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ESA requests

Iowa flooding: Grant Wood AEA employee relief fund

Ron Fielder, chief administrator of Grant Wood Area Education Agency at Cedar Rapids, had been contacted by several ESAs across the country that have asked what they can do in response to the Iowa floods. Fielder said the agency was flooded, for 36 hours the only access was by boat, and the area where his agency was located had restricted access enforced by the National Guard. The agency staff was able to move computers, Internet servers and other electronics to the second floor prior to the floods. Cleanup may run as high as \$900,000 before refurbishing.

Fielder said that the agency may be able to get some of its expenses back, but his primary concern is for his employees who may not. He has told all who have contacted him that a relief fund exclusively to assist the Grant Wood AEA employees has been established.

AESA Executive Director Brian Talbott and AESA Chief Financial Officer Peter Young said that individuals, organizations, or foundations that would like to assist the Grant Wood AEA employees may make a tax-deductible contribution through the AESA Foundation, an IRS 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit foundation. The AESA Foundation will aggregate the contributions and send 100 percent of the contributions to the Grant Wood AEA Employee Relief Fund. This procedure follows the precedent established in 2005 to assist Gulf Coast ESAs impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Contributions should be made out to “AESA Foundation,” indicate it is for “Grant Wood AEA Employee Assistance,” and be sent to:

Peter Young
AESA Foundation
53 Hotchkiss Grove Road
Branford, CT 06405-5409

Agency seeks Conflict of Interest policies

AESA has received a request from a member ESA asking for examples of Conflict of Interest policies. If your agency has a policy regarding Conflict of Interest or regarding outside contracting by employees, please send a copy to Peter Young of AESA by email at pyoung@aesa.us or by fax at (203) 483-7550.

Agency seeks superintendent transition programs or consultants

AESA has received a request from a member ESA asking if agencies or state associations have developed long-term superintendent transition programs that may include peer mentoring and opportunities for offsite program reviews at other agencies; or, that know of or have contracted with consultants who offer superintendent induction services. If you can provide assistance or referral to a superintendent transition program, please contact Peter Young of AESA by email at pyoung@aesa.us or by fax at (203) 483-7550.

Federal Advocacy Alerts

Medicaid reimbursement expires June 30 – Senate contact needed

The House, Senate, and White House negotiated supplemental budget that included the Medicaid moratorium extension passed the House on Thursday, June 18 and is scheduled for a floor vote in the Senate this week. The Medicaid moratorium will expire on Monday, June 30 if it does not pass.

AESA Executive Director Brian Talbott, urges ESAs to contact their senators urging support for the emergency supplemental appropriations bill, specifying the need for the Medicaid moratorium extension that will allow ESAs and LEAs to continue to receive reimbursement for the health related transportation, administrative and outreach services provided for Medicaid-eligible students. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued regulations to end the program.

Along with the AESA, groups opposing the HHS regulations and supporting extension of the Medicaid moratorium include the AASA, NSBA, NEA, The National Governors Association, the National Association of State Medicaid Directors, and the American Public Human Services Association.

It is the adopted position of AESA that Medicaid reimbursement is an important part of the support services that both ESAs and LEAs provide to eligible students throughout the country. AESA's position, adopted by the Governmental Relations Committee and approved by the AESA Council, is strongly opposed to steps taken by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to eliminate reimbursement for school-based transportation and administration costs.

AESA seeks to extend the moratorium to protect schools from any changes being proposed by CMS until a suitable Congressional solution can be found.

Update: Extending loan forgiveness to ESA teachers in HEA Conference Committee

Extension of the current federal loan forgiveness programs is in the Conference Committee that is considering reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. AESA continues to monitor its progress through the Congress. The program includes the Family Federal Education Loans (FFEL) and Federal Direct Loans. AESA is seeking extension of the program benefits to educational service agencies. It is especially important that ESAs with House and Senate education committee members make contacts urging support.

