

Improving American Education through Educational Service Agencies



Selected examples of Educational Service Agency support provided by members of the Association of Educational Service Agencies' Council, Governmental Relations Committee, and former Council and Committee members

A White Paper prepared for the US Department of Education

January 2010

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The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA), the national association representing 553 service agencies in 45 states throughout America, seeks to work more closely with the U.S. Department of Education to increase the ability of service agencies to assist local schools/districts in their efforts to create world-class educational achievement in American schools. The members of AESA are recognized in federal law in the No Child Left Behind Act, Higher Education Act, Individuals with Disabilities Act, and Perkins Act, provide services and support to school districts, and in many states, extend their reach to economic development and job training programs.

Designing a Preferred Future through Educational Service Agencies

Educational Service Agencies are the vital link in state and national efforts to take all students, public and private, to the highest levels of academic achievement and personal development. In recent years, several states with well-developed systems of Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), have subjected these agencies to careful legislative review and analysis. The purpose of this review and analysis was to:

1. Determine whether ESAs represent an effective investment in school improvement strategies;
2. Identify how ESAs assist in improving student learning; and,
3. Quantify how ESAs assist cost saving strategies for school districts through creating greater economies of scale.

States, including Nebraska, Washington, Iowa, Michigan, New York, and Texas have demonstrated, regardless of the metrics used in the evaluation, the importance of the service agency system to the states' efforts in providing a high quality, affordable system of education.

School systems work best at identifying and implementing successful school improvement strategies when there is an ESA that can assist them in the identification and diagnosis of operational elements that contribute to; or, hinder success. America's Educational Service Agencies have performed these tasks for over a quarter of a century. We believe ESAs can be enhanced and expanded as a strategic component of fundamental educational reform for American education.

In the 45 states where they exist, ESAs are recognized as critical drivers of educational change! The trend has been, and continues to be, for more states to recognize the benefits of establishing and investing in Educational Service Agencies. Many school districts lack the internal capacity to assess all functions of the system and, by itself cannot provide the new knowledge and skills necessary to achieve continuous improvement. Therefore, ESAs are stepping forward as a critical partner and link to assure success for all students.

Educational Service Agencies across the country are assisting local school districts and private schools by meeting the four priorities established through the AARA Investing in Innovation Fund.

1. Achieving Equity in Teacher Distribution

- **ESAs operate some of the largest and most successful alternative certification programs in the United States.**

In a 2005 study of Texas teachers who received nontraditional teaching certificates who had at least 3 years experience, it was reported 37% were trained through a regional service center (the ESAs of Texas), 29% through a for-profit entity; 23% through a university-based post baccalaureate program; 12% through a community college; 1% through a school district. Note: Percentage do not equal 100 due to rounding. (Zientek, L.R. (2007). *Preparing High-Quality Teachers: Views From the Classroom*. American Educational Research Journal, 44(4), pp. 959-1001.)

Each of the 20 education service centers in Texas either offers its own alternative certification program for teachers or facilitates one offered through another Texas ESC. For example, the Region 4 ESC program in Houston is also offered through ESCs in Wichita Falls, San Angelo, Amarillo, and Lubbock. Region 4 annually helps certify approximately 1,000 individuals as teachers, principals, and superintendents ranking it one of the top five producers of educators in Texas.

Other examples include:

