

2019 Winter Boardmanship Conference

February 17, 2020
Matthew Morse

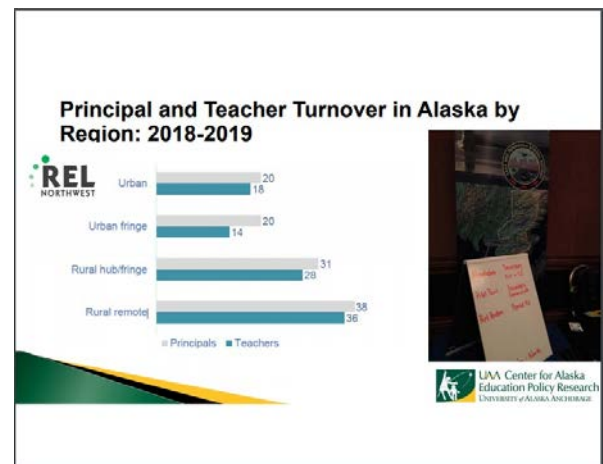
This is a travel report from my attendance at the Winter Board Academy in December last year.

Dec 6-

The first day started with an entertaining meeting with Allen Clendaniel and Michael Wenstrup. Between college football jabs and the professional tit for tat it was very informative. Allen is a experienced attorney with a local law firm that has represented school districts for a long time. Michael is a NEA attorney and has often sat across the table from Allen and other attorneys in collective bargaining for contracts. The biggest take away from this for me is that the Janus decision will likely lead to other cases involving the payment of union dues and union membership. Michael insisted school boards should notify the local union representatives when a teacher/support staff asks to stop the association payments deducted from their paychecks. Allen said he would recommend his clients tell the employee that stopping the payment deductions will not stop them being a member of the union and he said districts should encourage the individual to also let their local union representative know they have stopped the association fee payments. As a professional who has worked in recruiting and staffing for the past 20 years I raised my hand and told Michael I would not ask or encourage my district to give the union information about employees as that is an infringement of personal information. I did agree with Allen that we should tell the employee they should contact their union and let them know of their course alteration regarding the payment of fees.

The second meeting of the first day was School Safety and SRO's

This session was led by Clint Campion and Officer John Carroll. It was very informative about the role School Resource Officers play in schools and what they deal with day to day. Officer Carroll said in his mind his job is to create and strengthen relationships with students to foster proactive engagement. He told a short story about greeting a student and the student later came back to him a couple days later and thanked him for asking and caring because he was having a really rough day. We all know school safety is a major issue in American schools and having a violent event is the worst nightmare for anyone involved in education. It is reassuring to me to know that SRO's are one more tool to reach students that may have issues and need extra help. It is also good for students to get to know police and law enforcement professionals and see they are there for their benefit and not people they should fear. Something we as a district need to keep in mind is there has been cases in which districts were held liable for school shooting incidents if they could have reasonably been prevented. Keeping our students safe and promoting a positive learning environment should be the main focus we all have.



The third session of the first day was The Business of Health- How Health Insurance Works and was led by Curt Heber. Curt is a broker for a local insurance agency that provides different options



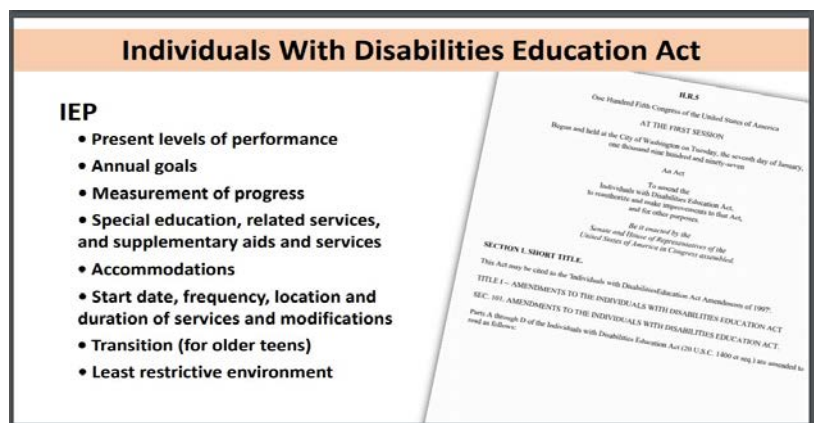
to districts. He was quick to point out that healthcare cost is higher in the United States than any other country in the world and Alaska has the highest cost of the states. Alaska's recent trend has been an 8-10% cost increase year to year. There is a range of benefit options from fully insured to self-insured, fully insured is the least risky but comes with the highest cost and vice versa for self-insured. Curt's talk encompassed the details of fully funded versus self-funded options and the benefits and liabilities of each. With self-funded (which KPBSD has) we assume some of the risk for employee health care cost but we also get more control of the

