



The invisible service agency no more

by Joan Schuman, AESA council member, MA

As recently as 2005, E. Robert Stephens and William G. Keane wrote in "The Educational Service Agency: American Education's Invisible Partner" that educational service agencies "are unequivocally the least understood and the worst-documented component of public elementary and secondary education." Now that we number 553 ESAs in 44 states, it is time for ESAs to be better understood with greater documentation of our effectiveness. AESA has seen the need to have more research conducted on the effectiveness of ESA's for several years. With the advent of No Child Left Behind under the reauthorization of ESEA in 2001, greater accountability and transparency for all who provide K-12 education is becoming the

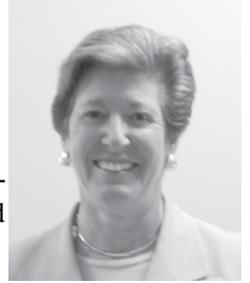
focus of local, state, and national organizations. AESA and ESAs are no exception to this heightened scrutiny on results and effectiveness. Indeed, several states have called for a variety of accountability measures to ascertain the effectiveness of ESAs as they emerge as natural partners of school districts in the implementation of No Child Left Behind.

In 2002, Bob Stephens urged AESA to "plan the first step in the creation of an AESA standing committee on research." The first meeting of that planning group was held at the 2002 annual conference in Dallas. In 2003, council authorized the membership services committee to form a subcommittee on research and development. The subcommittee was launched at the 2003 conference at Marco Island. Subsequently, a Delphi study was conducted by Hobart Harmon on what priorities the subcommittee should have. In 2005, the publication of Bob Ste-

phens and Bill Keane's landmark study on educational service agencies made clear that more research was needed on these entities and that AESA

should be the driving force behind new research. Thus, in 2006 the AESA council voted to establish a full standing committee on research and development (RDC).

Of course, AESA, through its journal *Perspectives*, has always been interested in and concerned about research and opinion involving ESAs. Thanks to Bill Keane's extraordinary



dedication and voluntary editorship of the journal over the past 13 years, AESA

has built up a compilation of research studies and opinion by both its members and prominent researchers in the field of education. Over the years, AESA has commissioned law firms to render legal opinions on how ESAs could benefit from or be affected by Federal legislation, particularly NCLB and the Perkins Act. A brief glance at the AESA Website and a click on the "research" button brings forth a plethora of studies that have been commissioned by AESA, individual states, think-tanks, and individual ESA's across the country. Most recently, AESA, with the help and sponsorship of Laureate Education Inc., contracted with McREL to study alternative certification programs administered by ESA's across the county. Many ESAs are participating in that study — a study that will be of paramount importance to ESAs given the lawsuit filed recently by interested parties in California against the U.S. Department (Renee v. Spellings) for allow-

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Meet the candidates for AESA executive council elections in December

Eastern Region

James N. Baldwin

James N. Baldwin is the district superintendent of Questar III, the BOCES for Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene counties, an educational cooperative serving 23 school districts with 40,000 students, near Albany NY. He also is the representative of New York's Commissioner of Education to the school districts in the region.

He has been a participant in AESA conferences and a member of the AESA Governmental Relations Committee for a number of years.

Baldwin has years of public service leadership experience, as executive deputy secretary of state for the state of New York from 1983 to 1995, counsel to the New York State Assembly, school attorney and then chief operating officer for Questar III. He was an elected member of his local board of education.

He earned a B.A. from Union College; J.D. from Albany Law School; and Ed.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University (conferred in October 2007).



Southern Region

John Bass

Mr. John Bass is in his fourth year as executive director of Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC) in Amarillo, Texas, after seven years as deputy executive director. Located in the mostly rural Texas Panhandle, Region 16 ESC serves a total of 63 school districts and two charter schools with approximately 80,000 students in a 26,000 square mile geographical area. John has been a teacher, principal and school district superintendent in several districts throughout Texas.

John knows AESA is the national organization committed to ESAs serving each school district and campus in educating every student. AESA is the national voice articulating the value of ESAs to local, state and Federal officials helping officials understand the vital role, indispensable array of services, and diversity of size, type and mission among ESAs. John is committed to maintaining AESA as the "go to organization" in all ESA matters.



