



Highlights from Penny Vadla

By far, this was one of the best AASB Annual conferences I have attended in the past twelve years as a board member. General Session speakers were exceptional, sectionals were informative, resolutions went smoothly, and student presentations were fantastic (as usual). Attendees were a true joy to connect and reconnect with during the six days of attendance.

Wednesday At a BOD meeting, directors were asked to preside over sectionals, meet **Board Liason Partners**, lead district resolution forums, and participate in several conference activities.

Thursday One of the most important and labour-intensive aspects of the AASB Annual conference is the Resolutions Committee process which involves the review and revision of belief statements and resolutions by subject areas: Governance, Funding, Child Advocacy, Personnel, & Education Programs. Board members gain a clear perspective of the importance of resolutions as board members and AASB work together on priorities to bring before legislators.

Friday **General Session** – (opening performance by Trailside Elementary Choir)

Keynote Speaker Michele Brooks “The Power of Transformation” session was dynamic.

Ms. Brooks discussed how ‘Building relationships of trust is transformative - It creates a space for healing and bridges understanding.’ School districts and Board members should ask, “Who are the families in our communities?” If we want to transform our schools and impact learning, we must embed family engagement into the school structure. If we want to effect balance, we need to listen to each other.

Board President Workshop School Law –Building Trust with Your Superintendent – John Sedor
Communicating and Building a Relationship is paramount to the success of the team:

Strengthening the Relationship Guidelines ① Build mutual trust and understanding. ② Develop a shared understanding of roles and expectations of the board as well as the superintendent. ③ Build a shared vision that focuses on student needs for the future. ④ Ensure long term communication within/between the board & the superintendent. ⑤ Make effective decisions emphasizing consensus building, conflict resolution, and learning together. ⑥ Develop positive links with community. The relationship at the ‘top’ is dramatic. If it goes badly, it filters down into the halls. It is important to work on strengthening the relationship.

Early Childhood Planning Session luncheon – Lori Grassgreen and Betsy

Alaska Needs Assessment of the Early Childhood Care & Education System was the initial focus as we discussed the strengths of the Ak ECE System, the impending need for chldcare and pre-elementary programs, and the complexity of accessing ECE services . Next, small groups

worked on individual 'next step' priorities, gathered these priorities into categories, and gave the information to Lori and Betsy to pass on to the joint task force team for consideration as the team continues to develop this vision and strategic plan. Because access to early education is paramount to the success of student learning, it is imperative that the state of Alaska continue to make it a priority. Education is and should be a primary focus.

School Law Working with the Public - John Sedor

Communication and the involvement of social media in school districts was the focal point. Always listen to constituents carefully, be human, have a plan for talking to upset people, check for clarity, avoid promising a solution, and pass on information to correct channels. Discussion focused on how quickly factual information can be unraveled on social media when only 'some' information is reposted! Take away comments: To tell the truth can be easier said than done in the electronic age. 'A million people with a bad idea is still an idea' so remember results are dependent on process! Know the process by which the district/board uses or does not use social media effectively and correctly.

Some Social Media Questions to consider: When do boards (and individual board members) get involved in rumors and media? What do your board rules advise? Can Facebook become a problem? What potential impact might the use of school district emails be for board members?

Saturday General Session (opening performance by Alaska Native Culture Charter School)

Keynote Speaker – Donna Oser's "Welcome Superheroes" reinforced board responsibilities & roles. "I am here because I care deeply about children." How true! A challenge for boards is the community does not always understand our role as a board. When people come together, what unites them is shared beliefs and the desire to commit to a vision that reflects those beliefs. It is essential for people to know 'why' we are doing something not necessarily 'what' we are doing! KPBSD has a process for reporting out so stakeholders can connect and be aware.

Of note: *Superheroes of the Schoolboard*

Establish a vision for the district that reflects the community's beliefs and aspirations for their children; **Ensure** that resources are aligned to accomplish the vision; **Inspire** stakeholders to work towards making that vision a reality; **Hold** the system accountable for attaining/making real progress towards the vision.

Equity and Policy - Lisa Worl & Lon Garrison – In the balance of equity it is important to ask, "How do we move from challenges to solutions?" Some areas of importance: review policy, differentiate, diversity in teachers, same set of priorities, socio-economic issues, and culturally relevant education for all students. Also, students should not view their talent as a burden; it is a gift! One voice makes us stronger, and one voice unites us and provides channels for equitable opportunities for each and every student. We need to narrow the gaps!!

Roundtables with Students – Discussions aim to elevate student voice and enhance leadership skills. Our group included three students/three adults. We discussed the biggest successes and issues impacting their schools and how districts can support students to help solve problems. Successes - students helping younger students, caring teachers/helpers who make their day,

involvement in sports or school/village events, and mentorships. Problems - bullying, loss of lunch service in village, few activities and/or classes available, suicide, internet connections, teacher turnover, and decisions made without student input! Districts can - host more events/speakers/specialists, provide mentorships, celebrate successes... "It is important to provide resources, connections with people and other districts. Solutions are not just about budgeting!"

Large/Urban District Forum - Starr and I were group facilitators. Our group selected and discussed resolutions of interest, discussed positions on those resolutions, and chose the priorities to send to Monday's Director's meeting. Our priorities were local governance, pre-K, school safety and well-being, student achievement, employees retention benefits, and funding.

Sunday Business Meetings – During the Resolutions meeting we discussed, debated, revised if necessary, and passed the resolutions for 2020. AASB awards followed this business meeting.

Board and Superintendent's Roles in Systematically Protecting Students from Sexual Abuse in Schools - Don Austen –This presentation was very informative. I have included a couple of pieces of information. More information is available on AASB website listed below.

Where Sexual Abuse Occurs: Home and in the family (probably most often); Community in general; Communities of Faith 4. Youth activities and sports; Schools (a very, very low percentage). Possible life-time problems associated with being sexually abused: self-esteem, mental health, education, employment, alcohol and/or drug abuse, family, and the law.

Monday Board of Directors Meeting – First we focused on NSBA, the AI/AN Council, AASB Review, ICE, Membership & Administrative Services, and AASA Reports; approval of budget; 2020 priority Issues; Board Liason Assignments; and Committee Appointments. Finally, we reviewed priorities as submitted from all Like-Sized District Forums and developed a school board priorities focus list'so AASB could devop talking points. Our meeting was long, fruitful, interesting, and well worth the time. I appreciate BOD members who put in the extra time.

Plan for success: Approach with a growth mindset **Steps**: Establish expectations, Monitor progress, Discuss progress, Make adjustments if needed, and Monitor progress

NOTE: To access presentations and documents mentioned in this conference overview, please go to the AASB site <https://aasb.org>; and scroll down to



Respectfully yours,

Penny Vadla