- In Colorado all of the full-service BOCES (the ESAs of Colorado) provide Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs for member districts. Additionally the BOCES have partnered with higher education institutions to develop an online program to allow Speech Language Assistants to work toward a Speech Language Pathologist Certification.
 - In Massachusetts the Educational Service Agencies provide alternative licensure in special education and administration. For example Hampshire Educational Collaborative has licensure programs in reading, English as a second language, middle and high school mathematics and science, English/language arts, and all levels of administration. Hampshire Educational Collaborative has over 100 graduates working in high need urban districts, as well as graduates working in rural and suburban districts and institutional settings.
 - In Pennsylvania the Intermediate Units (the ESAs of Pennsylvania) have operated Emergency Substitute Teacher Consortium for 11 years, and provide certification for English as a Second Language, Child Development Associate, Nonviolent Crisis Prevention Intervention, Level 1 to Level 2 teacher certification, and masters equivalency graduate courses.
- **ESAs conduct teacher recruitment efforts for their member LEAs. Examples of teacher recruitment efforts include:**
 - In Arizona, the Yavapai County Office of Education lists LEA openings on its web site in an attempt to provide a one stop look at available positions; Maricopa County Office of Education provides teacher candidates from the Phoenix metropolitan area with information about jobs in schools in outlying areas and the benefits of working and living in those areas, and partners with the US Department of Education and US Department of Defense “Troops to Teachers” program to place veterans completing teaching certification programs.
 - Nineteen of Texas’ 20 ESCs offer resources to assist districts in advertising and recruiting teachers for their districts, including web-based vacancy postings, applicant databases, and job fairs. Region 4 attends more than 40 university job fairs a year in an effort to recruit graduating teachers for the 54 school districts in its region. It also holds an annual job fair annually. It attracted over 4,000 educators in June 2009.

- In Massachusetts the Hampshire, Cape Code, and Merrimack Education Center conduct administrator searches for member districts.
 - Pennsylvania Intermediate Units coordinate posting of LEA job openings on PAeducator.net, an online clearinghouse.
 - In Washington, Educational Service Districts operate online job opening listings for teachers and administrators, along with other educational opportunities including environmental science and education positions, Washington Reading Corps for early childhood education, internships through LINKS AmeriCorps, and substitute teacher placement cooperatives.
 - Many of the Colorado BOCES conduct or assist with teacher recruitment efforts for member districts, particularly in difficult to fill jobs in special education and ESL.
 - In West Virginia all Regional Educational Service Agencies provide recruitment efforts for prospective teachers and administrators through electronic and print media.
- **ESAs are the largest provider of professional development training in the nation.** Professional development historically has been one of the first services provided in state constitutions or authorizing statutes for Educational Service Agencies. For example, in 1867 Michigan the three responsibilities of a county superintendent were: 1. Promote school improvement, 2. Conduct professional development, and 3. Improve student attendance (Spencer, D.A. (2008). *The Monroe County Intermediate School District: A Case Study*. Unpublished Doctor of Education Dissertation, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI. p. 239).

Data from other studies including the fall 2007 issue of Perspectives, a research journal published by the Association of Educational Service Agencies, the 2005 History of the Association of Educational Service Agencies: 25th Anniversary, and a 2006 study of the Role of Educational Service Agencies in Teacher Professional Development conducted by Hezel Associates on behalf of PBS TeacherLine and the US Department of Education.

The Hezel Associates study found “ESAs play a number of roles in providing professional development to both teachers and instructional coaches, including: direct, centralized training services; group licensing of online software; cooperative purchasing of training; and technical support for hardware, software and connectivity issues.” The study reported that among ESAs studied, 97% of training was tailored to individual school or district needs, 70% of the agencies provide training to building-level providers of professional development in a train-the-trainer model to extend the reach of the training, and the top four curricula categories of training were mathematics, 74.1%; ELA, 53.7%; science, 53.7%; and social studies, 40.7 percent. (See: <http://www.hezel.com/ESA/>)

Other examples of professional development include:

- In 2008-09, Texas’ system of 20 Education Service Centers provided training to 1,058,997 individuals and also provided 4,239,413 hours of technical assistance to clients. The Texas Education Agency participated in a survey to measure the satisfaction of Superintendents and Charter School Directors with Texas Regional Education Service Centers. The survey was conducted from September 14, 2009 through October 30, 2009. Attendees of education service center trainings across the state were asked to rate their levels of agreement with the statement, “I would recommend this training session to my colleagues.” Out of a total of 698,564 respondents, 93% favored the program; 68.54% stated “Strongly Agree,” and 24.49% stated “Agree”.

