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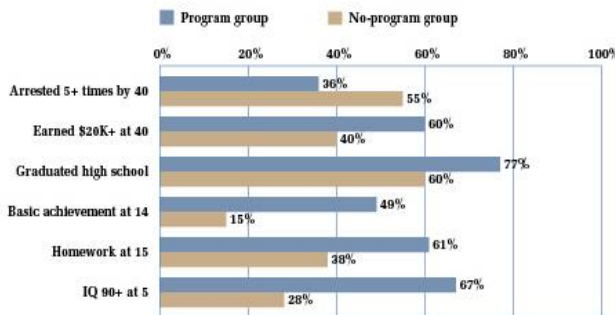
Spend a Little Now or Pay a Lot Later: Early Childhood Education's Essential Role in Alaska's Future

by Jennifer Schmitz, ACSA/AAESP President; Principal, Scenic Park Elementary

At the end of February, I had the pleasure of attending the National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP) Leaders Conference in Washington, DC. It was my second time attending the conference and, once again, I left feeling proud and excited about being an elementary principal. Across our country there are individuals who have chosen this profession because they truly believe, as I do, in providing our students with the best possible educational experiences.

One of the subjects we discussed as a group, as well as with our national leaders, concerns the importance of early childhood education. As Congress looks at making changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), I believe inclusion of language that will ensure high-quality preschool for all students is imperative. Beside the obvious positive effects of getting children ready for kindergarten and preparing them for success in their early years of school, the long-term advantages of early childhood programs cannot be disputed. One well-known study, the High Scope Perry Preschool Study (see figures below), found that "[i]ndividuals who were enrolled in a quality preschool program ultimately earned up to \$2,000 more per month than those who were not," and that "[y]oung people who were in preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school, to own homes, and have longer marriages" (NEA.org/).

Major Findings: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study at 40



HighScope Preschool Study

For the past couple of years, I have been teaching at UAA in the Early Childhood Program. This is a strong and well-attended program at the University. I have seen the passion and dedication in these early career educators. They know what the research says and believe in programs to help and support parents. Among these aspiring teachers, there is no doubt about the benefits to children of their being involved in quality programs, starting at

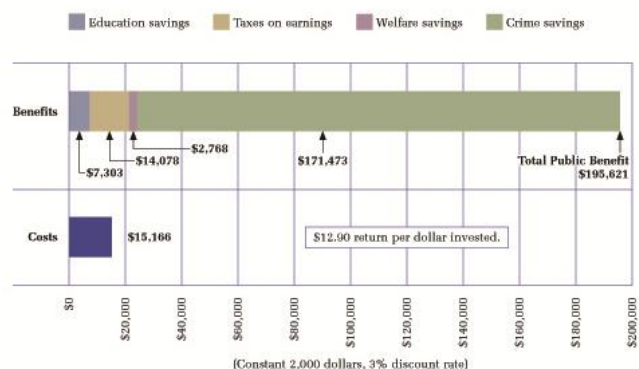
an early age. It is heartbreaking to see some of the teachers we have trained locally choose to leave our state after graduation to work in places that value and fund early childhood education as a part of the overall education plan for their students.

As you know, our state is in somewhat of a financial crisis. Our elected officials are now, more than ever, trying to decide which programs are the most important to our state. Unfortunately, at this moment, preschool and other early childhood programs are on the chopping block. The loss of funding for these programs could have long-lasting effects in Alaska. I encourage you to let your voices be heard. Remind our elected officials of both the short-term and long-term positive effects of quality early childhood programs. Many studies show that quality early childhood programs lead to higher graduation rates.

According to an article in the *New York Times*, "On any given day, about one in every 10 young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates, according to a new study of the effects of dropping out of school in an America where demand for low-skill workers is plunging" (nytimes.com). In the state of Alaska in 2009, the average cost per incarcerated person was \$49,800 (<http://www.correct.state.ak.us>). That same year, our state made an increase to the education funding formula (BSA), providing \$5,480 per student for districts to use to educate our students (nea.org).

Is it only me, or does it seem like some basic funding changes and additional efforts now to prepare our youngest citizens for school could help alleviate the longer-term funding crisis by making our state stronger, healthier, and a more stable place for families?

