

## AASB Legislative Fly-In

Spending time in Juneau with our two student representatives (and their mothers), board member Debbie Cary, and Superintendent Clayton Holland, was a wonderful opportunity. We learned a lot at the two days of speakers arranged by AASB and then had two days of productive conversations with over 20 Alaskan representatives and senators. I know they'll be hearing more from me, and more importantly, I know that we have many parents and community members who will be advocating for prioritizing investing in public education.

I'm thankful for this opportunity to spend time in Juneau with others from our district, school board members across the state, and Alaska's representatives and senators. The time spent there was valuable, both in the information gathered and the relationships strengthened.

### Notes from AASB presentations:

**2.12.22**

#### **Civil Discourse: Leading the Board Term with Grace in Challenging Times**

- Erosion of civility – Choose civility: does not mean roll over or agree. Interact to find solutions.

Michael Johnson, Commissioner of Education

- Conversations around education are passionate, complicated, contentious. They aren't difficult because kids are difficult don't do what we say. It's because adults are difficult, and we don't do what we say. Have the same expectations for yourselves as you do for your students.
- Use our voice with all our heart, but never disregard someone else's heart.
- Who will be the recipients of your civil discourse? Before worrying about winning the argument, learn to enjoy the variety and celebrate the wonder of each unique personality. Listen openly.
- How – Be ethical. Have appropriate demeanor. Be honest. Show respect. Don't distort or falsify others. Don't use emotional appeals without evidence. Don't breach normal courtesy by heckling, grimacing, etc. All of this can be found in our student handbooks.
- What – don't overlook the ordinary. Policy conversations are not more sophisticated than what's happening in our classrooms.
- Don't race past wisdom in our desire to be sophisticated and smart.
- Clarity comes from being captivated by the ordinary.
- Humility is courage. Humility is not thinking less of ourselves. It's thinking of ourselves less.

John Sedor

- "What do you mean by that?" Be curious.
- What is "civil discourse?" Speaking kindly, listening openly, discussion without degradation. Civil discourse (or bipartisanship) is not agreeing with everyone else. It is not agreeing to disagree. Come together as two different parties and have a conversation. Pretend agreement or respect is not healthy. Genuine respect, willingness to listen.
  1. Requires research/knowledge. Deeper the knowledge, the better you can civilly discourse. Don't use someone else's soundbites.
  2. Make a decision/conclusion. Where am I heading? What are my goals?
  3. Acknowledge my assumptions. Every argument has baseline assumptions. Compromise can be found in the "squishiness" of assumptions.

4. Reverse engineering. Understanding my assumptions, what is the best way to get to my goals. This is advocacy. **Advocacy is education.** (More than informing. Transform.) Passion must be built on knowledge.
  5. Stand in the other person's shoes. What are their assumptions? Know your audience. What am I communicating with?
  6. Listen!
- The Open Meetings Act does not give public a right to comment, only to listen. No statutory or right for public comment. Our policies provide for public comment and the protocol makes sure that everyone is heard. If our public comment isn't working, address the policy. First amendment rights, but subject to time, manner, and place restrictions.
  - What public comment is:
    1. To have respectful public comment, the board must be providing a positive example.
    2. Limited total and individual time and introduce is underscoring the need for decorum (from the board, speaker, and the audience).

**Adequate Funding** – if we don't define it, it's a moving target.

- Brainstorming:
  - Funding level in which every student can meet their potential.
  - Appropriate numbers of teachers in appropriately sized classrooms.
  - World events, inflation, and BSA has not been adjusted. Inflation proofing.
  - As a district we need to engineer backwards on a state level and figure out what the funding should be for the BSA.
  - Adequate - equitable, not equal.
  - Literacy, CTE, social emotional development
  - Stability for staff – recruiting, retirement, health benefits
  - What isn't adequate? Cuts every year, because of inflation.
  - **Accountability of monies spent**
  - Maintaining standards, if not increasing
  - Cost differentials for diverse communities in Alaska