- Last year, Grant Wood AEA in Cedar Rapids, Iowa served 33 public school districts and 22 private schools. These schools employ approximately 5,000 teachers. The agency offered 385 different professional development classes and learning experiences for which teachers could register. These classes drew 8,587 participants, which is a rate of over 1.7 classes taken per teacher.
- The Regional Office of Education 28 serving Bureau, Henry, and Stark Counties in northwestern Illinois provides professional development across a variety of content areas: Administrator's Academy, Arts for the Classroom, Early Childhood, Fine Arts, Gifted Education, Language Arts, Mathematics, School Improvement, Science, Social Studies, Special Education, and Technology.
- In Massachusetts the Hampshire Educational Collaborative provides over 2,000 person/days of standards-based professional development to rural and small district educators annually. The Hampshire Educational Collaborative is the largest provider of professional development in the state with a primary focus on curricular areas of reading, ELA, mathematics, US History, and local history. Additionally the Collaborative Center for English Language Education provides assistance to large urban districts including Boston, the state juvenile justice education program, as well as under-resourced rural districts. The Center will provide 60 hours of state-mandated training to over 4,000 content area teachers this school year.
- The LEARN Regional Educational Service Center in Connecticut in January, 2010 provided 30 professional development sessions in the curricular areas of Connecticut Professional Development, mathematics, reading, Early Childhood/Early Care and Education, language arts, paraprofessional, and health.
- In Arizona the County Offices of Education provide training to local districts. Examples include Pima County reaching 13,123 teachers, 867 administrators, and 2,818 other educators in 1,522 activities and Pinal County providing 323 workshops or meetings for 15,926 educators in 2008-2009.
- The Lamoille Area Professional Development Academy of Vermont provides both face-to-face and online trainings. In addition, it provides customized contracted services for individual schools, districts, supervisory unions, and human service organizations to meet their unique professional needs.
- In Pennsylvania Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5 provided 731 professional development activities in 2008-2009 to 12,286 participants, including videoconferencing and paraprofessional training. Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 provided professional development that included teacher's assistants obtaining Child Development Associates degrees; or in staff obtaining the Family Development Credential through Cornell University.
- Southeast Education Alliance in North Carolina provides services to 12 rural school districts. Its January 2010 professional development focus is on Teacher Evaluation Instrument Training offered in collaboration with the state Department of Public Instruction.
- High Plains Regional Education Cooperative in New Mexico in January 2010 has scheduled professional development in DIBELS, Edo-Class, Literacy, Professional Learning Communities, Strategic Planning, Special Education Law, Positive Behavioral Support, and Integrating Technology. It also provides video trainings.
- Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) an ESA in Hawaii provides professional development not only for 10 Pacific island political entities whose affiliation ranges from statehood (Hawaii) to free association as independent nations, but receiving

US Department of Education Title I and other funding through post-World War II treaties such as the Northern Mariana Islands. “School” may mean a modern, well-equipped building or a wooden platform with a thatched room and no electricity. “Teacher” may mean anyone from a high school graduate to a Ph.D. Professional development is provided on site, online, by satellite, and by conferences.

- In New Jersey, the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission (MRESC) serves approximately 100 school districts and municipalities throughout New Jersey. Established in 1977, the MRESC provides specialized, auxiliary and remedial services to thousands of eligible special needs students, including a comprehensive Professional Development Academy, (PDA) and the Collaborative Educational Services (CES) program, helping districts offer educational programs for special needs students within their neighborhood schools.