Western Region

Michael Cook

Dr. Michael Cook is the executive director of Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK). Under the direction of Dr. Cook, ESSDACK has grown from 13 to 135 employees and from 21 to 52 member districts, serves over 50,000 students and 4500 educators, and works closely with the Kansas DOE, Kan-Ed and post-secondary institutions. Previous experience includes secondary and post-secondary teaching and administration. Cook currently serves on the Kansas State Council of Superintendents. His experience in public and parochial education and as a member of professional organizations such as United School Administrators, KASA, ASCD, and AASA gives Dr. Cook a broad-based perspective of the needs of education. His specific interest lies in what the future of education should look like.



Note: To review, AESA bylaws call for four-year terms of office and each region will have a bye once every four years. This year, the Central Region has the bye and will not have a nominee.

ESEA Reauthorization includes references to ESAs

Representatives George Miller, and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon, chairman and senior republican of the Committee on Education and Labor; and representatives Dale E. Kildee and Michael N. Castle, chairman and senior republican of the Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee recently released a staff discussion draft of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA – a.k.a. No Child Left Behind). During the open comment period, AESA sent a letter to the committee thanking them for including ESAs and further expanding their role.

AESA is pleased that the staff discussion draft recognizes ESAs in many areas including:

- Set aside of five percent of State Educational Agency (SEA) funds

to support entities such as ESAs to provide technical assistance and support for schools identified for school improvement.

- Recognition that SEAs will work with ESAs to provide technical assistance to LEAs and schools to help address certain identified factors such as providing professional development to “help low-achieving children meet challenging academic standards” and the implementation of “programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents.”
- Building on the tremendous experience and depth of ESAs in the field of professional development by suggesting SEAs will consider providing professional development and technical assistance through ESAs.

- Designating ESAs as part of the educational infrastructure as components of the “System for Support,” which shall, at a minimum, devise additional approaches to increase the opportunity for all students to meet academic standards.

AESA director Brian Talbott stated that a particular strength of ESAs is the ability to provide a network of success, not only throughout a region or state, but also nationally. There are numerous examples throughout the country of ESAs managing district and school improvement projects and adding ESAs to this list would be beneficial to these teams.

For a copy of the complete letter go to www.aesa.us. For a link to the House Committee on Education and Labor go to <http://edlabor.house.gov/>.

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ing alternative paths to licensure and thus highly qualified status.

With the establishment of this new committee, the first order of business was to clarify and enunciate its purpose. The council adopted the following language for the purpose of its newest committee: “To initiate, design and collaborate in research and development efforts on behalf of AESA, and member ESAs, and to provide for technical assistance to the membership.” The next order of business was to define the committee’s goals for the next two years until 2008. These are: 1. Complete the transition from sub-committee to standing committee; 2. Design the research and development procedures the committee will use to determine research projects it will initiate or support; 3. Design, approve and operationalize R&D procedures; and 4. Implement a R&D program.

In 2007, the council and RDC members were surveyed in order to

identify the most critical research needs for the AESA membership. The responses to that survey were analyzed and prioritized by committee members and the results were brought to the council for approval. The council recommended the approval for a research study to be conducted on ESA voluntary accreditation/accountability standards. The RDC was now ready to launch the first open RFP solicitation on behalf of AESA. And so this past August (2007), an RFP was released to the research community. We hope that by early 2008, funding will have been secured and an award can be made to a selected bidder to conduct this critically important research.

Other research initiatives being done in conjunction with the association includes a project with Learning Point Associates, who are conducting a five-state Great Lakes ESA study to better understand the structure, services, policies and

funding of ESAs in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. Bob Stephens, Bill Keane and Hobart Harmon are conducting three separate studies: The First Periodic Profile of State Professional Associations of ESAs; A Compilation of Brief Individual State Network Annual Reports; and How CEO’s View the Frequency of Common Network Leadership and Management Challenges Facing their Agency. Finally, AESA associate director Kari Arfstrom is writing her doctoral dissertation on the entrepreneurial characteristics of ESAs and leaders of ESAs.