High/Scope Perry Preschool Program Public Costs and Benefits



HighScope Preschool Study



2015 Alaska Principals' Conference

by Mary McMahon, AASSP President Elect; Principal, Colony Middle School

Mark your calendars for one of the best professional development opportunities coming this Fall for all school and district level leaders.

The Alaska State Principals' Conference is being held this year at the Sheraton in Anchorage, Alaska, from October 18th to 20th.

The theme is "The Passionate Present Principal," but the keynotes and sectionals will offer something for *all* school leaders. This is such a great opportunity for us to come together and learn with and from the best in education.

The conference planning team is working to make this conference comparable to one you will find on a national

level. In fact, two of our keynote speakers presented at the ASCD and NASSP conference this year, as well as many others. We are also extremely honored to have Carol Comeau, our state's ASA 2015 Honorary member join us as one of our three keynotes.

Our conference planning team consists of passionate and committed leaders from three of our state organizations: AASSP, AAESP, and ACSA.

We will be offering early registration this year, beginning in late April or early May.

The following information about our keynote speakers will get you excited for what's to come. This is one conference you don't want to miss out on!

Principal Baruti Kafele

Keynote Speaker—Sunday, October 18, 2015



Recipient of the National Alliance of Black School Educators Hall of Fame Award, the New Jersey Education Association Award of Excellence, and the prestigious Milken National Educator Award, Principal Baruti Kafele is ON FIRE! He has distinguished himself as an award-winning educator, an internationally-renowned speaker, and a

best-selling author.

As an elementary school teacher in East Orange, N.J., Principal Kafele was selected as the East Orange School District and Essex County Public Schools Teacher of the Year. As a middle and high school principal, he led the transformation of four different urban New Jersey schools, including "The Mighty" Newark Tech, which went from a low-performing school in need of improvement to national acclaim—including U.S. News and World Report magazine recognizing it as one of America's best high schools.

A best-selling author, Principal Kafele is a leading authority on professional development strategies for creating a positive school climate and culture, transforming the attitudes of at-risk student populations, motivating Black males to excel in the classroom, and school leadership development. In addition to writing several professional articles on these topics for popular education journals, he is the author of the best-selling books *Closing the Attitude Gap*, *Motivating Black Males to Achieve in School and in Life* and his latest title, *The Principal 50: Critical Leadership Questions for Inspiring School-wide Excellence*.

John Hope Bryant

Keynote Speaker—Monday, October 19, 2015



A natural entrepreneur, John Hope Bryant became a businessman early in life with a modest, but life-changing \$40 investment from his mother in his first business idea at the age of 10.

John Hope Bryant is a "silver rights" entrepreneur and businessman, author, thought leader, philanthropist, and the founder, chairman, and chief executive officer of Operation HOPE and Bryant Group Ventures. Bryant has been an advisor to the last three sitting U.S. presidents, and his work has been recognized by the last five U.S. presidents.

On February 26, 2014, Bryant was appointed by President Obama to serve on his new U.S. President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans, focused on the next generation of young leaders.

Mr. Bryant is the only bestselling author on economics in the world today who happens to also be African-American. His book *How The Poor Can Save Capitalism: Rebuilding The Path to the Middle Class* was selected as the Best Business Book for Economics & Finance for 2014 by 800-CEOREAD, as the Best Business Book for Sustainability in 2014 by Business+Strategy, and as one of *Essence* Magazine's Top 10 Best Books for 2014.

Bryant was named a TIME Magazine "50 for the Future" leader in a 1994 cover story and is an Oprah's Angel Network award recipient.

Carol Comeau

Keynote Speaker—Tuesday, October 20, 2015



Mrs. Carol Comeau started her teaching career in 1963. In December 2000, she was named superintendent of the Anchorage School District, a position she held until her 2012 retirement.

During her educational career, Mrs. Comeau has held a number of district, union, community, and national educational leadership positions.

She's received countless recognitions, including induction into the Alaska Women's Hall of Fame.

She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from the University of Oregon and a Master's Degree in Public School Administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage. She was presented an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Mrs. Comeau has been married to Dennis Comeau for 52 years. They have two sons and a daughter who are each happily married. She has five grandchildren who live in Georgia and Washington.

