



New Mexico technology plan demonstrates collaboration and partnership by Steve Aguirra

As the executive director the High Plains Regional Education Cooperative in Raton, New Mexico, I wanted to share with you how AESA has helped me implement an idea that has grown statewide in Raton, New Mexico. While attending the AESA national conference several years ago I attended a presentation made by North Central Educational Service District in Washington State which shared their experience collaborating with companies that donated time, money, and labor in providing connectivity with fiber optic cable between various school districts. Due to the rural districts that our agency serves, I found this idea intriguing and immediately set about trying to fit into the geography of New Mexico.

Many of our rural districts are 90 miles apart, and the ability to lay fiber optic cable would be an insurmountable expense, so I explored the viability of wireless technology. This was determined to be expensive and labor intensive, as well.

Upon my return to New Mexico, I kept thinking about the project in Washington State and how they were able to implement their connectivity between districts. I knew that if I could provide something similar in New Mexico, I could assist our rural schools with meeting the challenges they face. Thus, my technology team began to research what districts were paying for T-1 line costs from Albuquerque. The costs ranged from \$1,500 to \$1,800 per line per month. We also discovered that those companies providing the T-1 lines were siphoning bandwidth, therefore limiting the end-result bandwidth at the final destination.

Again, this was cost prohibitive.

With clear vision and a documented need, we visited an OXY Permian site in Northeast New Mexico.

OXY Permian runs a wireless network connecting rural New Mexico to Houston. It so happened that the gentleman we spoke with had a son enrolled in one of our districts. His son had taken advanced math the previous year, but due to tighter budgets and decreasing enrollment, the district was unable to afford the advanced math teacher. Consequently, his son was placed in a regular math class. He understood, firsthand, what our vision could mean to rural students, and he took our concept to the main office in Houston. Shortly after, OXY Permian sent an engineer, Mark Atkins, to do site surveys in northeast New Mexico, west Texas, western Oklahoma, and southern Colorado. This document provided High Plains Regional Education Cooperative with our initial technology plan, at an estimated cost of \$100,000. OXY Permian provided this as in-kind to our project.

Once the site surveys were completed and the document prepared, we contacted Mr. Bob Tacker, the information technology director at New Mexico Technology University. Mr. Tacker was so excited about the project, he made arrangements for us to meet with the State Office of Communications (GSD) in Santa Fe.



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The educational service agency — American education's invisible partner

Starting with the belief that ESAs are “unequivocally the least understood and the worst documented component of public education,” authors William G. Keane and E. Robert Stephens proceed to systematically provide a full picture of ESAs— from their history and development to predictions for their future—in their newly released book. They address key issues of concern to ESAs including structure/ organization, financing, governance, programs and services performed, accountability and accreditation.

This 274-page book provides the information necessary to understand ESAs, and to compare and contrast ESAs in the various states. The authors are uniquely qualified for their task. E. Robert Stephens (director of the Institute for Regional and Rural Education) has provided research and documentation on ESAs since the early 1970's. Coauthor William G. Keane (associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Oakland University) was for many years the superintendent of Oakland Intermediate School District, an ESA in Michigan, and served as president of AESA.

The AESA Foundation played an important role in the publication of this volume. The publishers required a guaranteed sale of 100 books before publication and the foundation was pleased to make this investment to ensure publication of this important work.

Every ESA will want to obtain copies for key staff and board members and have copies of this volume in its professional library. AESA has secured a special 20% discount on the \$38 list purchase price of this work. Go to www.univpress.com and order ISBN 0-7618-3155-X. Enter the special promotional code 1S5AESA on the payments page and the discount will be provided.

“This book should be a part of your professional library. It is mine,” said Brian Talbott, executive director of AESA. He extends his gratitude to Bill and Bob for their dedicated work and research on ESAs throughout the years. AESA also extends its deep appreciation to Bill Keane and Bob Stephens for this significant work that documents, explains, and challenges ESAs.

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It was agreed that the state of New Mexico would provide three Mbs of bandwidth per district—twice the bandwidth of a T-1 line—at a very reasonable cost!

Mr. Tacker also sits on the board for the Council for Higher Education Computing/Communications Services (CHECS). This group is composed of all the IT folks from institutions of higher education. After discussions, it was clear that to bring this project to scale, institutions of higher education needed

to partner with K-12.

We have made tremendous progress and education will be more effective in rural New Mexico due to this joint project between High Plains Regional Education Cooperative, OXY Permian, Council for Higher Education Computing/Communications Services, New Mexico Office of Communications, and New Mexico Technology. And, ultimately, it all comes back to a meeting at the AESA national conference several years ago.

Educator's Call to Action: Federal Advocacy conference

Federal dollars are tighter than ever, and September is the time to be in Washington, DC. Congress will make their final decisions on funding of education programs and your voice must be heard, especially this year with dollars so scarce. Attend this important event on September 14-16, 2005. CEOs of ESAs should attend, as well as board members, federal/state program directors, and the coordinators of curriculum/instruction, vocational education, Head Start, technology, and special education. Why not bring your local school superintendents and make this a team event?!