### **How to Save Legal Fees...From a Lawyer!**

How to evaluate lawyers –

1. Rate? How long will they take? How many people will touch the file?
  - a. the cost of bad legal advice is hard to evaluate
2. Early advice is often time cheaper than when you are well into the forest.
3. Understand your insurance.
4. Regardless of your view of attorneys, an attorney ambush (if yours) is never good.
5. Three simple rules: facts/facts/facts
6. Single point of contact
7. A "dump" is not just a place to put trash. Put all the documents in order, chronological. Give the attorney all the relevant documents. Don't decide for yourself which documents will be important for them.
8. Look backward to move forward – background checks
9. August - He is better than no one. December - No one would be better than him.
10. Don't cross the Rubicon unless you are prepared. Tenure – once you're there, you can't go back.
11. Given enough rope, many hang themselves.
12. The rule of carrying baggage.

## Board Leadership – Planning Your Year of Governance

Purpose of school boards: to provide local leadership, governance, and accountability of public education by ensuring that schools reflect community expectations and needs, make the best use of available...

Alaska's Board Standards: vision, structure, accountability, advocacy, conduct & ethics

What do we need to do this year? Update policies, approve contracts, set board goals, set federal and state legislative priorities, approve budget, superintendent evaluation, board self-evaluation, curriculum, calendar

School boards must:

1. Must hire and evaluate superintendent
  - a. Complete by March if possible, for the previous year
  - b. Hire – peak recruiting is January to early March
2. Set and approve the district budget
  - a. Organized areas – start in December and conclude in April or May
  - b. Provide stakeholder opportunities
  - c. Take ownership – know your budget, it belongs to the board
3. Review and adopt curriculum
  - a. All year
  - b. Rotate subject areas – refer to policy
  - c. Required expertise – the board will need input from your educational professionals
  - d. Provide stakeholder opportunities
  - e. Utilize committees
4. Develop and adopt policy
  - a. All year
  - b. Rotate through policy sections – refer to policy
5. Board self-evaluation and goals
  - a. When – late spring or early fall is best
  - b. Facilitated – it is very hard to do this effectively on your own

## 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Boards (Stephen R. Covey)

1. Be proactive
  - a. Plan your governance year – calendar events
    - i. Board self-evaluation and goal setting
    - ii. Policy review – how and when
    - iii. Superintendent evaluation, contract review
    - iv. Budget process
    - v. Curriculum review
    - vi. Advocacy (local, state, national)
    - vii. Opportunities to review and discuss student achievement
  - b. Review strategic plan
2. Begin with the end in mind
  - a. What is your desired outcome?
  - b. Board self-evaluation and goals
    - i. better communication and understanding
    - ii. a clear focus

- iii. expectations
    - iv. create a positive board culture
  - c. Superintendent evaluation
    - i. Known process and expectations
    - ii. Timeliness
    - iii. Better communication and understanding
    - iv. Improved board-superintendent relationship
    - v. Leadership retention
    - vi. Improved student outcomes
  - d. Budget approval
    - i. Known process and expectations
    - ii. Timeliness
    - iii. Stakeholder engagement and support
    - iv. Supports your strategic plan
    - v. Supports improved student outcomes
- 3. Put first things first
  - a. The crisis of the next crisis
  - b. Creating order – when and how
- 4. Think win-win – look for solutions and create win-win situations
- 5. Seek to understand, then be understood
- 6. Synergize
- 7. Sharpen the saw – continually grow

## 2.13.22

### Setting the Stage – Our Purpose

- The art of politics is the art of compromise.

### Legislative Process and Context 2022

Norm Wooten, AASB Director of Advocacy

The Pressure is On!