ESA members interested in hearing more about the R&D efforts of AESA should contact the current chairperson of the committee, Joan Schuman (Schuman@collaborative.org) or Brian Talbott at [AESA\(btalbott@aes.org\)](mailto:AESA(btalbott@aes.org)).

Promoting lifelong learning

Like birthdays, AESA's national conference comes once a year with all the excitement and anticipation of celebrating a special event. Other conferences may offer a few sessions about ESA efforts, but only the AESA annual conference offers a complete range of general sessions, workshops, networking opportunities and exhibitor resources geared toward ESA's and the roles they play in sustaining education.

Leading for Lifelong Learning is the theme of this year's AESA conference. As a driving force for positive change in school districts, AESAs must lead the way by providing access to the latest knowledge and successful practices. This year's conference is designed to "lead the way" by stimulating thought, initiating action and leveraging resources.

Conference highlights

The 2007 conference has something for everyone from dynamic keynote speakers, informative concurrent sessions, vendor exhibitions and ESA showcases; to an internet café and pre-conference opportunities.

Keynote speakers

Dr. Raymond Reyes, associate vice president for diversity, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA, will speak at Thursday's opening session on the "New Literacies for a 21st Century Authentic Multicultural Democracy."

Stan Collender, managing director at Qorvis Communications in Washington, D.C., and a well-known authority on the Federal budget, will address conference attendees at Friday's general session.

Closing the conference on Saturday is Pedro Noguera, professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and executive director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. Pedro will offer perspectives on racial inequality and diversity in our schools.

Concurrent sessions

Concurrent sessions are organized around five strands: Leading for Learning, Emerging Issues and Trends, Technology Transfer, Tools for Collaboration, and Measuring Success. These sessions are designed to help enhance the knowledge and skills of ESA staff as they respond to requests from schools to address local needs.

Pre-conference and special events

Setting the stage for this dynamic conference are pre-conference and special event activities.

Build trust —On Wednesday, November 28, the AESA Foundation has organized a day-long session on the importance of building, strengthening and restoring trust between ESA boards and their CEOs. Conducted by the Hamilton County ESC, Cincinnati, Ohio, those attending the session will explore the five waves of trust, while learning strategies to create a thriving and successful educational community. Register early, since attendance at this event is limited.

Play golf —Join your colleagues at the 2007 AESA National Golf Championship at the beautiful Bloomingdale Golf Club, named one of Florida's "Top 10" golf courses. This four-person team scramble will begin with a shotgun start on Wednesday, November 28, at 8 a.m. To register and obtain additional information go online to www.aesa.us/golf07.

Be entertained —Enjoy an evening of song and dance by attending a vaudeville style cabaret review at the historic Tampa Theater. Individual tickets must be purchased for this event. See conference registration materials for additional information.

Registration

If you are not registered, do so now! Don't miss this great annual conference. Everyone is invited. To learn more please visit the AESA Website at www.aesa.us.

Come for the conference...stay for the sunshine.

Glenn Pelecky named Iowa Superintendent of the Year!

Congratulations to Glenn Pelecky, chief administrator of Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency in Bettendorf,



Iowa, who was named the 2007/2008 Iowa Superintendent of the Year! School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) sponsors this annual award, which is in its 21st year.

SAI Executive Director Dan Smith said, "Glenn Pelecky exemplifies educational leadership. As chief administrator, he has consistently provided innovative and visionary leadership to the educators and students in the area. SAI is pleased that his colleagues have selected him for this award."

With characteristic modesty, Glenn responded by saying "I am comfortable accepting this honor as recognition of the work of the staff and board of the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency, not any individual effort. We have accomplished a great deal together."

Glenn has been chief administrator at Mississippi Bend since 1988. He was previously a superintendent at Raymond Central and Oxford school districts in Nebraska.

He was nominated by his peers and selected for the award by a committee of Iowa superintendents. Glenn was honored at a governor's awards ceremony in late spring and at SAI's awards banquet in August.

Glenn Pelecky served on the AESA Executive Council from 1999-2003. He served the association as president-elect, president, and past president. Glenn Pelecky continues to serve on the AESA Foundation board.