The issue is that the current law limits loan forgiveness to teachers in “schools” but that definition does not include teachers working for ESAs. Extending the loan forgiveness will allow teachers employed by ESAs who have the same certification standards as LEA classroom teachers to qualify for the same benefit as those LEA teachers in “schools.”

The AESA Governmental Relations Committee stresses that when ESAs contact their members of Congress they urge support of including ESAs in the definition of schools.

Update: S. 1965, Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act in House committee

The bill to protect children from cybercrimes, including crimes by online predators, to enhance efforts to identify and eliminate child pornography, and to help parents shield their children from material that is inappropriate for minors has been sent to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. The bill, S. 1965: Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act, passed the Senate by unanimous consent in May. AESA continues to monitor the progress of the bill and will provide updates as its status changes.

Update: Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self Determination Act expires

The Congress did not include the extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self Determination Act in the House, Senate, and White House negotiated supplemental budget, effectively ending the program.

It is the position of AESA that this safety-net legislation addresses the challenges of school districts located in federal forest counties. AESA supports continuation of the program to ensure a consistent funding stream for these school districts. In addition, AESA strongly believes that any full reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act should treat all states slated to lose funding fairly, allowing for an equal ramp down in all impacted states.

AESA Executive Director Brian Talbott said that AESA will continue to work with the Forest Coalition and other associations to develop a new strategy to address this issue.

AESA News

Summer CEO Conference registration

Registration for the July 21 – 24 AESA Foundation’s annual Summer CEO Conference is still available at <http://www.aesa.us/CEOConf2008.html> . You may book hotel rooms at the negotiated rate of \$179 per night until Close of Business on Monday, July 7 by calling the Vail Marriott (800) 648-0720. Specify the AESA CEO Conference to obtain the negotiated conference rate.

The Summer CEO Conference theme “Building ESA success through design and innovation” will address questions such as:

- How does an organization know it needs design or innovation?
- What is the practical difference between design and innovation?

- What roles does leadership play in design and innovation?
- Why are design and innovation so critical for ESAs right now?
- How do you prepare your organization for design and innovation?

The working conference includes breakout sessions, descriptions from ESAs in two states about how they are redesigning programs for a statewide system of ESAs, and a report from Ted Stilwill, former Iowa Commissioner of Education now with Learning Point Associates of Chicago. He will address recent research on how ESAs in the Great Lakes area are becoming part of the State Systems of Support (SSOS).

Annual Conference hotel reservations tied to online registration

Hotel reservations for the 2009 AESA Annual Conference at the J.W. Marriott Desert Ridge Resort, Phoenix, Arizona, are tied to the online registration process. The AESA conference block of rooms has filled the hotel, so it will not be taking reservations by phone or through its website. The conference dates are December 3 – 6.

When you complete your online registration for the conference, you will then be referred to an online hotel reservation page linked to the registration. You can access the online registration at <http://www.aesa.us/AnnConf2008.html> .

The theme for this year's conference is "Preparing Students ... Delivering Success." The conference will feature keynote speakers and ESA peer-to-peer presentations on the theme in strands that include: Demonstrating Results, Delivering Success, Technology – Transforming Learning, Tools for Collaboration, and Measuring Success.

Perspectives: Annual Reports request

State leaders are collecting data for an annual report that will be published in Perspectives, the AESA Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies. The report will include:

- Legislative actions affecting ESAs in the 2007-2008 year.
- Strategic plans and /or actions taken by the network of ESAs in the state or by some subset of the network (e.g., consolidations, creations of centers that will serve a collection of ESAs in some way, etc.)
- Identification of new services or programs not previously identified with ESAs in the state.
- Special honors, awards, or recognition won either by an agency or by one or more of its employees.
- Legal issues or decisions that are affecting the future of ESAs in your state

Please assist your state leader in the collection of the data for this report; and, if your agency has published its annual report to your web site, please send that URL to the AESA so it may link to the report from the AESA web site. You may email that URL to: info@aesaus .

