

AASL Online Committee Chair Orientation
WEEK 3: "Being an Effective Chairperson: Tips from the Experts"

Hello!

Your task for this week is below and should be an interesting one since you'll be communicating with your committee members. Read through the tasks then focus on the tips that follow before actually doing the TASK FOR THE WEEK!

TASK FOR THE WEEK:

Using your committee's email discussion list, send a "welcome" message to new and returning members. Here's what to include in your welcome email:

1. Present a brief summary of the group's work for this year, based on the Minimum Intended Outcomes by June 2008 with a possible timeline for the completing the work.
2. Share your plans on how the committee will work electronically as well as face-to-face at Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference
3. Discuss how all members, including virtual members, will play an effective role in achieving the committee's objectives.
4. Ask committee members to introduce themselves online as we did in our first week.
5. CC this discussion list with your message to help all of us make connections between our committees.

Now that you've mastered the 2008-2009 AASL Committee Chair Handbook, we are going to explore techniques to help you effectively communicate with your committee members -- especially virtual members -- and read a few hints from experienced AASL chairpersons. As many of you emphasized in your hints last week, communicating regularly with your committee is very important to help build a "team" spirit and feeling of contribution for all members -- especially for those who will not be attending the ALA Midwinter Meeting and/or the ALA Annual Conference.

To assure continuous collaboration and communication for all committee members, please use your committee's electronic discussion list. All of you are familiar with electronic discussion lists where participants send a message to the list and everyone on the list receives the message, such as this committee chair discussion list -- AASLCOM. AASL maintains individual electronic discussion lists for each committee and those lists are ready to use now. Your staff liaison can help you get started with your committee's discussion list, or contact Jen Habley, AASL's Governance Program Coordinator, at jhabley@ala.org if you have questions about your discussion list.

I have observed that some of the committees are already at work using their discussion lists. It is AASL policy to use the discussion list as the primary means of communication for committee work. The discussion list, when used effectively, is a quick, informative way to solicit information and accomplish tasks.

One of the keys to implementing the AASL Statement on Virtual Participation (adopted January 12, 2001; see page 5 of your Committee Chair Handbook) is utilizing different strategies to be inclusive and utilize the talents and ideas of virtual members as fully as possible.

Here are some suggested strategies for working with all committee members electronically, but most specifically with those participating only in a virtual sense.

- Use your committee/task force discussion list to send the agenda for meetings at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference to all members PRIOR to the physical meeting(s). This should be done as early as possible.
- Request input on the topics from those members who will be unable to attend the meetings physically.
- Immediately following the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, briefly summarize the meeting discussion and committee decisions or actions and post to the list.
- Divide committee/task force responsibilities so that ALL may participate, not just those who can attend meetings physically.
- Virtual members need "real" work to do before, during, and after the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference.
- Establish communication with members of the committee immediately, and communicate frequently. Email is a perfect way to accomplish this. Require a response/reply to make sure that all members are connected and reading their email in a timely fashion.
- Make sure that contact information on your committee's roster is up-to-date with ALL data, including address, fax, phone, email at home and school. Share any changes with your staff liaison. Ask committee members to verify that they are receiving messages.
- Set up committee parameters at the very beginning. Newcomers (and sometimes old -timers) need to be reminded not only of the function of the committee, but of attendance, communication, etc. Minimum intended outcomes should be shared with all members, as they will guide your committee's activities during the year.
- Chairs are required to attend the ALA Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference. (If an emergency situation prevents a chair from attending either of these two meetings, it is the Chair's responsibility to communicate with his/her committee and locate a substitute, work with the substitute to prepare an agenda, and report back progress on tasks.)
- Attend the All Committee Meeting, and schedule additional meetings during the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference, if necessary.
- Plan for your meetings. Communicate with your committee about agendas, dates, places, and times for meetings as far in advance as possible. Work with your AASL Board and staff liaisons assigned to your committee; it will make your work much easier.
- Encourage committee members to participate in discussions and ASK questions.
- To ensure continuity, ask the former chair for any relevant material that can be passed to you as new chair.
- Use the committee's function statement and minimum intended outcomes to make sure that the committee or task force's activities stay on track.
- Know the deadlines your committee or task force must meet.

This week's message was filled with suggestions to help you be an outstanding chairperson and work with your group to meet the minimum intended outcomes by June 2009. Next week, I'll be posting a message about the AASL staff and committee liaisons. These are the folks who will facilitate your work as chair, and help you get what you need.

Have a great week!

Ann M. Martin

2008-2009 AASL President