2. Improving the Collection and use of Data

- **ESAs throughout the nation operate data systems on behalf of the school districts they serve. Examples include:**

- The Regional Service Center Computer Cooperative (RSCCC) software managed by Region 20 ESC in San Antonio is one of the most widely used school administrative software applications for business and student applications in the state of Texas, used by over 700 school districts and charter schools with support provided by 19 of Texas’ 20 ESCs.
- In New York the Regional Information Centers operated by the BOCES provide infrastructure and support that includes the state’s Basic Educational Data System (BEDS), New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool (nySTART). Additionally the BOCES provide assistance to school district administrators and building principals in the interpretation of the data.
- Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania utilize data systems in support of Head Start and Pre-K programs, including the DART Program for Early Childhood Education analysis of month data reports to monitor programs and inform decisions regarding instructional strategies. DART data is shared with parents, supervisors, and other team members to demonstrate child outcomes.
- Grant Wood AEA (AEA10) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa provides a number of data systems. This includes a student assessment system, which allows school administrators to drill down into ITED and ITBS scores by building, grade, classroom and individual student. All of the public school districts served by AEA10 use this system. AEA10 also provides payroll and accounting services for the majority of the districts in its service area as well as for the northeast Iowa Arch Diocese and numerous districts across the state; is the provider of the statewide IMS data system, which is used by all schools across the state to record Individual Education Plan data; and, AEA10 provides PowerSchool with extra features programmed into it for its client participants. PowerSchool allows parents and students access to grade information as well as student assignments.
- Six collaboratives in Massachusetts were funded by the state to hire and house data specialists who work with underperforming schools, teachers, and administrators to understand, analyze, and use data more effectively in the classroom.
- The Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC), formed 40 years ago, is operated through collaboration of the state’s Educational Service Districts to provide data services, manage district finances, and support student data systems including special education reporting for 290 public school districts and private schools.

- **ESAs are assisting the local school districts by training school personnel and their communities in the use of both summative and formative data analysis. Examples include:**
 - The 20 Educational Service Centers in Texas provide a wide range of formative and summative data analysis support to school districts. AEIS-IT is a comprehensive test data analysis tool for the Texas accountability assessments managed by Region 10, Richardson, and supported by 15 Texas ESCs. DMAC Solutions consists of a suite of web-based applications developed to assist educators with their assessment and curriculum needs. DMAC is a product of Region 7, Kilgore, and is supported by nine Texas ESCs. WebCCAT, managed by Region 10, Richardson, and supported by 16 Texas ESCs, provides educators with a repository of more than 33,000 questions mapped to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that can be used to create assessments of student ability in the areas of language arts, math, science and social studies for grades 3-11.
 - Region 4 at Houston has provided professional development to districts on the use of performance assessments that may be used for formative or summative assessments and maintains a science website http://www.escweb.net/tx_bm/science/ social studies website http://www.escweb.net/tx_bm/social/, math website www.mathbenchmarks.org, and a reading language arts website www.readingbenchmarks.org which are available for use by any school district or charter school.
 - The Iowa AEAs developed the Iowa Collaborative Assessment Modules, which are standards-referenced assessment modules for reading and mathematics. Districts can choose assessment modules to meet state requirements for "multiple measures" and to round out their comprehensive assessment system. AEA10 offers a variety of pre-programmed spreadsheets that teachers can download and use to monitor and assess student progress. To view the spreadsheets and instructions for how to use these data tools please see: <http://www.aea10.k12.ia.us/curr/qualitydatatools.html>. AEA10 also provides a wealth of academically relevant data on its Website. To see the wide assortment of links to data, follow this link: <http://www.aea10.k12.ia.us/datasources/dsindex.html>.
 - The Texas Math and Science Diagnostic System (TMSDS) is a free online tool from the Texas Education Agency and supported by ESCs that contains assessments and TEKS-aligned question item bank from grades 3 through high school in the subjects of math and science. This tool supports on-going formative assessments to allow educators to determine students' skill levels, analyze the results of those assessments, and act on the results by re-teaching or extending instruction to meet the students' needs.
 - All of the Colorado BOCES provide training and support to administrators, principals, teachers, and support staff on how to use formative and summative data to inform and improve instructional strategies.
 - The Minnesota Service Cooperatives use several strategies with schools, such as facilitating data retreats, providing assistance with using NWEA assessments, providing training and guidance in using the state educator portal to extrapolate and analyze testing and other student data, conducting the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum, curriculum mapping, and other strategies to compare and connect curriculum with state standards and assessments.
 - Formative and summative testing are generally focused on criterion based standards. Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 in Pennsylvania uses formative and standardized, norm-referenced summative assessments for early childhood education. All assessments are developmentally appropriate for prekindergarten-age children. The assessment measures

are applied for their intended purposes including: individual and group planning, measurement of progress over time points, determination of progress against individual goals, measurement of progress within a group, assessment of progress within a curriculum, and/or eligibility for a categorical state or federal program. These, and norm referenced clinical tests, are typical of the testing done in early childhood programs operated by ESAs nationally.

