

AASB 2021 Annual Fall Conference & BOD Attendance Report Penny Vadla

AASB offered virtual and in person attendance conference options, and I attended the first half virtually and the last half in person. Both options provided unique, interesting, rewarding and sometimes challenging ways to be in attendance. I gained so much from both options. Virtually, it was super to be in small breakout rooms and have time to really talk through issues; while in person attendance allowed me to connect with seasoned and new board members too. It was so important to be in person during the Sunday Business meeting. My thanks go out to Patti Truesdell because we worked together through this process so well.

November 5, 2021 - Friday - Deed Commissioner Michael Johnson - As always Commissioner Johnson's 'Welcome' was inspiring, honest, and uplifting. His opener, "How are you?" Followed by ..."This year reminds me of a hike! I'm on a hike. I'm hiking a mountain and looking up, I think I'm almost there and I relish it... and then, I realize I'm not there - I'm almost there. All of us had an uphill slog...we're all over the hard part or so we thought. We're not there, and this hike is not over we've reached the crest, we can take a rest; and then... we realize because we have 'local control', we have helped achieve our district success ...and we are there!"

Keynote speaker: Alaska Writer Laureate Heather Lende – Ms. Lende's presentation pleasantly reminded me about the power of words: Poetry teaches us to listen and slow down. Poetry and writing in general give us a window into someone else's world, and it can be very uplifting, thought-provoking, and heart moving. All around us today things are going wrong, but it's important to highlight things that are going right and there are many good things happening because people are acting heart to heart. Many people are making a difference and being kind. My interpretation is that we learn from and often teach through our stories, our successes, our struggles, our actions, and our interaction with others. She mentioned being kind, brave, and thoughtful. In several anecdotes she presented, she mentioned the importance of not always looking at what might be wrong with something; rather, we should be finding or showing what is right. Meet hostility with courtesy! Finally, remember to show gratitude.

School Law – Allen Clendaniel, Clint Campion & Michael Caulfield – Our presenters discussed several topics during this session: AK Statutes, court cases, board policies, students' rights, gun law, discipline and more. A few ideas worth mentioning: Clear board policies guide us and provide us with the steps to take not only when disciplinary issues arise but also when we are revising policies or writing new policies; most important for board members to know is that 'procedural due process' is necessary in all hearings; and our board policy should demonstrate the rules in the process. The presenters also went over the 'hearing process' and how it's extremely important that Board members 'do not' discuss anything with parents, the student or individuals requesting the hearing, read outside information, or refer to Facebook and other social platforms. Board members should only consider evidence at a hearing. In meetings, ground rules should be set so meetings move forward respectfully and safely. Of note was the fact that board members should always be civil, respectful, and focus on children. Alaska statute provides 'a right to education for all students.'

Robert's Rules and Running Great Meetings - Tiffany Jackson & Clarence Daniel – This session was packed with great information: practice equity in participation, do not reply all; track all who have spoken and make sure each person gets an opportunity to speak before someone speaks again. Tiff suggested boards never go further than a motion and 1 amendment. Requests for information to be provided should be made early well before a meeting. Calling the question, vote reconsideration, OMA, and many other issues were discussed.

November 6, 2021 - Saturday –

Keynote speaker: Nikki Whaley Arizona- How Schools Make or Break Their Promise to Support All Students Nikki said, "I learned being different wasn't good. I would have to fit in. My parents told me to be a leader not follower; and if I fail, try again. I moved out at 18 knowing education would change my life. Often, students have to assimilate and shut themselves off to blend in the world and achieve success. This should never be. As educators and parents we must do better. If we're going to do better, we must avoid putting kids in

square holes with round pegs. Every student should have the opportunity to succeed.

What is student achievement? It is parents, confidence, autonomy, individual focus, and support. Student achievement should be intentional, built with lasting relationships because it's a journey not a destination. Access to education and educational opportunities is about helping each student because it's a moral and economic imperative. We need to follow our mission and our vision. As board members we must set expectations and work to attain those expectations. Finally, what was stated and what is very important to me is that we need to look at where we embed "student voice". How do we become intentional and include student voice where it should be?

Working Together to Prepare Students for a Career in Teaching – Kern McGinley (ASD) and Gene Stone (Lower Yukon School District) – Anchorage School District in partnership with the Lower Yukon School District worked together with UAA, the King Career Center, and the Ak Middle College to form Kusilvak Career Academy in Anchorage. This partnership focuses on training students and providing opportunities for a career in culture and leadership. Students are brought to Anchorage, many of whom are first-generation college students, with the goal to train students to be teachers, nurses, and entrepreneurs. There is power in 'place', and the partnership has created a 'place' for high school students from outlying areas can come and earn high school and college credit while training for a career. The KPBSD has many of these opportunities in place, and the district would be able to develop a similar program through continued work with KPC, our Middle College, and existing partners and new partners. Innovation is very much present in KPBSD.

November 7, 2021 - Sunday –

Business Meeting and Delegate Assembly – The Business Meeting/Delegate Assembly was a really good experience. Despite the fact that I was attending this meeting in-person and Patti Truesdell was attending virtually, we made time to review and go over the resolutions prior to the Business Meeting & Delegate Assembly so that we would be informed and be able to represent the district based on the Boards determination of what we would support or would not support regarding new and pulled resolutions. While it took most of our day, Resolutions was a great wonderful process because we discussed many issues and emerged with a clear set of revised resolutions to add to goals we had as a group. This process supports us in our advocacy to provide a quality education for all students. This resolution process is perhaps one of the most important jobs we have as a board so I really appreciate AASB's support and all board members who worked through the process. There were some unexpected interruptions, but we made it through. It was a great process, and I enjoyed working with Miss Truesdell very much. She is a real team member.

Politics: The Art of Compromise – Norm Wooten postponed due to Business Meeting/Delegate Assembly

November 8, 2021 - Monday BOD Meeting – During this full day meeting, we accomplished many tasks. Our final task was to develop our state Legislative priorities based on recommendations from board members from around the state. Initially, we worked in small groups to develop a list of priorities. We then came together in one group to make a list of priorities that would include ideas from all groups, and we presented our collective ideas to AASB. These priorities are available as a resource for all school boards in Alaska.

I want to thank everyone who made this conference so successful. You came together again during a very difficult time to put on a virtual/in-person workshop that was very beneficial in a time when we needed it. Also, thank you to KPBSD for your support. You make this all possible so we can improve our skills and continue to provide what I consider a quality education for every child every day. ~ Penny