Following her retirement, Mrs. Comeau moved to Washington to spend more time with her family. She now regularly volunteers in her granddaughter's classroom. She has also volunteered time at the Bellingham Food Bank and the Bellingham Public Library.



Closing Thoughts Before the Close

by Dr. Lisa Skiles Parady, ACSA/ASA Executive Director

Let me begin with some observations of the session and the situation we find ourselves in:

- The fiscal crisis we are in is dire. In the 90 days since the legislative session convened, alone, Alaska has spent almost \$1 billion more than she has earned in revenue. In the last month, the Commissioner of Revenue sold \$4 billion worth of stocks from the Constitutional Budget Reserve to have the cash on hand to meet the needs of the state. This session's budget cuts of roughly \$400 million have essentially been offset by the reductions in the most recent revenue forecast, meaning virtually no headway has been made on closing the deficit gap. One could go on, but you get the picture. Unfortunately, many in the state do not—yet.
- The flip side is that the cuts to education, while a mere rounding error in the big picture (they equal roughly \$130,000 per day on a \$10,000,000 day issue), are truly damaging to schools. We are not talking about cutting around the edges; the cuts are deep, driving into vital school functions, most specifically teachers and class sizes.
- Thus, our state's leadership failed schools and students despite both branches saying "education is among our highest priorities." Instead of staying the course and letting the process work in a measured way, Governor Walker opened with a \$32.2 million cut to education, and the legislature doubled down with a \$47.563 million (equivalent to \$200 BSA) cut to the foundation formula. Particularly troubling was the decision to cut the formula in the last days of the session, short-circuiting public input and Alaska's democracy itself.
- Commitments from the "Education Session" and all of the promises to make education a first priority now ring hollow. Making education a priority means just what it says. Instead, at the time this article is being written, education has been cut nearly 27%—as deep a cut as suffered by almost any other function of state government. I won't belabor new building leases or the tepid cuts in the legislative branch or any other comparative choice, as all choices are hard. Even harder, apparently, would be to stand up for education.

There is no point in bemoaning where we are or belittling those who serve. There was no cup of tea. Always keep in mind their public service and recognize it when you interact with them. This session will go

down in the books as one of the most difficult. What is before us to do is what we always do – roll up our sleeves and find solutions that work for students. Every district in the state balances its budget every year. Every district in the state matches up its activities with its resources, spending within allotted revenue. We need to work in good faith with the coming four studies under HB 278 on education issues. We have to fight the good fight, to tell truth to power.

"As we move forward, let's understand that education can choose to be the victim of change or the advocates of change. Let's collaborate with education stakeholders to be the architects of our own fate."

The truth is kids come first, schools need support, and a dollar in education is not just spent; it is an investment in what matters most—the future of our state, and the children for whom we adults are directly responsible.

My real and fervent hope is that education funding will be restored at some level in final negotiations over these closing hours. Of course, the amount is yet to be determined and won't be what educators are hoping for.

On a related front, ASA's President-Elect, Dr. Michael Johnson, shared the following sentiment: "Sometimes it is better to cut the knot and retie the hook. If Alaska's legislature wishes to untangle the knot of public education accountability and parental rights, they should cut the knot and start over. Attempting to do it one string at a time, or with opt-outs alone, will undermine public education accountability and do nothing to meaningfully increase parental rights. Under the current system, you'll still end up with the knot."

We are in a paradigm shift in education. We have seen this session a constant tension between parental rights and public education regulations. There are concerns being expressed by policy makers regarding federal and state overreach. As we move forward, let's understand that education can choose to be the victim of change or the advocates of change. Let's collaborate with education stakeholders to be the architects of our own fate. Let's speak with a collective, organized, consistent voice of educators in Alaska!

Finally, influencing legislation requires relationships, and relationships are built over time—built brick by brick in your districts with your legislators on your issues. No one can better represent students than we can, as we dedicate ourselves to their success. So while, to date, this session has been discouraging, no one should lose sight of the bigger picture. Legislators will be returning to their districts, where you should devote time to meeting with them to share what you are doing to best serve students and improve your district. Before we know it, they will be headed back to Juneau. Let's use the next eight months to lay the groundwork for what will certainly be another challenging 90 days.