Highlights of the conference include a discussion on new changes to No Child Left Behind, an overview of supreme court and other district court decisions handed down this year relating to education and schools, and a panel discussion of top officials from the U. S. Department of Education. Prior to your Hill visits, concurrent sessions will be held to provide an update on last minute deals on education appropriations, E-rate and the Telecommunications Act, Perkin's Vocational and Technical Education Act, and changes to Head Start and other early childhood programs. For a full agenda, please visit the AESA Web site.

AESA commissioned a legal brief on Supplemental Educational Services (SES) from Maree Sneed with the Hogan and Hartson law firm. This brief will be released at the conference, with Sneed presenting an overview. ESAs are named as providers of SES under NCLB, but what does this really mean for your agency? Attend the conference to find this out, as well as how your agency should be responding to and assisting your local schools/districts that are in need of improvement.

Make your appointments with senators and representative prior to coming to Washington for Thursday afternoon. The Capitol switchboard number is (202) 244-3121. Reserve your hotel room at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill (400 New Jersey Ave NW) by calling (800) 233-1234 or (202) 737-1234 and request the AESA rate of \$199/night. This rate is only valid through August 16, 2005; don't delay. We listened to your evaluations from last year and we will end before noon on Friday, thus we were able to lower our conference rate! Register on-line and pay by credit card for a fee of \$350 (\$380 if paying with check or PO). This includes the welcome reception, breakfast both days, and lunch on Thursday.

To download a copy of the conference brochure, to register, or to find out more about this conference, please go to www.aesa.us. See you soon in Washington!



November 30-December 3, 2005
Savannah International
Trade & Convention Center

See y'all in
Savannah!



This is the only national conference dedicated solely to Educational Service Agencies. This conference addresses the unique characteristics of ESAs, including interaction with customer districts, state agencies, and federal agencies.

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Robert Ballard – known for his discovery of the *Titanic* and for leading school children on an interactive expedition through the JASON program.

Dr. Douglas Reeves – a leading expert on leadership, educational accountability, and assessment. He is the author of more than fifteen books and winner of the *Parent's Choice Award*.

Register Now! Make your reservation today to help lay the foundation for more successful services by Educational Service Agencies. For more information and to register, visit www.aesa.us

Congratulations Rodger Smith

The Indiana University School Administrators' Association recently named Rodger E. Smith, executive director of the Region 8 Education Service Center in northeast Indiana, the 2005 recipient of its **Outstanding Leadership and Contribution to Education Award**. The award recognizes individuals who have had distinguished careers in education, who have shown outstanding leadership, and who have at least 15 years of experience in a leadership roles.

Nominations open for national awards program recognizing contributions to ESAs

AESA is proud to support three national awards to recognize outstanding contributions to ESAs as follows:

Justus A. Prentice Award

This award recognizes an individual for contributions through executive leadership in the advancement of ESA programs at the regional, state, and national levels. Nominees have included past or present ESA executives and staff. Criteria include: advancement of the goals and philosophies of ESAs, outstanding accomplishments and innovative practices, exercise of leadership, and service to ESAs.

Walter G. Turner Award

This award recognizes an individual citizen who has made outstanding contributions in the advancement of ESA programs at the regional, state and national levels. Nominees could include board members, state/national legislators, and local/state/national educators, and professional association staff. Criteria include: advancement of the goals and philosophies of ESAs, outstanding accomplishments and innovative practices, exercise of leadership, and service to the ESA community.

E. Robert Stephens Award

This award recognizes an individual for research, writing, and/or publishing of information that advances the understanding of ESA programs at the regional, state, and national levels. The work(s) may include, but is (are) not limited to articles, monographs, dissertations, a book chapter, or a book. Nominees could include any individual whose work(s) meet the intent of this award. Criteria include: advancement of goals and philosophies of ESAs, scholarly nature of the work(s), and impact of the research writing(s) and/or publication(s) on ESAs.

Nomination Process

Nominations must be postmarked by August 26, 2005, and recipients will be recognized at the AESA annual conference in Savannah, Georgia, November 30-December 3, 2005. Application forms are available on-line at www.aesa.us/awards.html or by mail upon request by contacting the AESA office at (703) 875-7039. Awards are based on merit and may or may not be given annually.

AESA council positions now open

The **call for executive council nominations** is now open!

AESA is your voice at the national level. By linking the local, regional, and national activities into a strong network representing ESAs throughout the country, we have become one of the most influential educational groups in America. This success has been the direct result of outstanding leadership on the AESA Executive Council.

AESA is governed by a 12/13-member body including 12 council members and the immediate past president. The past president, depending on whether he or she was elected in the third or fourth year of his or her term, will either be the 12th or the 13th member.

Council candidates are nominated by region, but elected by national vote. If there are more than two nominees from a given region, a regional election will be held to determine the two finalists to be placed on the national ballot.

In order to maintain 12 council members and have four-year terms of office, each region elects council members three out of four years. This year the Southern Region has the bye and will not have a nominee.

States in the **Southern Region** include: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

These states will, however, have the opportunity to vote in the general election.

States in the **Eastern Region** include: Connecticut, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

States in the **Central Region** include: Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

States in the **Western Region** include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

Following the above regional delineation, nominations for specific positions must be submitted by filling out an AESA nomination form. All nominations and biographical statements are due at the AESA office on or before September 16, 2005. All nomination materials can be found on the AESA Web site at www.aesa.us.