- This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislature. All legislative bills lapse upon adjournment and the introduction of bills begins anew with the convening of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislature.
- 143 education-related bills have been introduced in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Legislature. Every lawmaker wants their bill to cross the finish line and today is Day 27 of the session!
- This is an election year and legislators cannot accept contributions nor campaign as long as the legislature is in session.
- The PFD question remains unsettled. Many legislative campaigns ran on a platform of adhering to the “statutory PFD formula” and in some cases a “back payment” for those years of “shorting” the PFD amount.
- The electorate has a long memory concerning the PFD. Sitting legislators want to hit the reelection campaign trail with a positive PFD message.

One More Legislative Distraction!

- Everyone, including those of us in the room today, are tired of the pandemic.
- It is becoming particularly acrimonious in the legislature.
- A plethora of bills were introduced this session to abolish COVID health mandates.

- These centered around vaccine/non-vaccine issues and the ability of personal choice for each person.

“Everything is Good” (said no legislator ever!)

- Continued gridlock with majority/minority unable to garner votes to pass substantive legislation.
- Civility among House members continues to be elusive. House Speaker Rep. Louse Stutes (R-Kodiak) has issued a warning and is keeping a wary eye on the behaviors.
- With little to no fiscal plan in sight, the bulk of the session continues to be more concerned with the PFD rather than public policy.
- The Rep. David Eastman (R-Wasilla) debate over his Oath Keepers membership is a significant distraction to the Legislature’s work.
- Redistricting for the 2020 census has the potential to alter the makeup of a future legislature.
- The Alaska Redistricting Board released its recommendation by a vote of 4-1.
- Four lawsuits have been filed over the decision of the proposed redistricting plan.

#### A Crowded Gubernatorial Race

- The outcome of the 2022 gubernatorial election could have a profound impact on state policy issues no matter the winner.
- A crowded field of candidates for governor!
- Governor Dunleavy (R), Pe. Christopher Kurka (R), Kenai Mayor Charlie Pierce (R), Former Rep. Les Gara (D), Former Governor Bill Walker (I), William Toien (L), Bruce Walden (R).
- Ballot Measure Two, Ranked Voting, passed in 2020. It will be a much different election this year.
- On January 19, the Alaska Supreme court upheld a lower court ruling affirming the constitutionality of the voter approved Ranked Voting System.

#### Ranked Voting – Primary Election

- The Primary Election will be a “top four.” Voters will vote for one candidate in each race and the top four candidates from each race will go on to the general election.
- All candidates will be on the same ballot, and all voters will get the same ballot, regardless of their political affiliation.

#### Ranked Voting – General Election

- Round 1 – Only your 1<sup>st</sup> choice is counted. If a candidate gets 50% +1, they win. If not, the counting goes to Round 2
- Round 2 – Candidate with the fewest votes gets eliminated. If you voted for the eliminated candidate, your vote goes to your next choice and still have a say in who wins. If more than two candidates are left, counting continues.
- Round 3 – (and beyond!) – If two candidates are left, the candidate with the most votes wins.

“We in America do not have a government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”  
-Thomas Jefferson

#### **Update from D.C.**

Top five priorities: COVID recovery, full funding of IDEA, recruiting and retaining teachers, close learning loss gap, support America’s public schools (opposition to vouchers), broadband push

#### **Key Legislative Issues and Bill Review**

- HB 18 – Teachers: National Board Certification
  - Encourages teachers to become National Board Certified