Alaska School Leadership Institute 2015

Institute for Rural and Small School Leaders

Hilton Hotel - 500 West Third Avenue - Anchorage
 Pre-Conference May 26 - Conference May 27-29
 Online registration @ www.regonline.comASLI2015

Integrating with Intention: Standards, Assessments, and Educator Evaluation

Over the past three years, schools and districts across Alaska have experienced a series of sweeping changes around standards, assessments, and educator evaluation. All of these changes were intended to support teachers and leaders in their daily efforts to prepare Alaska's students as college, career, and culturally ready graduates.

Integrating the standards, assessment, and educator evaluation initiatives are critical to successfully accomplishing this mission. ASLI 2015 will engage teacher, school, and district leaders in examining the high leverage strategies necessary to Integrate with Intention.

Alaska School Leadership Institute Purpose

- To lead and support high quality implementation of the Alaska English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards.
- To explore how to create a comprehensive assessment system to support the Alaska Standards.
- To build capacity for implementation of the new educator evaluation system for Alaska schools.
- To collaborate with school and district teams to outline implementation plans for 2015 – 2016.
- To sustain the ASLI professional learning community through role-alike critical friends groups.

In addition, ASLI 2015 will address foundational understandings about:

- defining rigor and ambitious instruction using researched-based strategies;
- designing professional learning to support high quality standards-based teaching; and
- developing structures and processes to integrate standards, assessments and educator effectiveness initiatives.

Critical Friends Conversations and District Team Planning Time will remain important components in the overall learning design



Who Should Attend: Practicing principals, principal/teachers, teacher-leaders, central office staff, and superintendents from small schools and rural districts.

Conference Registration Fee: \$450. No fee for the Pre-conference Day.

University Credit: One-500 level professional development credit will be available.

Meals: Breakfast and lunch are provided Wednesday - Friday. Lunch will be provided on Tuesday to all who enrolled in a pre-conference session.

Lodging: Participants must reserve their own rooms at the Hilton Hotel. The room rate is \$205 per night. A limited number of rooms are available at this rate, book your hotel now to ensure that you receive the lowest rate. School districts are responsible for all lodging costs. Call 800-HILTONS and ask for the "ASLI15" rate code.

Priority and Focus Schools: Schools designated as priority and focus have school improvement funds to support their participation in this event. These grants have already been awarded to the eligible districts as school improvement (1003a) funds. Districts pay participation costs directly and will be reimbursed through EED's existing quarterly grant reimbursement processes.



Advocate for Public Education

by Todd Poage, ASA President; Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District

Lower-than-forecast oil prices have created an immense State operating budget deficit to resolve. Legislators and others are referring to the 2015 session as a time to tighten our belts and explore innovative solutions to this current and critical fiscal shortfall. As a champion of public education, Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) members have accepted this challenge as our opportunity to advocate for regulatory changes in education that will reduce costs associated with outdated statutes and unfunded mandates. Notwithstanding, in 2014 the Alaska Legislature made a commitment to Alaska's families and children by forward funding education to support Alaska schools.

“Our passionate voices must continue to be heard through accurate real-life examples and stories that illustrate the impact public schools have on kids’ lives now and in the future.”

Efforts to retreat from this commitment are now underway, and it is a crucial concern of utmost importance facing districts across our State. The impacts associated with the elimination of funding for public education go to the basic function of responsible budget-building for FY16. Many districts had planned on these allocations to continue quality programs that are just plain and simple good for kids. ASA members need to take advantage of every opportunity to voice unity in support of restoring public education funding. We do realize that public school allocations will be impacted by the State's fiscal deficit; this is the primary reason superintendents as well as like-minded partners are only advocating for funding previously committed to by the legislature. Public education funding should be adjusted gradually over-time according to the three-year funding plan approved last session so that districts have a legitimate opportunity to find creative solutions to accomplishing more with less. As the economy of our State weakens further, public schools will be responsible for providing additional support to address the needs associated with the increase of low-income students walking through our doors. Without the committed funding, public schools will face enormous difficulty in meeting even their basic missions while taking on increased responsibilities.