plan and benefits structure. One way to mitigate some of the exposure and risk the employer takes is to also buy stop loss coverage.

The next session was led by John Sedor about Superintendent Contract Negotiations. Negotiation is a topic I like and deal with almost every day at my recruiting firm. My biggest take away in this is that often Board President's/school boards don't put in the work to negotiate. Everyone is different and what one person may need in their contract could vary greatly from another's needs. In the private sector I cover these bases frequently in negotiating between a client and candidate but I think in public sector jobs the discussion is often not investigated fully. This was perhaps the best session for us (KPBSD board members) as we will inevitably be in the process of recruiting and hiring a Superintendent in the near future. John said we should explore every area of a contract to see what the needs of the candidate are and what we can offer. One candidate may not need health insurance and being that the district wouldn't be paying for that would mean we could offer a higher salary to offset that savings. One candidate may not want a business vehicle and we could offer the salary offset for that savings... many aspects can and should be explored to make sure the district is providing what we should and the candidate is getting what they bargained for.

The last session of the first day was The Law of Special Needs- IDEA and 504 led by Lea Filippi. This session went into pretty good detail about The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, section 504. This act described that a person with a

disability cannot be treated differently and must be provided the same opportunities as others without that disability for anything that receives public dollars. Later the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act came along to further define what the earlier law did not go into specific to education. Special Education requires individualized instruction and that is different from one person to another. Individual Education Plans are how schools and teachers can meet the needs of every student that has struggles.



The second day of the Winter Boardmanship Academy was focused on equity. The four key areas school board members should focus on are 1. Superintendent 2. Budget 3. Curriculum and 4. Policies. This got us thinking about how our individual boards look at equity in these areas and how we might do things differently if changes need to be made.



The next session covered The School Boards Role in Teacher Retention. Diane Hirshberg specifically spoke about Alaska's teacher workforce, teacher turnover and supply, why we should care about turnover, why teachers are leaving, and what we can do to retain teachers. With the ever-present issue of state funding this should be a big concern for everyone. UAA lost its education accreditation and is working to get it reinstated which means local supply will be hindered even more in the short term. Most of Alaska's teachers are prepared outside of Alaska regardless (in 2017-2018 it was 57%). This can present other challenges as it is less likely that someone from outside Alaska would choose to make Alaska their forever home. I believe many

come for an adventure and to see something different however after a few years being here the person will likely miss being close to home, relatives, friends, etc. and will also probably deal with aging parents and other family situations. Bush communities are hit the hardest as the lifestyle can be so different and remote that it provides its own unique challenges to attracting and retaining educators. Teacher turnover is higher with teachers with smaller salaries. Since 2013 fewer than 300 teachers have been graduating from the UA system per year. Studies show in Alaska high teacher turnover correlates to poor student achievement. Things like salary, community involvement, support from administration, resources provided, and job satisfaction are all things that increase retention. It is estimated that teacher turnover in Alaska is a cost of \$20,431 per teacher.

The next session was called Your Role in Equity being presented by Norm Wooten and Jenni Lefing from AASB. Again, they emphasized the focus points for school board members regarding equity are 1. Superintendent 2. Budget 3. Curriculum and 4. Policies. The ways to promote equity are; evaluate your districts data, foster staff diversity, scan policies to see where changes should be made, encourage staff professional development regarding equity, ensure the strategic plan supports equity, and Superintendent Evaluation.