AESA Business Partners News

Great American Plan Administrators provides IRS 403(b) and 457 plan compliance

Great American Plan Administrators, one of AESA's longest standing Business Partners, can provide ESAs and the school districts they serve with full compliance of the IRS mandated changes to the administration of tax sheltered individual annuity 403(b) and deferred compensation 457 plans that take effect January 1, 2009. Great American Plan Administrators will provide no cost administration of those programs, including third party plan administration provided regardless of the program vendor that will meet the IRS mandated changes.

Great American Plan Administrators is a wholly owned subsidiary of Great American Financial Resources (GAFRI) whose parent company is American Financial Group (AFG). Great American

Financial Resources subsidiaries also include a fixed and variable annuity company as well as several other companies.

Great American Plan Administrators, as required by law, maintains a separate program staffing, financial, and records keeping from Great American Financial Resources and its other subsidiaries. Its reporting structure to GAFRI is through the legal department to ensure full compliance with these guidelines. In addition, it ensures data separation from GAFRI and its other subsidiaries by maintaining its program on separate servers and a separate network.

For ESAs or local school districts submitting paper transactions for 403(b) or 457 programs, Great American Plan Administrators will provide free technical assistance to move to online systems, saving time and ensuring accuracy through customized reporting, allocation changes, name changes and billing; and, access to compliance updates along with financial product education and retirement planning calculators.

ESAs and local school districts participating with Great American Plan Administrators also have free access to Great American Plan Administrators' legal counsel with questions regarding IRS guidelines and plan compliance.

For additional information, visit www.gapladata.com, email AESAGAPlan@gafri.com, or call Lana Woodring at 800 695-1471.

Walden recognized for Hispanic education, announces new degree programs

The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, the only Hispanic educational magazine for the higher education community, has recognized Walden University, an AESA Business Partner and an accredited online institution, as a leader in providing access to advanced degrees for Hispanics. In May 2008, the magazine published a list of the top 100 U.S. colleges and universities that awarded degrees to Hispanics in 2007. Of more than 4,100 U.S. institutions, Walden University ranked 17th for master's degrees as well as overall Hispanic enrollment.

Walden University has also announced new programs offered through its Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership:

- **Bachelor of Science Psychology and Child Development**
The psychology degree program includes 70 percent of its content in psychology topics while completing general education courses that emphasize civic engagement, social responsibility, and global awareness – core to Walden's mission. The child development program includes three concentrations: preschool, infant/toddler, and a dual concentration in preschool and infant/toddler, that deliver an in-depth focus on child development, child-centered learning, developmentally appropriate environments, and effective practices for working with children and families.
- **Master of Information Systems Management**
This program is designed to prepare students for leadership in the creation and management of information systems combining technical and business skills to solve problems and provide solutions in their enterprises working across organizational and disciplinary boundaries to manage the development and delivery of information systems.
- **Master of Science in Nonprofit Management and Leadership**
Students in this program gain the knowledge and skills to lead diverse and complex nonprofit organizations and serve as social change agents in local and global communities. The program's curriculum focuses on understanding and applying concepts, principles, and processes related to leading and managing nonprofit organizations including statistical models, methodology, and program evaluation; concepts, principles, and processes related to budget, finance, and resource development; strategic planning related to marketing, public

relations, and communication; and craft strategies for acquiring, managing, developing, and retaining volunteers and board members.

Walden University is a member of Laureate International Universities, a leading global network of accredited campus-based and online universities. For more information on these programs or Walden University, visit www.WaldenU.edu.

Summit Energy announces education diesel fuel program and major acquisition

Summit Energy Services, Inc., of Louisville, an AESA Business Partner providing natural gas energy management for ESAs and their member school districts, announced it will expand its commercial diesel fuel purchasing program to education customers. Summit Energy provides energy management services for thousands of facilities in industries ranging from education, aerospace, and automotive to government, chemical, food manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, and others internationally. Summit Energy also announced a major acquisition that increases its energy management by approximately \$5 billion to a total exceeding \$19 billion. Summit has additional offices in the United States as well as in Belgium, France, Germany, Mexico, and The Netherlands. Summit serves clients with sites all over the globe. For more information, visit www.summitenergy.com.