- **ESAs help local districts leverage both their technology and E-Rate dollars. Examples include:**

- Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania has provided E-Rate services for over 10 years. Its fulltime staff has prepared over 4,000 applications requesting more than \$20 million in discount funds for districts participating in its cooperative services that meets all program rules and guidelines and among other services, files all forms and maintains documentation for local school districts to ensure consistency and compliance.
- Each of Texas' 20 ESCs help improve the efficiency and economy of the school districts they serve through a variety of ways including E-Rate assistance through technology network consortiums providing internet access and email access, web hosting, content filtering, and other Title IID services including professional development, data backup/disaster recovery, distance learning, and other telecommunications services.
- Through its cooperative purchasing programs, the Massachusetts collaboratives purchase technology hardware and software for its member districts and others at a considerable savings in cost.
- Educational Service District 101 in Washington provides E-Rate application compliance services to a multi-state consortium of schools in the Pacific Northwest.
- East Bay Educational Collaborative in Rhode Island, like most ESAs across the nation, maintains a Technology Resource Center with a computer lab of both Windows PC and Apple Macintosh operating systems to provide opportunity for software demonstration and computer training. Additionally, East Bay Educational Collaborative serves as an adaptive technology resource for demonstration of special education technologies. Most states have an ESA, or a program coordinated through ESAs, for this purpose for special education teachers statewide.
- Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) in Connecticut provide programs from high tech infrastructure to desktop support for its school districts including network/infrastructure planning and evaluation to leverage technology resources.
- The state of Iowa distributes its E2T2 dollars through consortiums. Grant Wood AEA provides additional technology hardware and professional development for 31 of its 33 school districts. Additionally, Grant Wood AEA assists schools in maximizing Microsoft Settlement dollars that provide schools with high free and reduced student populations with additional technology funding, and negotiates prices and provides discounts on purchasing technology through the Iowa Educator Consortium. To see more information about this cost-saving initiative by the Iowa AEAs, see: <http://www.iec-ia.org/>
- Region 1, Edinburg, Texas has established a partnership with Microsoft Corporation and Insight to resell productivity software and all Microsoft related software to local education agencies. With this partnership school districts can purchase software at a discounted rate and allow for their employees and students to purchase software for personal use at a lower cost.
- In New Jersey Educational Service Centers provide training for district and building level administrators on application requirements and eligibility.