This year, ASA members have been asked to determine which unfunded mandates and outdated regulations should be eliminated in order for districts to save funds and/or time that will assist in offsetting the proposed monetary cuts to education. We have done our part, seizing this opportunity to advocate for changes to regulations that carry no state fiscal note but cost districts tens of thousands of dollars each year to implement. In conjunction with the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB), a list of unfunded mandates was produced and provided to legislators as well as the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). Now, a bill that addresses these concerns is being discussed as one of the solutions to accomplishing this most difficult and complicated task.

I support the school foundation formula without any adjustments as equitable. Are there changes that could be instituted to make the formula more just? Of course. Should factors be built into the foundation formula to include low-income students or schools residing in high poverty communities? Education Trust-West reports that “[u]nder the formula that Governor Jerry Brown (California) pushed and the Legislature passed two years ago, a school district annually receives a base level of funding for every student plus a 20 percent supplement for each high-need student.” However, opening the school foundation formula to a variety of adaptations (school size, cost factor differential, special needs...) will not be beneficial for the majority of our districts. The negative impact on equity thru the modification of the public school foundation formula will far outweigh any potential cost-saving benefits.

Who will be the voice for public education, advocating for kids across our State who have no voice and who will lose teachers and basic instructional programs (counseling, preschools, music, art, class size...) as a direct consequence of numerous reductions to public education funding? Who will continue to be a faithful advocate for kids and public education? The Alaska Superintendents Association and our like-minded partners. Our passionate voices must continue to be heard through accurate real-life examples and stories that illustrate the impact public schools have on kids' lives now and in the future. I will voice my opinion on our need to adequately and equitably fund public schools until that final legislative gavel comes down.

Thank you to each of you who has made the effort to voice your opinion for educational issues in support of kids across our State; for making the time to research and write testimony to advocate for public schools; for rallying board members, staff members and community members to fight for educational causes; for visiting legislators to campaign on behalf of ASA; and for waiting in Legislative Information Offices for an hour to provide two minutes of testimony. Our voices make a difference!

Thank you for building a united “public education” voice Alaska can be proud of!





Opting Out, Not a Good Choice

by Dr. Stephen Atwater, ASA Past President; Associate Vice President for K-12 Outreach, University of Alaska

Since the election of President Obama in 2008, our country has been increasingly divided between those who feel that government should play a minimal role in their lives and those who feel that it should be responsible for helping to ensure their well-being. The Affordable Care Act is of course the flagship example to illustrate a government action that furthers this division. In recent years, public education has gained a place at this table with its own star, the Common Core Standards. While it is easy to fixate on these two main players, it is just as important to pay close attention to less splashy activity such as the current proposal to pass legislation that will give parents the right to opt of required school activity. If this and other such changes are put into place, the impact on public education will be far deeper than choosing whether to adopt the Common Core.

Led by groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, there is a move across our country and now in our state's legislature to undo some of the basic tenets of public education. These seemingly small steps such as parents opting out are promoted by such groups, and can best be described as a chipping away at the system. When viewed as a part of the whole however, they are significant.

During our last legislative session the body debated the merits of school vouchers and this year, there is a lot of attention on how collected student information may be a threat to privacy. The federal law (FERPA) that protects student information aside, it is clear that there is an

unrest by some in the legislature with our schools' relationship with the state and federal requirements. The current move to empower parents to opt, while logical on the surface, does not help the public school system improve. It is ironic then, that the constant cry for school improvement is being undercut by a proposed change that is designed to undo the very system that is being asked to improve.

In order for school districts to be well informed, they need standardized information. Having partial information on how many children are reading on grade level or are doing math as well as children in Oregon, limits the informed decision making that is a part of the improvement process. It also prevents a district from gaining a fuller perspective on how their education system is preparing its students. It is critical that our graduates do not have a rude awakening after they leave high school. Alaska is not a test-heavy state and nothing in the data collection on reading, writing and math will lead to student profiling. Assessing students in basic skills is a critical tool for school districts. The results of these assessments are one of the ways that the public can determine how well its investment in public education is working.

Public schools have tested students for years; school districts take such assessments in stride and use the results to improve. Let's not use public schools as a pawn to further our social divisions. Our students do not benefit from this.



ASA Members

- **ASA/DEED Summer Meeting**
July 26-27
- **ASA Fall Conference**
September 24-26

Planning for these events is underway! Keep an eye on your inbox for more details!

