

AESA NEWS

AESA—the place to find what you need

by Lee Warne, AESA President

Our Association of Educational Service Agencies is truly a wonderful collection of people dedicated to helping its members. The past few years of being active on the council have provided me with a bird's eye view of the many opportunities that are provided.

Keeping up with trends in our arena could be difficult without an organization that knows what is happening all over the country. We are continually being informed by AESA about recent issues. For example, in a number of states, ESAs are being asked to provide accreditation for local school districts. Other states are finding that their regional agency is being accredited through state education departments or through legislation. These and many more issues are being presented to us in a timely manner by the staff of AESA.

Just recently, E. Robert Stephens and Bill Keane submitted their study comparing the job-skills needed to be a school superintendent versus running an educational service agency. Their expertise outlined the differences that will provide guidance for ESA boards in the future as they look to fill the ranks of departing CEOs. I believe this study underscores the recent program, Executives in Residence, begun by AESA as a way to provide professional learning opportunities for potential educational service agency CEOs. It was felt that unique learning and growth experiences were necessary to help develop future leadership within ESAs. As we enter into our third

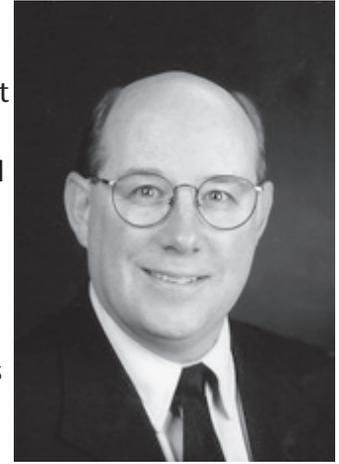
year of this program, its endorsement by past participants and increased number of applicants, tell us that we need this type of opportunity.

"This is the best professional development I've ever had!" is a common comment from past participants.

The annual conference, scheduled in Palm Springs at the end of November this year, is the only conference where the focus is solely on educational service agencies. Over 90 sessions covering all aspects of our agencies are provided by folks who do the day-to-day work you do. The incredible growth of this conference is testament to its mission of providing the best place to learn from practitioners.

Check out www.aesa.us to find these and many more programs, information on the conference, and anything else related to educational service agencies. I know that you will find chances for growth and new opportunities for you or your staff at AESA!

Lee Warne is executive director of the Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative, at Marshall, Minnesota. He also serves as the current president of AESA.



Your membership services committee is listening

by Judith Miller, chair

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Almost weekly, I'm asked to complete a survey or to evaluate a meeting I've attended. Somewhat reluctantly, I take the time that is needed to respond. Why? Because as a researcher and as an administrator, I know we must analyze the data in order to make better decisions.

For the past two years, the membership services committee has conducted a membership services survey of conference attendees during the regional breakfast at the national conference. We've asked participants to tell us about AESA services, the types of technical assistance they have requested, and the greatest issues and concerns their agencies are facing. Once the responses are compiled, the committee uses the information to develop its work plan for the coming year(s). The plan is presented to the council for consideration during the spring planning session.

What does AESA's membership have to say?

Two hundred seventy six (276) conference attendees responded to the 2005 survey, resulting in a 36% increase in survey responses over the 2004 conference. Distribution of responses by regions included: 23.6% from the eastern region, 38% from the central region, 18.1% from the western region, and 20.3% from the southern region.

During the past year, which AESA member services have you and/or your agency utilized?

Visited AESA website	71%
Attended AESA national conference	85%
Attended AESA Educators' Federal Call to Action.....	21%
Attended AESA Summer CEO Conference.....	15%
Read AESA News newsletter.....	75%
Read AESA electronic newsletters/updates	50%
Read articles in AESA Perspectives: Journals of Research and Opinion	48%
Posted or reviewed AESA employment opportunities	7%
Used services of AESA business partners and/or members	9%
Requested and received technical assistance from AESA national office	11%

What type of technical assistance support, if any, do you and /or your agency need the most?

Agency operations.....	11%
Cost reduction programs	26%
Evaluation of your programs.....	22%
Research in ESA best practices.....	50%
Product identification	16%
Federal legislative advocacy	45%
State legislative advocacy.....	30%
None	10%

Should AESA consider delivering services on a regional basis?

Yes.....	53%
No.....	16%
No comment.....	31%

Survey continued on page 4.

AESA's Executive in Residence program completes a successful second year

Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) are a vital part of the educational landscape in 44 out of the 50 states. There is no doubt that the role of the ESA is growing and becoming more diverse with each passing year. This ever-expanding role coupled with the continued challenge for adequate funding has created an environment which makes the ESA a unique entity. Because ESAs are unique they enjoy the opportunity to serve schools in ways that other organizations cannot. However, that uniqueness does not come without its share of challenges.

One of the major challenges faced by ESAs across the country is how to replace the CEO who retires or moves on. Where does an agency find someone with the leadership skills, educational experience, and business acumen necessary to be a good leader of an entity that is at the same time both governmental and business oriented? The logical solution is to promote from within the organization. The problem is that many of the internal individuals do not have experience or training at the CEO level.

AESA recognized this as an emerging issue for ESAs and responded by creating the Executives in Residence (EIR) program. EIR had its official beginning in 2005 when two individuals piloted the program as participants. Enhancements were implemented based on the input of those two participants and in 2006 three applicants were chosen to participate in the second year. Participants of the Executives in Residence class of 2006 have now completed the program, which began with attending AESA's Summer

CEO Conference last year. During the year participants also attended the Educators' Call to Action conference in Washington D.C., and the AESA Annual Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The participants also were invited to attend the AESA Executive Council meeting. Participants felt that the conferences served to broaden their thinking about ESAs and helped them gain a more national perspective for ESAs.

