Elementary in Petersburg, 907-772-4786 or ekludt@psgsd.k12.ak.us** and request a nomination form. Nominators names remain confidential. When you submit the form a congratulatory letter and an application packet are sent to your nominee. Make this a top priority for your week. Contact Erica right away.

When you do nominate someone, follow up by calling your nominee to encourage him or her to complete the process. I know it was helpful to me to get a regular reminder.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

NAESP ANNUAL CONVENTION

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS!

March 29 - April 2, 2007

Seattle, Washington

This is the 86th NAESP Convention and it's *right in our backyard!* These dates are right before testing so should allow many Alaskans to attend. If you haven't already registered, you can save \$ 50. by registering before March 19, 2007. Just go to www.naesp.org.

This conference promises to be another excellent experience for all. Keynote speakers include Marion Wright Edelman, Dr. Rick Rigsby, Jonathan Kozol, Erin Gruwell, and Taylor Mali.

The Alaska Room Block is at the Sheraton Hotel right next to the Convention Center. If you wish to join your colleagues there contact Tim Doran as soon as possible, tdoran@northstar.k12.ak.us as reserved rooms go quickly.

WANTED – NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP) current Executive Director, Loyola McManus, is retiring as of June 30, 2007. AAESP is actively seeking to fill the position. Go to the AAESP website <http://www.ak-principals.org/> for more information or contact:

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