ACSA would like to say thank you to Laurie Miller for her service to the association as our Office & Membership Services Manager. Laurie will be leaving ACSA at the end of May, and while we will miss her, we wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors!



Laurie Miller (center), pictured with Dr. Lisa Parady, ACSA/ASA Executive Director and Todd Poage, ASA President, at the 2015 Champions for Children Awards Banquet.





Managing Change

by Amy Lujan, Executive Director, ALASBO

In February I had the opportunity to attend the ASBO International Executive Leadership Forum along with several ALASBO colleagues. One of the excellent interactive presentations we heard from was by the Blanchard Institute on Managing Change.

In most organizations, managing change does not go well! We learned that

- in a survey of 350 senior executives across 14 industries, 68% confirmed that their companies had experienced unanticipated problems in the change process;
- 50%-80% of efforts to implement organizational change do not meet their objectives;
- 70% of reengineering efforts fail to get implemented.

Why do efforts to institute change fail? How can we learn to do better?

In many cases, efforts to manage change fail not because of a lack of good ideas, but because of poor implementation. Research shows that, when people see change coming, they have predictable concerns. If these concerns are not addressed, energy may become blocked or misdirected, and the change may never be implemented.

Does the fact that people have concerns mean that they are resistant to the change? Not necessarily. Concerns may flag unanswered questions that need to be resolved to make way for the change to occur. Before, during, and after any change process, concerns arise in predictable and sequential stages:

1. Information concerns – What is the change? Why are we doing it?
2. Personal concerns – How will it affect me? Will I win or lose? Will I get help adapting?
3. Implementation concerns – How long will it take?

How will the organization change?

4. Impact concerns – How do we measure results?
5. Collaboration concerns – How can we get others involved?
6. Refinement concerns – How can we continue to improve?

Research shows that the **first three stages are the most critical** and need to be carefully addressed by implementers. A common mistake is to gloss over these first three levels, but if concerns are not addressed at this stage, group members may “wait out” or even sabotage the change process!

Here are some proven ways to work through the first three critical levels of concern:

- tell me, don't sell me – focus on facts
- check for understanding
- assume people are smart and can deal with straightforward information
- let people vent; what you resist persists
- speak to small groups to respond to concerns
- go toward resisters and learn why they are resisting

Overall, change occurs more effectively when people are involved at each stage of the change process. People will never feel they have enough resources! But leaders can help the change process move forward with these strategies:

- be a role model for supporting the change
- make sure infrastructure is in place to support the change
- find early adopters, promote their success and involve them as advocates
- prioritize; avoid death by 1,000 initiatives
- avoid unnecessary bureaucracy

These days, the only constant is change! Good luck managing change in your organizations.

Alaska State Math and Science Conference

Sitka Alaska



October 23, 24, and 25, 2015

2015 Alaska Math/Science Conference

Plans are underway for the biennial Math/Science conference, with the theme *Navigating the Tides of Change*, to be held in Sitka October 23, 24, & 25, 2015.

Presenters and those wishing to attend should visit the website at <http://www.amsc2015.org/> to learn more.

There will be field trips, vendors, events unique to Sitka, and multiple opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from across the state.

Keynote addresses will feature:



Commissioner Mike Hanley,
Alaska Department of Education &
Early Development



Dr. Rodger Bybee
Lead author of the Next Generation
Science Standards



Dan Meyer
Math advocate – <http://mrmeyer.com/>



2015 Alaska State Math/Science
Conference

Website: amsc2015.org
Email: alaskamathscience@gmail.com

Make your plans now to visit Sitka in October 2015!

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2015 Educational Association Events

29th Alaska Legislative Session Ends
April 19, 2015

2015 Alaska School Leadership Institute –
Anchorage, AK
May 26-29, 2015

State Board of Education – Fairbanks, AK
June 3-5, 2015

NAESP National Conference – Long Beach, CA
June 30-July 2, 2015

ALASBO Summer Leadership - Wasilla, AK
July 24-26, 2015

ASA/EED Summer Meeting – Juneau, AK
July 26-27, 2015

AASB Fall Boardmanship Academy –
Anchorage, AK
September 12-13, 2015

ASA Fall Conference – King Salmon, AK
September 24-26, 2015

AASB Annual Conference - Anchorage, AK
November 5-8, 2015



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