

Career Development Grant Report

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On January 27th and 28th I attended a 2 day conference put on by the Association of Alaska School Boards in Anchorage. The conference was provided for principals of Alaska charter schools and their APC members (Board). The purpose of this event and the function of using this grant was to develop a better understanding of charter school leadership and also the uniqueness that exists between the principal, APC, district school board, and support from the State of Alaska for charter schools.

The agenda for this event included topics such as roles and responsibilities, conducting effective meetings, the Alaska Open Meetings Act, your charter as your policy, advocacy, the principal and board evaluations, and opportunity to meet and share with other charter school leaders about the events, challenges and success they occur in leading a charter school. Additionally, the conference made clear that the AASB knows this is an important public school option and that there has been limited professional development support for APC members and principals.

My participation was of a personal/professional growth nature, in that the conference provided insights and training for me that would be helpful in providing leadership in a charter school setting, which may be an option for my continued employment in the district. I found the conference to be very beneficial in understanding the unique challenges that exist within the leadership of a charter school. The conference was very focused on establishing clarity of roles between the APC and the Principal. Defining these roles and responsibilities was a cornerstone of the training and it was clear that, in many cases, this can be a very blurry line that both APC members and Principals can cross.

Another focus of the training was to stress the importance of following the Charter and adhering to policies and by laws. The discussions were less about informing principals of this importance, but that a principal may need to stress their importance to new and evolving APC boards. In addition to this instruction was information about carrying out an open meeting; information about knowing and following Robert's Rules when carrying out a meeting was presented and developed. This meeting process, while not unfamiliar to me, allowed me to understand how its structure is important to limiting unrelated voices and business within a structured meeting, but does allow opportunities for those concerns to be voiced. I found this information to be useful in application to our Site Council meetings and agenda.

One component that I was not aware would interest me was the information about advocacy. I had assumed the session would be about presenting your school to the public and getting the story out to those in the community. The session did touch on those concepts, but had a more narrow focus on getting the word out to the legislature. I had no knowledge about this need or even how a person would go about presenting important school information to the legislature outside of calling a representative. I was intrigued about the possibility of participating in the Fly-in sessions and sharing in a face-to-face format.

Probably the most important aspect of the conference was the networking that occurred with fellow principals. Many of them share similar stories and challenges even though most had very differing philosophies guiding their school programs. It was helpful to me to develop relationships and connections with potential resources and gain insights about how I may want to structure my time and effort in leading a charter school. Even though I spent 10 years as an educator in a charter school, this class gave me additional background that was valuable for me to in understanding some of the added challenges that exist for an administrator in a charter school. It allowed me to be aware of way I can build success in that capacity should I have opportunity to be a principal at a district charter school.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Dusk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

2/1/17