3. Improving the Quality of Standards and Assessments

- **ESAs are the link between local educational agencies and state education agencies with the unique perspective of local program delivery, regional macro analysis of needs based on the multiple school districts served, and direct connection to state and national educational goals. For example:**
 - The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) executive director has been asked by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to serve as project manager for California's Race to the Top application.
 - Iowa law mandates the accreditation of each of the state's 10 AEA's. The accreditation process requires the AEA's to set educationally related goals for the agency, based on local area needs. They are further required to measure their progress on how they are achieving those goals and to report this progress on an annual basis, via an on-line annual progress report system provided by the Iowa Department of Education. To see examples go to: https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/web/aea_apr_summary_staticweb_wrap.asp
 - The Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Department of State Initiatives provides policy guidance and program support for statewide activities from pre kindergarten to college and career readiness. The focus is on efforts that support the academic achievement of all students. Texas ESCs act as liaisons between districts and TEA for these state initiatives which includes after or extended school programs, communities in schools, dropout prevention and recovery, early childhood, limited English proficient student success, P-16, and many others. The Texas Regional Math and Science Collaboratives (TRC) is a statewide network of 61 regional projects that provide professional development in science and mathematics. TRC projects are partnerships between high-need local education agencies, institutes of higher education, the 20 regional educational service centers and local business supporters.
 - In Ohio, Educational Service Centers have been aligned into regional State Support Teams, which include several county ESCs. For example, Hamilton County ESC serves as the fiscal agent for State Support Team Region 13 that includes Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, and Warren counties. The Region 13 State Support Team is responsible for the regional delivery of school improvement, literacy, special education compliance, and early learning and school readiness services to districts using the Tri-Tier Model, a differentiated technical assistance structure of support based upon need. The team works through the Office for Exceptional Children, Office of Literacy, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness and the Office of Field Relations by providing technical assistance and professional development. The SSTs include staff and services formerly provided by the Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs) and the Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs).
 - Ohio's ESCs also provide technical assistance and training on behalf of the Ohio Department of Education through the Ohio Improvement Project.
 - In Oregon, Northwest Educational Service District in collaboration with the Office of the Governor, Office of the Department of Education, Oregon University System, and the Oregon Association of Educational Service Districts works with the Oregon Education Enterprise Steering Committee (EESC). The four areas of programs facilitated through the EESC are programs for children with special needs, technology support, school improvement services, and administrative and support services.

- **ESAs in many instances provide the regional infrastructure for data analysis and formative assessment training for teachers, principals, and administrators of local educational agencies they serve. Examples include:**
 - With the development of the Iowa Core Curriculum, AEA curriculum consultants have provided ongoing workshops for superintendents, principals and curriculum directors for local districts to help them understand how their district standards align with Iowa Core Curriculum standards. In addition, consultants are helping the districts to plan modifications to their course offerings so that the students' classroom work meets or exceed the Core Curriculum.
 - As noted previously in the discussion of the training of school personnel and communities in the use of both formative and summative data analysis agencies provide statewide and regional services. The examples previously discussed include Region 4 at Houston, The Texas Math and Science Diagnostic System, Colorado BOCES, Minnesota Service Cooperatives, and Pennsylvania Intermediate Units.
 - Additionally, an example of a data-driven process is the "Campus Snapshot" provided by Region 16 ESC, Amarillo, Texas, which provides schools with a comprehensive, objective analysis of the current state of the school and its capacity to meet the needs of its students.

- **ESAs provide professional development on implementing instructional strategies aligned to standards.**
 - In Arizona, Yavapai County conducts annual assessments of the effectiveness of its programs for Advance Placement, AZSEA, and MSP grants that provide intense levels of professional development demonstrating best professional practices aligned to state standards. Other county offices provide similar workshops, all of which integrate technology
 - Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania provide professional development on implementing instructional strategies aligned to standards including the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaches (PIIC). Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 curriculum, instruction and professional Development staff facilitated the development of curriculum frameworks in mathematics, literacy, early childhood and science that are integral components of Pennsylvania's Standards-Aligned System (SAS).
 - The Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative (TESCCC) is comprised of a team of 15 Texas ESCs. TESCCC has developed CSCOPE, a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum support system. Lessons are all aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Participating ESCs provide training and support for the 619 districts using CSCOPE.
 - In Ohio the ESCs provide professional development for local school districts to meet state curricular standards.

- **ESAs provide these services to all school districts, urban, suburban or rural. Including the 9,600 school districts in the United States with 3,000 or fewer students (75% of the nation's 12,800 school districts); school districts that generally do not have staff capacity to provide these services on their own. For Example:**
 - The six districts in La Paz County, Arizona range in size from about 40 – 1,800 students. Five of the six districts are under 300 students. The entire county is very rural with only two incorporated towns. Teachers in all of the districts wear many hats and have little access to collaboration with other teachers in the same/similar grade levels. Additionally,

due to budgetary limits and student numbers, many teachers must teach combination grade level classes. Staff capacity is very limited when it comes to providing professional development and other services – outside resources are necessary. La Paz County ESA provides ongoing services throughout the year versus the high cost of bringing in outside consultants who have limited time and lack understanding of the local demographics.