- Goal is 4% of teachers by 2025
- Schools are required to create a display in the living of all teachers who are National Board Certified
- AASB testified in support
- AASB has consistently pushed back on required district to pay for NBC
- Bill is in House Rules Committee awaiting calendaring on the house floor
- HB 19 – Limited Teacher Certificate; Languages
  - Allows a limited certificate to be issued to a teacher in a language immersion program. Only valid in that specific program.
  - Certificate for a non-Alaska Native language cannot exceed 4 years.
  - Certificate for an Alaska Native language may exceed 4 years.
- HB 60 – Public School Mental Health Education (SB 80)
  - DEED is to develop guidelines for instruction in mental health
  - Guidelines for developmentally appropriate instruction in mental health shall be developed in consultation with the Dept of Health and Social Services, regional tribal health organization, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations.
  - Each district is encouraged to initiate and conduct a K-12 mental health program.
  - No funding attached to this.
- HB 164 – Early Ed programs: Reading; Virtual Ed (SB 111)
  - Implements Early Ed program over a period of 6 years beginning with lowest performing 10% of districts.
  - Districts not required to establish a pre-K program
  - Once a district pre-K program is approved by DEED – it may include pre-K students in the ADM at .5
  - Requires an evidence-based reading program through grade 3 with interventions for students not meeting proficiency. DEED is to develop criteria
  - Increases limit on unreserved fund balance from 10% to 25% of district expenditures.
  - Op Ed in today's ADN on this?
  - Elementary education teaching endorsement must have 3 credits, or equivalent, in evidence-based reading instruction
  - Establishes Virtual Education Consortium. Professional development for teachers utilizing virtual ed will be available
  - DEED will develop a database of virtual education courses for 6-12
  - Early ed grants will be repealed after 11 years.
  - Not enough in this bill about culturally responsive courses? (Edgemon – share what we do that addresses culturally responsive education, and what we do to correct the past issues for native students)
- HB 220 – Retirement Systems; Defined Benefits Option
  - Designed to be cost neutral with a variable contribution rate of 6% to 8%. If fund balance drops below 90% employee contributions can rise from 6% to 8%.
  - Would be open to TRS Tier 3 and PRS Tier 4 and all future state employees. Employees would have the option to enter a defined contribution or a defined benefits plan.
  - Employees could retire after 30 years of employment or at age 60.
  - Health care benefits would remain the same as TRS tier 3 and PERS tier 4.
- HB 259 – PFDs 25/75 POMV Split (only bill moving that addresses the PFD)
  - Retains the statutory amount of the POMV draw from the PF.
  - 25% of the POMV draw would be allocated to PFDs.
  - 75% of the POMV draw would be allocated to the General Fund.
  - Of the 75% to the GF, no less than 50% would go to the public education fund to satisfy the foundation formula.
  - If the 50% of the 75% GF allocation does not satisfy the foundation formula, the GF would make up the shortage.

- If the 50% of the 75% exceeds the foundation formula, the overage would be distributed to districts through the formula.
- HB 272 – Increase Base Student Allocation
  - Increases the BSA over two years from the current \$5930
    - July 1, 2022 - \$6153
    - July 1, 2023 - \$6208
  - This would be the first BSA increase since 2017
- HB 273 – Increase Base Student Allocation Inflation
  - Increases the BSA for inflation each year.
  - The formula for the increase is by a percentage equal to the percentage of increase over the preceding three years for all items in the Consumer Price index for urban Alaska.
- SB 34 – State-Tribal Education Compact Schools
  - A State Tribal Education Compact (STEC) would be considered a school district.
  - Compacts would be with Federally Recognized Tribes (FRT).
  - A STEC must follow all statutory requirements for non-STEC districts.
  - STEC school may not charge tuition
  - STEC employees are state employees, but preferences may be allowed for a member of a FRT.
  - If a STEC has applications in excess of its capacity, it may prioritize enrollment to members of the FRT
- SB 72 – Secondary School Civics Education
  - The state board must develop a curriculum that includes government, citizenship, and history of governmental systems used in the US and Alaska, including those used by Alaska Natives.
  - Students must pass a civics assessment developed by DEED.
- SB 80 – Public Schools Mental Health Education (HB 60)
  - See HB 60 above
- SB 111 – Alaska Academic Improvement and Modernization ACT
  - Companion bill to HB 164
  - Reading interventions are required for students who are not proficient.
  - Unless a waiver is granted, a student not proficient in reading will not be advanced to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
- SB 119 – Oath of Office
  - Would require newly elected school board members to Read the Constitution of the State of Alaska, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States prior to assuming office.