- **Summit Energy diesel fuel risk management program**

Summit Energy's Diesel Risk Management Services provides market research and analysis focused on long-term trends and forward-looking projections, proprietary modeling services; proprietary modeling services including pricing forecasts and market recommendations on when to lock in and when to float; risk profiling and risk planning allowing development of a customized risk strategy tailored to your usage; and, reporting and transacting to place orders on your behalf and track positions, create hedge allocation reports, and track them to the market.

The risk management program allows your ESA or your school districts that have an aggregated purchase of more than 45,000 gallons of diesel to lock-in pricing when the ESA or districts determine.

For more information about the Diesel Risk Management Service, contact Gabe Smith, Summit Energy Client Development Manager, and AESA Business Partnership contact at gabe.smith@summitenergy.com.

- **Summit Energy acquisition of Kimball Resources**

Summit Energy acquired Kimball Resources of Houston, Texas, one of North America's largest independent energy management solutions companies, in May. The addition of Kimball Resources to Summit Energy's business operations takes Summit near the \$20 billion mark in energy spend under management, and creates an energy management resource with virtually unmatched leverage in critical global markets.

Kimball Resources, a leading industry player, is a full-service management firm operating from offices in Houston, Texas; Portage, Michigan; Camas, Washington; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The firm manages approximately \$5 billion in energy spend and is active in all U.S. markets as well as Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

Business Member Announcements

TERC: STEM data program with demonstrated student achievement gains

TERC, an AESA Business Member, has developed a program funded by the National Science Foundation and evaluated by independent researchers to integrate its "Using Data" program with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiatives. The researched based program has documented gains in student achievement in mathematics and science. TERC's school reform and improvement efforts embrace teacher professional development; efforts to

change cultures within classrooms, schools, and districts; policy, curriculum and assessment reform; and, collaboration among web-based communities of educators, researchers, and others concerned about the direction of STEM education.

TERC, an educational nonprofit organization from Cambridge, MA, has also announced its Using Data Partnership Program for Educational Service Agencies. The Using Data program will allow participating ESAs to have their staff trained in the research based program so that they may train and facilitate educators to effectively and without bias use the data generated from state tests, SIS systems, formative tests, portfolios and other data sources to make the best decisions for improving learning for all children. Because Using Data is a process and not a vendor-specific product, it may be used for all types of data analysis. TERC teamed with the National Science Foundation and other educational institutions over a five-year period of research, field tests, and contracted engagements with foundations, states, educational service agencies, and school districts to develop the Using Data process now being offered to ESAs.

For more information contact Jake Schlumpf, Using Data/TERC Director of Education and Business Alliances, at 617 547-0430, ext 648, email jake_schlumpf@terc.edu or visit the Using Data website at www.usingdata.terc.edu .

**AESA continues to bring “Best of Class” products to its membership:
2008 SIIA Codie Awards**

Six AESA Business Members won 10 awards in the 2008 Software Industry and Information Association (SIIA) 23rd Annual Codie Awards (<http://www.sii.net/codies/2008/winners.asp>). The Codie Awards are among the highest honors for technology companies as they represent nomination and voting by other technology companies and customers. The companies, award categories and products, and links to the AESA Business Members’ award-winning products are:

