



AESA congratulates annual award winners

Justus A. Prentice Award

The Justus A. Prentice Award recognizes outstanding accomplishments of contributions to education and to AESA. Congratulations to the 2006 winner who was selected for outstanding contributions through executive leadership in the advancement of regional educational service agency programs at the regional, state, and/or national levels.

Virginia Seccombe

Executive Director of LEARN, Connecticut

Virginia Seccombe exemplifies the Justus A. Prentice Award as an excellent leader in the advancement of regional educational service agency programs.

During her tenure as executive director of LEARN, Ginnie has been extremely supportive of AESA and the work it does to support members both regionally and nationally. Ginnie was the first female executive director elected to the AESA executive council, and ultimately served as AESA president. She was instrumental in establishing AESA as an international organization. She is a founding member of the AESA Foundation.



Walter G. Turner Award

The Walter G. Turner Award recognizes contributions to education and to AESA. Congratulations to the 2006 winner who was selected for outstanding contributions in the advancement of regional educational service agency programs at the regional, state, and/or national levels.

Dr. Shirley Neeley

Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency

Dr. Shirley Neeley was appointed commissioner of education in Texas in 2004, marking the first time that a woman was tapped to lead educational efforts in a state that educates over 4.3 million students in its public schools.

Throughout her tenure, Commissioner Neeley has constantly spoken about the crucial role that Texas education service centers have played in her personal success and the success of the Lone Star State in meeting its educational challenges.



E. Robert Stephens Award

The E. Robert Stephens Award recognizes outstanding accomplishments of contributions to education and to AESA. Congratulations to the 2006 winner who was selected for outstanding contributions that advance the understanding of regional educational agencies through research, writing, and/or publications at the regional, state, and national levels.

Dr. Hobard Harmon

Independent Education Consultant

Hobart Harmon is a private consultant with extensive experience in public education. He is an accomplished consultant, researcher, author, college professor, and senior administrator in various settings. He is passionate about the contributions and successes of ESAs. Through his on-going research and dedication is a regular contributor to *AESA Perspectives*; and a contributor to national research on ESAs.



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Value-added services —

Business analysts tell us that today's consumers demand added value with their purchases. Providing a quality product or service is no longer good enough. When people write those checks, open their wallets, or hand over credit cards, they want something extra—a bonus, a rebate, free “add-ons,” product support; something that exceeds their expectations in service, quality or price.



I first heard of “value added services” in regard to telecommunications, as a term to describe services beyond standard telephone calls. But in the past few years, “value added” has become a popular notion for other businesses as well. *Barron's* business news weekly now defines the concept as “activity that increases the worth of any product” and a method to “create wealth and increase revenue.” I've read in other business journals that the biggest international investment firms now advertise how they add value by “building relationships” with clients.

What are the implications for us as education service agency administrators? Certainly, the education business is not immune to trends of society. Our consumers, whether they are school or agency administrators, board members, parents or students (whether they are young or adult learners), also are looking for added value. In fact, I believe we have a responsibility to ensure that value is added to our services. Most of our clients, especially school leaders, are dealing with the same realities we are in ESAs. They are under constant pressure for fiscal accountability, too often in situations where resources do not keep pace with expectations or mandates. Thus, we can expect continued, or even greater, scrutiny of ESA services as our customers seek value for every dollar they spend.

“Everything [ESAs] do is aimed at easing some of the burden from school districts that have limited resources.”

Then, the question becomes, “how can we enhance and enrich the services we offer?” Furthermore, can ESAs not only compete, but survive and thrive in this “value added” world of 21st Century economics? I believe the answer to that question is a resounding “YES!” Everything we do is aimed at easing some of the burden from school districts that have limited resources. By the very nature of our operations, ESAs are filling that special niche of helping clients maximize their dollars by providing added value with our services and products.

Consider the following core principles essential to the way ESAs do business:

- Services are collaborative and reflect partnerships with our clients, who are often involved in program development.
- Cooperative programs save great sums of money for our clients through economies of scale.
- Programs and services are developed for schools and educators—our most important customers.
- Staff are highly qualified, and most are trained educators who understand the issues and realities of life in the classroom, school, and district offices.
- Customer service is vital. Our programs and products are supported

by staff who place a priority on maintaining client loyalty because ESAs are also public agencies and face similar funding issues.

“Across the country, ESAs offer thousands of innovative, quality programs that illustrate how we add extra value for our clients.”

Across the country, ESAs offer thousands of innovative, quality programs that illustrate how we add extra value for our clients. Here is just a sampling ...

In my home state of Pennsylvania, we have several consortia of intermediate units coordinating joint purchasing programs that have saved local districts and other public agencies multi-millions of dollars over the past 20 years. They provide competitive pricing options for numerous supplies and products, and they enable participating schools to earmark more funds for instruction.

Also in the Northeastern U.S. is one of the more unique instructional programs, conducted jointly by two ESAs. They offer high school students an aircraft maintenance technology program, providing hands-on experience and related knowledge to service, repair and overhaul reciprocating and turbine aircraft engines. Students work toward a “Powerplant License” by studying under regulations of the Federal Aviation Administration.

