

## **AASB Virtual Leadership & Legislative Academy and Youth Advocacy**

**Institute** ~Penny Vadla~

**Leadership Day - February 6, 2021**

**Welcome** – delivered by **Commissioner Michael Johnson**, Alaska DEED – “Boards are more engaged now than ever. Boards have had many challenges, conflicts, and tragedies. Boards have always been strong leaders and kept our students safe.” He suggested three resources and supports that Boards need to manage our responsibility: Protect local authority- our role of local governing that allows us to make decisions; Embrace and be confident in our responsibilities and hold people accountable; and Look to our own educators for answers.” Also, always live up to kids’ standards and BE KIND! Kids’ voices count so remember to always ask, “Is this good for kids?” This message was incredibly uplifting and supportive of the positive influence board members can have in their districts.

**Superintendent Contracts** – John Sedor – Contracts need to reflect the uniqueness of the relationship between the school district and the superintendent. A solid discussion covered contract language, terms, stipends, responsibilities, etc. Also, noted as essential to districts was the ‘duty and importance’ of the superintendent evaluation procedure. Also of note was that a ‘one year’ contract can hinder a superintendent’s authority.

**Communicating over the “Great Divide”** – Tiffany Jackson, AASB – Have those difficult conversations. Don’t make situations worse. We must think about the situation and respond or face the cost of avoidance! Try to untangle emotions so the conversation is not lost. Remember voice, gestures, feelings of not being heard can have a negative impact. In meetings, nobody should be heard “twice” before others who have not been heard or considered. Be cognizant of the “norms” of other people. Remember to listen and validate or ask questions of a speaker. The community sees these relationships working and this positive communication practice becomes a model. In my mind, ‘these norms and roles of the board’ set protocols for success within the Board.

**How Do We Communicate During These Pandemic Times?** – Pegge Erkeneff, KPBSD – In our society and in these times, we need to have GRACE. As part of this presentation, participants were asked to take each letter of the word GRACE and write the first word that comes to mind. For example, I chose G – gratitude, R – respect, A – advocacy; C – compassion; and E – enthusiasm. It was a great discussion with exceptional words that somehow all tied back to communication. The ‘tone’ we set through grace resonates with people so it is vital that good communication is responsive. During a pandemic or other difficult situation, how do we rise to the charge and communicate effectively? We use stories, patience, honesty, and kindness to guide us. We are all in this together!

**Mindfulness for the School Board** – Kay Douglas, Texas TASB /Timi Tullis, AASB – Mindfulness is important but not always easy to do. Being aware of what is happening NOW = focusing on today. Focus on kindergarten today so we give kindergartners what they’ll need in their future. It is vital to be present in the now so one does not get distracted by side issues not important at that moment. ‘Mindfulness and SEL should be the place from which we serve everything else especially when we realize that everybody is experiencing stress - teachers,

principals, staff, students and beyond. Six Steps to Being More Mindful: breathe, pay attention to experiences and live in the moment, eat mindfully, take a digital detox, listen mindfully, and speak mindfully. Mindfulness is essential!!!

### **Legislative Day - February 7**

**Legislative Process & Context** – Norm Wooten, AASB – Norm, a long-time advocate for children and education, presented a general overview of the 2021 Legislative process and the Senate/House legislative branches: rules, organization, bind/non-binding caucuses, leadership in the Senate & House, committees, and potential coalitions.

**Key Legislative Issues & Bill Review** – Norm Wooten AASB - Discussed the current bills relevant to education: Pre-K programs, SEL, Funding, Public School Mental Health, Academic Recovery, Energy Efficiency, Correspondence funding, Native Languages, Governor’s supplemental, operating/capital/Approp Mental Health Budgets, and more.

**Creating the Message** – Norm Wooten AASB -Tell your 3-5 minute story during the Pandemic, have five (5) bullet points, begin with an ‘ask’ and end with an ‘ask’, and include why and how this will benefit students. NOTE: If in a Zoom with legislators, respect other district’s time to speak, identify self & district, have a shorter presentation as it is better than a longer one, encourage other partners and colleagues to participate, and remember this may be the only opportunity districts have to present their story and their needs. Connections are important to success!

**Coming Together Talking Points** – Jenni Lefing & Lon Garrison, AASB – We met in like size districts, shared our stories, discussed bills, talking points, strategies, while also preparing statements to discuss with Legislators. It is imperative that we share our district successes, difficulties, where we want to be, and what supports we need.

Remember, ‘If you don’t advocate for your students who will?’ Overall, this was a wonderful two days of education and preparation!! I was especially impressed with our students Tegan Retzer and Olivia Davis. They knocked it out of the park & represented the KPBSD with strong voices, passion, and perfection! Well done ladies!