- The Texas ESCs serve a total of 1,245 school districts, of which 990 or 79.5%, have student enrollments of 3,000 or fewer students. The Texas Virtual School is a web-based, statewide initiative partnered by 14 of the state's Education Service Centers to provide online courses to students (and professional development for educators). Region 10 ESC, Richardson, and ESC 4, Houston, facilitate delivery of online courses, provide information to stakeholders, and provide training for teachers to teach online courses.
 - Educational Service District 101 in eastern Washington provides services to 59 LEAs in seven counties covering nearly 14,000 square miles with school districts ranging from rural K-6 school districts with an enrollment of 9 students to urban districts with enrollments up to 30,000 students.
 - Additionally, ESAs often provide juvenile detention and education services for the criminal justice system. At Maricopa County in Arizona, the Juvenile Transitions Innovation Program improves student achievement and reduces recidivism for youth that have been detained, incarcerated, or otherwise involved with the juvenile justice system. To achieve these goals its team: Provide professional development training for correctional and alternative educators who serve this specific population of students. Conduct research and facilitate the use of data in program development and support and evaluate progress utilizing local, state and national coalition partners. Facilitate compliance with quality standards and assessments through the AdvancED regional accreditation process for juvenile justice schools. Facilitate implementation of evidence-based educational programming through providing a regional support system for meeting local needs of juvenile justice schools in support of transition and placement for youth involved with the juvenile justice system.
- **In many states, curricula leaders of ESAs serve as members of state-appointed content standards and state high stakes testing assessment committees. For example:**
 - Two West Virginia RESA directors serve on the state's Core Committee to develop a comprehensive plan to intervene in struggling schools.
 - The governor of Washington appointed an Educational Service District superintendent to the state's Quality Education Council.
 - When NCLB was passed, the Iowa Department of Education asked each AEA to identify two people who would become the SINA/DINA experts for their AEAs. These individuals participated in extensive training and planning, and as schools appear on the watch lists and/or on the SINA/DINA lists, these individuals have become partners with the district leaders in developing innovative measures for improving student achievement.
 - Staff at Region 4 in Houston have been appointed to 16 content standards and state high stakes testing committees, including: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills: grades 5, 6, 7, 8, Physics, and Chemistry, Biology End-of-Course, Chemistry End-of-Course, Physics End-of-Course, Physics End-of-Course, Geography End-of-Course, Elementary Standards writing, Algebra II and College and Career Readiness Standards Alignment, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills: grades 6, 8, 9, and 10, Algebra I End-of-Course, Geometry End-of-Course, Algebra II End-of-Course, TAKS-M™ Standard

Setting, Elementary Standards Writing, Gifted/Talented Leadership Committee, State Assessment and Monitoring Committee.

- A math specialist from Region 16 ESC, Amarillo, serves on a Texas Education Agency student assessment division committee to discuss the test design for the new assessments for high school end-of-course and grades 3-8 in math.
- Ohio ESCs have many collaborative agreements for shared services and personnel, such as curriculum supervisors, school psychologists, and speech therapists.

4. Improving Struggling Schools

- **State Departments of Education have turned to ESAs to assist with struggling schools. For example:**