In the Southeast, there is an ESA that specializes in professional development, matching speakers to training requests from participating districts. Despite having a staff of only two full-time positions, this ESA last year sponsored 82 programs and events for nearly 2,100 participants from 13 districts. Presenters range from nationally known consultants to local teachers.

An ESA along the Gulf Coast is known statewide for its professional development offerings, which conducted electronically. Under a grant from the state, this ESA adds value by giving educators convenient access to quality professional development courses via an online learning academy and a television channel over the DISH network.

Another Gulf Coast ESA exemplified the highest degree of added value by helping member schools and local communities recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Primarily, the ESA office became a hub for communication, warehousing, purchasing and distribution. Staff handled countless phone calls and e-mails, thousands of pieces of equipment—from backpacks to computers, and 15 trailer-loads of notebooks and office supplies. In addition, the ESA opened its computer lab for displaced residents to apply for disaster assistance.

Building relationships between schools and communi-

ties gives added value to an initiative by a West Coast ESA. This agency sponsored community forums on the value of public education, resulting in new business partnerships for schools, increased positive coverage in local news media, and monthly teacher recognition awards presented by the region’s largest newspaper.

A Midwest ESA is promoting excellence in teaching through a mentor academy. Mentor teachers from participating districts are trained to work with beginning teachers over a two-year period. Evaluations indicate that the program increased retention of promising new teachers and enhanced student achievement.

In the Southwest, an ESA is positively influencing classroom instruction by developing math and reading textbook series that have become very popular. With 750 resources currently in publication, including textbooks and curriculum support materials, this ESA’s products are purchased by 72 percent of schools in its home state. Staff credit the success of their materials to the use of quantitative assessment data as well as qualitative formal and informal customer input to identify true customer needs, not merely customer wants.

“Without question, you are adding value for clients — value demonstrated by cost savings, professional growth of staff, relationship building and most importantly student achievement.”

I could go on and on, with more examples. But now it’s your turn. Consider the services and products offered by your ESA. Without question, you are adding value for clients — value demonstrated by cost savings, professional growth of staff, relationship building and most importantly student achievement. You and your staff deserve congratulations, every bit as much as the dedicated educators who are responsible for the programs I’ve cited. If there’s any lesson we can learn regarding value added services, it’s a reminder that we should tell our clients, as well as our staff and the board members who support our operations, of that “extra worth” provided by education service agencies.

To sum up, value added service is just another example of how ESAs have become “can do” organizations, capable of tackling whatever tasks are laid at our doorsteps.

Bob Witten is executive director of Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit 16 in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. He also serves as Eastern Region representative on the AESA executive council.

Council election results announced!

Congratulations to the following candidates who were elected to the AESA executive council, they will take office in May 2007.

Central Region

Mick Loughran

Administrator
Educational Service Unit #9
Hastings, Nebraska



Southern Region

John D. Hough

Executive Director
RESA VIII
Martinsburg, West Virginia



Western Region

David Long

Superintendent
Riverside County Office of Education
Riverside, California



AESA annual conference registration

AESA will institute a new registration/reservation process for the 2007 annual conference to be held in Tampa, Florida. Under this new process, those wishing to attend will first register for the conference either online or by fax, receive a confirmation number, and then will be given access to make a reservation at the hotel. This new procedure will eliminate duplication in registrations and/or rooms and ensure that those who register will have rooms.

This new registration/reservation process will be available by June 1, 2007. PLEASE NOTE: this is a change in date from prior years. E-mail notifications will be sent to all AESA members and further information will appear in print.

2007 CALENDAR of events

To plan now for 2007, please add the following events to your calendar and plan to attend. More information may be found at www.aesa.us.

Summer CEO Leadership Conference

July 23-26, 2007, Rochester, New York
Lodge at Woodcliff

Join your peers for three-and-a-half days dedicated to conversations by and for ESA leaders. This year's location will be stunning. Atop a wooded hill in Rochester's affluent suburbs stands The Lodge at Woodcliff, upstate New York's premier resort and conference center. Its vantage point reveals spectacular views of vivid landscapes. These vistas will tempt you to take advantage of a world rich in recreational and cultural excitement outside the lodge, from Native American encampments to New York's largest indoor shopping mall. More information will be sent to all ESA CEOs in spring 2007.

AESA Educators' Call to Action Legislative Conference, September 26-28, 2007

Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Fall is not only the best time to visit the nation's capitol, it is also the best time to talk with your elected officials as they prepare to vote on funding measures affecting Federal education laws. The collective voices of ESA CEOs, staff, and board members make a difference as senators and representatives debate issues and cut side deals. This is the time to make your voice heard. Plan now to attend this event and walk the hallowed halls of Congress.

AESA Annual Conference

November 28 - December 1, 2007, Tampa, Florida
Tampa Convention Center

You and your team will not want to miss the annual gathering of ESAs from around the nation and a few from abroad. Over a thousand people will attend this event and talk about ESAs and the programs, services, and products they provide. This is the time to tell your story by presenting a concurrent session, highlight your agency by having a showcase booth, make purchasing decisions when visiting with exhibitors, or get inspired by one of the keynote speakers. Spend the evening at the historical Tampa theater, visit Ybor City, or relax with peers who understand the particular nuances of running an education service agency.