The other major component of the Executives in Residence program is the site visit, which provides a "one-on-one" opportunity for the participant to shadow a CEO during his/her daily routine for three to five days, and gain perspective from the senior leaders at the host agency about the organization's culture and the administrative style of the CEO. Participants in the class of 2006 went on at least one site visit and agreed that it was the highlight of the year. It is an opportunity to learn firsthand about some of the unique challenges that face ESA CEOs and how they handle those challenges. It is also an opportunity for the participants to learn about different leadership styles and management techniques.

This year's participants were asked to critique the program and discuss any opportunities for improvement they thought would be helpful. Again, all of the participants wholeheartedly recommended the program and felt it worth the investment to participate. Items mentioned as opportunities for improvement included creating a mentor relationship early in the year between the CEO and the EIR participant. Another thought was to develop a survey to try and help

match participants with CEOs/host agencies for arranging site visits.

All in all, it was a successful year for the AESA Executives in Residence program. Participants express their appreciation to:

- Dr. Brian Talbott, AESA executive director
- Dr. Twyla Barnes, AESA Executives in Residence program coordinator and host CEO, ESD 112, Washington
- Dr. Joe Marinelli, host CEO, Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES, New York
- Dr. Bob Witten, host CEO, Central Sequehanna Intermediate Unit, Pennsylvania
- Dr. Judith Miller, AESA Executive Council member
- Ms. Jada Rupley and Mr. Cliff Carmody. pilot participants of the EIR program

Without the hard work and dedication of these individuals this program would not be the success that it is today. Due to their efforts the future of the program is brighter than ever. The 2007 class of participants includes five very qualified individuals who are eager to get started on their journey. They can look forward to a unique and highly effective leadership training experience. The Executives in Residence program is off to a great start and has established a strong foundation.

The program will see continued success as more ESAs become interested in sending their future leaders and acting as host agencies. The EIR program is an excellent example of what can be accomplished when AESA members work together to create solutions.

What are the greatest issues or challenges that face your agency in the coming three years?

Securing the necessary financial support to meet identified needs	70%
Dealing with the efforts to reshape the mission of or number of ESAs by your state legislature.....	41%
Providing evaluation of your agency's programs to clients.....	23%
Meeting the demands of federal legislation on your members	45%
Meeting the demands of state legislation on your members	47%

If AESA should deliver services on a regional basis, should AESA conduct?

Regional conferences for professional learning opportunities	39%
Regional meetings with ESA CEOs	38%
Regional communications (such as e-mail listservs)	28%
No comment.....	37%

Note: It should be noted that the regional breakfasts are attended by ESA directors, staff, and board members. Not all participants may be knowledgeable of AESA services or how they are used by their agencies. Beginning in 2006, the membership services survey will include a self-reported position identification section, so that responses can be reviewed relative to positions held within ESAs.

From these responses, the membership services committee has observed that the greatest areas of membership concern fall into three major areas: finances, organization, and Federal/state legislation. We've also observed a continued use and an awareness of member services (i.e., newsletter, e-newsletter, journal, web site). It is also interesting to note an increase in the types of technical assistance that are needed by our members, particularly in the area of state legislative advocacy.

As we continue to ask questions of our membership, we hope that you will continue to take the time that is needed to respond. This is our way of listening and striving to continuously create an association that provides the services that you need.

Members of the membership services committee include: chair Judith Miller (MS), vice-chair Linda Lowe (NC), Joan Schuman (MA), Rick Saunders (AR), Joe Crozier (IA), JoAnn Henderson (AK), Liz Storey (KY), Ron Hitchcock (OR), Stephen Aguirre (NM), Suzanne Riley (MN), Terry Smith (TX), Wayne Bell (NE), and staff liaison Peter Young.

Caring and preparing for the future: AESAs' 21st annual conference

Wednesday-Saturday, Nov. 29 - Dec. 2, 2006
Desert Springs J.W. Marriott Resort & Spa
Palm Desert, California

In his invitation to attend the conference, AESA president Lee Warne said that this event was "designed to stimulate thought, initiate action and leverage resources." We hope that you have registered for this exciting learning opportunity starting on Wednesday, November 29th and ending on Saturday, December 2nd at the J. W. Marriott in Palm Desert, CA.

This event is for the entire ESA community: CEO's, board members and staff. Each person can find meaningful opportunities for learning in the major presentations, breakout groups and job-alike sessions.

Major speakers include Guy Dowd, the 1986 Teacher of the Year, who will speak to the hearts of those of us who serve in the education profession. Texas Commissioner of Education Shirley Neeley will share with us the importance of the 20 ESCs in her state in carrying out the mission of public education. Bonnie St. John will close the conference with an inspirational message of overcoming adversity.

Over 90 concurrent sessions and workshops will allow participants to learn about programs and services currently offered in ESAs across the country. This conference feature is an excellent opportunity to gather new ideas for ways that your ESA can be of service to your members.

Job-alike sessions—reintroduced at last year's event—provide an opportunity to network with folks who have the same job responsibilities as yours. What a great way to find resource folks that can be of help to you. Regional breakfasts allow you to network with those in your geographical region.

Do come and join with us! You will be glad that you did.

For more information, please go to www.aesa.us.