- Three West Virginia RESAs have hired a total of 76 staff to support struggling schools and students with all aspects of improving culture, instruction, and student achievement. Additionally, West Virginia RESAs are part of a comprehensive West Virginia Department of Education team working with struggling schools beginning in the spring of 2010.
- A system of district and School Assistance Centers has been established in Massachusetts providing administrative support, space, and data personnel for these centers who will work with underperforming schools in the region. Hampshire Educational Collaborative's consultants and trainers also provide technical assistance and training to teachers and administrators in struggling schools.
- In Pennsylvania, Intermediate Unit curriculum, instruction, and professional development staff were members of the State Leadership Team for School Improvement charged with helping ensure a coordinated school improvement support system, along with providing feedback and guidance to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- The Title I Statewide School Support/Parental Involvement Initiative, decentralized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to Region 16 ESC, Amarillo, is part of the ESEA Title I, Part A Technical Assistance Program. The purpose is to provide Education Service Centers with opportunities for professional development, TEA program updates, and training opportunities. Districts that did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress for the first time are offered support through professional development opportunities.
- The School Improvement Resource Center (SIRC) at Region 13, Austin, is a statewide initiative that serves as a support system to schools that receive funding under the Title I, School Improvement Program as they move through the school improvement process.
- Texas ESCs and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) are working together to provide technical assistance support to targeted campuses. Campuses that failed to meet AYP or have the potential to not meet AYP are being provided with targeted assistance.

- **ESAs in New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and California are working with, and in some instances, overseeing the management of failing schools. For example:**

- Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 has been the managing body of a financially and academically distressed school district in the Pittsburgh area for three years. It has been responsible for turning the district around in auditing and establishing new systems and supports to achieve academic and behavioral success.
- In California the Solano County Office of Education was required to take over operations of a local school district, including replacement of the superintendent during the period of time required to bring the district to fiscal solvency.

- The Texas Turnaround Center (TTC), housed at Region 13, Austin, is part of a state-wide system of 20 regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) dedicated to establishing and supporting a state-wide regional network of highly trained turnaround teams. These regional ESC teams provide technical assistance to districts and campuses identified as under-performing in the state's accountability rating system. Overall, the TTC's objective is to reduce the number of campuses rated low performing by enhancing capacity statewide for supporting comprehensive, ongoing improvement of under-performing schools.
- ESAs, as a regional support system, with demonstrated capacity to scale to meet local needs, are the source that many struggling and/or failing schools have voluntarily turned to for support. This includes many of the nation's 1,400 school districts (11.6% of the nation's districts) identified by the U.S. Census data as rural, in poverty, and failing to meet AYP.
- In Pennsylvania the Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 is responsible for training schools in using the Getting Results framework to develop improvement plans and providing technical assistance in the implementation of priority activities. These activities include conducting professional development in specific content areas, differentiated instruction and co-teaching, school wide positive behavior support, effective instruction strategies, and classroom management.
- Region 4 in Texas has provided technical assistance, professional development and services to 97% of the struggling and failing schools. Additionally, Special Education Services has provided contracted professional development and program evaluations to districts that are below the state standards on the Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System, State Performance Plan Indicators, Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) related to the performance of students with disabilities.
- With ARRA funds West Virginia RESA 2 hired three fulltime principal coaches and three fulltime instructional coaches to assist teachers and administrators with supporting formative and summative assessments in classrooms, and with the utilization of data in support of the adjustment of instruction.
- All West Virginia RESAs facilitated/coordinated County Assessment Teams to provide an infrastructure for state and local assessment and standards based instruction efforts. These teams called CAN I and CAN II teams facilitate assessment efforts in 97% of WV counties. Additionally identified schools serve as model schools for assessment in each region.

Conclusion

ESAs are a vital link in state and national efforts to improve schools. AESA offers a level of access and visibility not afforded by any other national association. There are 553 service agencies with over 100,000 employees in 45 states. AESA is in the position to reach 11,700 (79%) of the public school districts, 22,710 (83%) of the private schools, 2,160,955 (79%) certified teachers, and 2,018,888 (80%) non-certified school employees, and well over 40,732, 954 (80%) public and private school students, including administrators, administrative support staff, instructional coordinators, principals, assistant principals school librarians and support staff, instructional aides, guidance counselors, and other support service staff members. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey.

ESAs are in face-to-face contact with nearly every superintendent and staff of local schools on a daily/weekly/monthly basis. As a result, ESA personnel are acutely aware of the needs and problems faced by local public school districts, as well as private, parochial, and charter schools in their area, and other youth service agencies.

AESA stands ready to assist the U.S. Department of Education in meeting the four key goals of Education Reform as detailed throughout this white paper.