

## Candidate for Director



### **BRIAN MEE, RSBA**

Assistant Superintendent of Business Services

Pendergast ESD

Phoenix, AZ

#### — **Biography**

Brian Mee, RSBA, has over 20 years of school business experience and currently serves as assistant superintendent of business services for the Pendergast ESD. He has been an active member with the Arizona ASBO for over 20 years. He has chaired several committees, presented at numerous workshops, and served in a variety of positions, including president. Mee also has been an active member with ASBO International for more than 14 years. He serves on the Certificate of Excellence Committee and Leadership Development Task Force, and is vice chair of the Professional Development Committee. He has his undergraduate degree from Montana State University and his M.Ed. in education leadership from Northern Arizona University.

#### — **Vision Statement**

My vision encompasses three specific areas:

##### **1. Professional Leadership**

As an organization, we need to develop school business leaders to be the powerful voice of reason in government affairs regarding matters of resource allocation. Yet, too often, we rely upon other organizations to provide us with data that for the most part is outdated and inaccurate. I envision ASBO being the clearinghouse of data, which all governmental organizations look to concerning issues impacting education operations.

##### **2. Professional Image**

A key factor to our success is for other educational organizations to recognize that school business officials are the experts in school business operations. I believe we need to create an international credentialing program recognizing the importance of the role of the school business official and the expertise needed to fulfill its responsibilities.

##### **3. Professional Development**

With the baby boomer generation at or nearing retirement, our industry is facing a need to train a new generation of qualified business officials to fill its ranks. We need to provide our affiliates a quality leadership program, incorporating the best practices of our industry to assist in training and mentoring this new generation of leaders.

#### — **1. In your opinion, what targeted direction should the ASBO International Board focus on, in reviewing the Strategic Plan?**

The ASBO International Board and staff have done a great job developing a comprehensive Strategic Plan for the future of our organization. The plan provides significant direction and solutions to the central issues facing our organization and industry. I believe each area is extremely important to our association and membership, especially leadership development.

In a survey conducted by ASBO International a few years ago, leadership development was second only to health care as the top issue its members wanted the ASBO International staff to focus on. I believe leadership touches all aspects of our organization, because our membership is comprised of some of the top school business minds in education. Unfortunately, we are seeing a number of school business officials retiring without qualified personnel available to replace them. I believe, as the baby boomer generation is retiring, we need to provide our affiliates a quality leadership education program, incorporating the best practices of our industry to assist in training and developing this new generation of leaders.

ASBO International has taken a proactive approach to this by forming a leadership development task force, which will be submitting specific recommendations. As a member of this group, I am excited about the direction our association is taking. As defined in our survey, ASBO International believes “leadership development consists of educational programs and services that will prepare and promote school business officials to serve in a leadership capacity (in their schools, community, and profession) and encourage growth, and development for sustained educational leadership.”

#### — **2. What are the three top challenges facing school business officials today?**

##### **Funding and public perception.**

It seems public education has a public perception problem, which adversely affects our ability to adequately fund our education system. I do not believe students are receiving a poorer quality education than I received in the 1970s. I do not recall having near the educational opportunities and tools that we provide our students today. Technology, Internet, iPods, wireless access, and many other resources now available to our students were not even thought of back then. So why is the public so reluctant to invest in our schools? Perception. Education professionals are unique. How often do you hear teachers, support staff, or administrators publicly bragging or calling attention to their accomplishments as do others in the public eye? Public educators for the most part are humble and do their job because they believe they can make a difference in the lives of others. (It certainly isn't for the pay.)

So how do we change the public perception? We start by providing reasons to invest in education by getting the word out about the many great things happening in education. I believe ASBO International can play a key role in this by working with its affiliates, businesses, other associations, state governments, and the public to promote what is right in education. As school

business officials, we can take the lead by setting a high standard in stewardship, ethics, and leadership, thereby gaining the credibility needed to enhance education funding.

#### **Unfunded mandates and redistribution of resources.**

As accountability in education continues to be on the forefront of legislative actions, we are facing the challenge to become more creative in securing the funding sources needed to fulfill the requirements. Virtually every time the government comes out with new ideas to “improve” education, we have to redistribute our resources to accommodate these new requirements because, inevitably, these mandates do not come with funding. This is an opportunity for ASBO International to take the lead and be the voice of reason on unfunded mandates. We need to provide assistance to our members in developing strategies to deal with these issues, including accurate data supporting the financial funding requirements of the mandates, and the ramifications should they not be funded.

Another phenomenon occurring nationally is a redistribution of resources with an emphasis on getting more dollars into the classroom. At the same time, we see a shift to training, mentoring, and staff development, which by its very nature is in direct competition with the dollars in the classroom. I believe by working with our state and national government leaders, we can provide the data necessary to show the value of these support services and the direct impact they have on the classroom and achievement of our students.

#### **The rising cost of health care.**

The effects of this issue can be felt in every aspect of our job. Each year we hold our breath when renewal rates are published. We have to decide whether to fund the increases, reduce benefits, re-bid coverage, reduce staff, reduce services, or limit salary increases. In many instances, because of union agreements, the decision is made for us, causing us to reduce staff, particularly support staff, to balance our budgets. Many states have come up with innovative and affordable plans, which could be shared with others. ASBO International can take the lead in assisting affiliates by creating a health care issues task force, conducting regional Web conferences, and working at the national level with lawmakers to address this critical issue.

### **— 3. What role do you see the school business official playing in the instructional process?**

School business officials play an integral role in the instructional process. Resources, or lack thereof, have a tremendous impact on our education system. As a district, our primary responsibility is to educate students. As school business officials, our global purpose is to maximize every dollar to help students succeed by assuring that the resources allocated for educating students is balanced between instruction and operations. We need to do our job so well on the business operations side that teachers, principals, and certified education staff can concentrate on educating students and not worry about district operations such as classroom cleaning, busing, or whether the computers or air conditioners are working.

School business officials should also be involved in the strategic decision-making process of allocating resources to provide a maximum return in student achievement. No one knows better how our resources are utilized than the school business official. This places us in the unique position of directing those resources toward student achievement.