- **Apple**
 - Best Education Technology Solution for Productivity/Creativity: iLife ‘08
www.apple.com/ilife/
- **ClassLink**
 - Best K-12 Enterprise Solution: CLiC
www.classlink.com/products/clic/
 - Best Mobile or Handheld Education Solution: LaunchPad
www.classlink.com/products/launchpad/
- **Learning Express**
 - Best Student Assessment Solution: LearningExpress Folio
www.learningexpressllc.com/education/
- **McGraw-Hill**
 - Best Postsecondary Course or Learning Management System: McGraw-Hill Online Learning
<http://onlinelearning.mhhe.com/>
 - Best Postsecondary Instructional Solution: McGraw-Hill Online Learning
<http://onlinelearning.mhhe.com/>
- **Pearson**
 - Best Multi-Media Solution: KnowledgeBox
www.knowledgebox.com/index2.htm
 - Best Course / Classroom Management System: Waterford Early Learning
www.pearsonschool.com
 - Best Science Instruction Solution: Waterford Early Math and Science
www.pearsonschool.com
- **Spectrum K12**
 - Best Education Solution: Encore IEP Service Assurance
www.spectrumk12.com/encore/encore_iep_service_assurance

US Department of Education Announcements

New online learning book launch with July 2 webcast from NECC

The U.S. Department of Education will host a live webcast on its newest release in the Innovations in Education book series, *Evaluating Online Learning: Challenges and Strategies for Success*, from the NECC conference at San Antonio on July 2, 1:30 – 2:30 pm Central Daylight Time (2:30 – 3:30 pm EDT, 12:30 – 1:30 pm MDT, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm PDT). A panel of experts, all of whom represent sites featured in the book, will discuss some of the common challenges faced by program administrators who are trying to evaluate online learning, such as:

- How do you construct an evaluation design that can satisfy the demand for results even while program improvements are evolving?
- How do you measure the success of an online learning resource when there is no uniform way that the resource will be used by teachers or students?
- How do you collect data when it depends upon enlisting the support and participation of teachers and administrators who are widely dispersed geographically?

The book will be available from EDPubs on July 2 either online at www.edpubs.org or by calling toll free at 877-4-ED-PUBS or by mail at EDPubs, P.O. Box 1398 Jessup, MD 20794-1398. To register for the July 2 webcast, go to: <http://evalonline.ed.gov>.

“Doing What Works” web site adds Early Childhood research reports

The U.S. Department of Education's "Doing What Works" Web site recently added a feature that will empower educators and administrators with research-based strategies to help boost their early childhood language and literacy practices. This new feature brings online the recommendations outlined in five research reports previously released by the Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) on early childhood education.

The "Doing What Works" site, <http://dww.ed.gov>, offers a user-friendly interface to quickly locate teaching practices that have been found effective by IES, the Department's research arm, and similar organizations. In addition, it cites examples of possible ways, although not necessarily the only ways, teachers and designers of teaching materials may use this research to help students reach their academic potential.

Innovative strategies for recruiting, retaining, and compensating America's teacher corps archived online

The U.S. Department of Education's monthly webcast, "Education News Parents Can Use," in May focused on techniques for recruiting, rewarding, and developing a world-class teacher: "High Performing Teachers: Leading Students to Success in the 21st Century." It, and other broadcasts are archived online at: www.connectlive.com/events/ednews.

The previous broadcast topics this school year were: Back to School, September, 2007; Reducing School Violence, October, 2007; Higher Education, November, 2007; No Child Left Behind, January, 2008; Dropout Prevention, February, 2008; Math Education, March, 2008; Early Childhood Education, April, 2008; High Performing Teachers, May, 2008; Community Service and Volunteering, June, 2008. Also archived are webcasts from the 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 school years.

Implementation Study of Smaller Learning Communities: Final Report

Authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Smaller Learning Communities program was designed to provide local educational agencies with funds to plan, implement, or expand SLCs in large high schools of 1,000 students or more. The final report, released in May, describes the strategies and practices used in implementing SLCs based on surveys and case studies of the first cohort of grantee schools funded under this program, as well

as analysis of annual performance reports submitted by SLC grantees. The study examines the principal strategies, models, and practices that these schools implemented, the factors facilitating and inhibiting implementation in SLC schools, and how outcomes for SLC schools, as measured by student achievement and school behavior, change over time. The report is available for download at: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oepd/ppss/reports.html#slc> .