

## AESA governmental relations. . . Now, more important than ever

The Obama Administration has begun the process of setting forth its education priorities and that agenda is ripe for opportunities for ESAs.

AESA is our presence and our voice in Washington as we continue efforts to secure the future of ESAs as a vital component of America's educational system. And with the Administration's Race to the Top priorities such as they are, ESAs can expand their already essential role in improving and expanding educational opportunity and achieving cost savings through myriad services provided to local school districts.

Education spending will increase by some \$3.5 billion if the President's recently proposed budget is enacted by Congress. Additionally, the Secretary of Education has outlined proposed changes in the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that will reform the school accountability system to measure: student growth, school progress in closing achievement gaps, progress of schools and students towards achieving college and career-ready standards, high school graduation and college enrollment and completion rates.

AESA's Governmental Relations Committee recently convened in Washington for a full day of briefings from congressional staffers and a meeting with officials from the US Department of Education as well as a day of deliberations about AESA's 2010 Legislative Agenda. Those meetings unfolded in a very dynamic

political environment in which the Republicans in Congress continue to frustrate the Administration as it seeks to enact its agenda. A week later, the Republican victory in Massachusetts, turning over the seat held by Senator Edward Kennedy for nearly 50 years, stunned the Administration and congressional majorities and gave the opposition additional incentive to obstruct the President's agenda.

In this milieu, we learned that the Administration would advance a reform agenda related to ESEA reauthorization and that the Congress is likely to be purposeful but plodding in its deliberations about reauthorization. While a focus on improved student achievement and enhanced school accountability are clearly here to stay, the means through which those goals are to be attained will likely be the subject of intense debate that will extend well into this mid-term election year. In spite of optimistic forecasts by the Administration, it is likely ESEA will not be reauthorized until the next Congress — but much of the work will be done this year! And that is where AESA and our governmental relations efforts are critical.

Throughout our time in Washing-



*Jim Baldwin*

ton and since, our Executive Director Brian Talbott and Legislative Liaison Mary Kusler have been advancing an ambitious and comprehensive agenda on behalf of ESAs. As relates to ESEA, this agenda includes:

### **Recognition and expansion of ESAs**

We call for specific recognition and support of educational services agencies in the ESEA reauthorization through creation of a specialized grant program that would strengthen the network of existing ESAs and provide incentives for states without ESAs to create them.

### **Support for rigorous 21st Century standards**

We advocate ESEA support for the development and maintenance of rigorous, 21st Century academic standards, as a resource for states, enabling them to ensure American competitiveness in the global economy. Across the country, ESAs play a key role in standards based curriculum and program development and professional development.

### **Improvement of assessments**

We believe ESEA must support the improvement and increased effectiveness of state assessments to address the needs of each child and provide instructionally useful information that is utilized to improve student achievement. This includes the use

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of high quality adaptive and formative assessments to measure student growth and provide instructionally useful information to teachers and principals in a timely fashion.

### Help for struggling schools

We support ESEA recognition of the role of ESAs as agents of school improvement and call for support of ESA capacity to provide school districts with interventions, capacity building and the technical assistance required to improve, restructure, redesign or replace chronically struggling schools.

### Improvement in the collection and use of data

We advocate for ESEA funding of state and local systems required to acquire, collect, analyze, and disseminate student achievement and school accountability data to ensure that the data collected is used to improve education systems, instruction, leadership, and student performance. Additionally, ESEA should recognize the key role played by ESAs both as repositories of data and as experts in

data analysis for teachers and school leaders.

I encourage each of you to be in regular contact with your Senators and members of Congress. Let them know about what you are doing to advance education in your service area and how they can assist you. Find out who among their staff is the education specialist and become a resource for that person, staying in regular contact on issues of interest. Add their names to your e-blast and mailing lists and invite them to visit your programs to see directly how ESAs are creating the future of education in America. While the challenges we are facing are quite daunting, ESAs thrive in tough times and know how to seize opportunities to serve their customers and expand educational opportunities. Let's vow to use 2010 to show them what we can do!

*Jim Baldwin is Chief Executive Officer of Questar III Rensselaer/Columbia/Greene BOCES at Castleton, NY; and chairs the AESA Governmental Relations Committee.*

## Call for proposals; AESA annual conference

April 30 is the deadline for submitting proposals to present at the December 1-4 AESA annual conference at Savannah, Georgia. The conference theme is "Meeting Challenges ... Celebrating Success." Proposals are submitted electronically. The Call for Proposals and other information on the conference is available from the AESA website at [www.aesa.us](http://www.aesa.us).

This year's conference will have four stands:

- ESA board members setting direction through policy, leadership, and innovation
- ESAs assisting schools in meeting the four U.S. Department of Education principles:
  - o Achieving equity in teacher distribution/certification
  - o Improving the collection and use of data

- o Improving the quality of standards and assessment
- o Improving struggling schools
- Technology leading us into the future through student, financial, online learning, data warehousing, student learning systems, personal learning networks, and global networking.

- Innovative ESA programs that meet challenges and demonstrate success

AESA encourages CEOs/superintendents, board members, and staff to submit proposals. If your proposal includes an AESA Business Partner, Business Member, or other commercial partner, the majority of the presentation must be about the ESA's activity and led by the ESA staff.

# AESA celebrates 2009 national award winners!

## Justus A. Prentice Award

**Dr. William McKinney**, executive director of Region 4 ESC at Houston, Texas, was named recipient of the 2009 Justus A. Prentice Award. *The award is presented annually for contributions through executive leadership in the advancement of educational service agency programs at the regional, state, and national levels.*



Dr. McKinney has served the Region 4 ESC since 1988, working with eight Texas Commissioners of Education. Region 4 represents one of the largest ESAs in the United States.

Through the leadership of Dr. McKinney, Region 4 has become a benchmark for other ESAs across America. In 2003, Dr. McKinney started the Re-Engineering Academy of Region 4. Since 2003, Dr. McKinney and his colleagues have shared Region 4's best practices with over 100 organizations representing 40 states. While continuous improvement is the way in which he works, his leadership is no less innovative. When his agency faced a reduction in state aid, Dr. McKinney lead Region 4 into a transition of serving his customers through a combination of sales and services. To the outside world, this was done in a seamless and smooth transition.

Dr. McKinney has advanced the goals and philosophies of ESAs through his involvement in his state ESA association as well as with AESA, as a member and president of the executive council and as a member of its foundation. In addition, he has made valuable contributions to ESAs through his diligent efforts to secure corporate partnerships, and through his facilitation of the strong working relationship between AESA and the office of the U.S. Secretary of Education.

## Walter G. Turner Award

Michigan's Superintendent of Public Instruction **Michael P. Flanagan** received the 2009 Walter G. Turner Award during the AESA conference at Austin. *The award is presented annually to an individual citizen who has made outstanding contributions in the advancement of educational service agency programs at the regional, state, and/or national levels.*



Turner had a life changing experience as an 8th-grader in Brooklyn, New York. To his surprise, a respected teacher suggested that he join the "Eighty Niner" program that placed 8th grade students into a more advanced 9th grade curriculum. Never considering himself much of a student, Mike rose to the challenge and learned that all students (himself included) could rise to high expectations. This event formed Mike's driving belief that when it comes to student potential for achievement and success that "all really does mean all."

Throughout his career as a K-12 superintendent of the largest ESA in Michigan, executive director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, and the current Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mike Flanagan's commitment to assuring that all students have the resources and opportunity for success has been an underlying driver for his actions and efforts.

## Brian L. Talbott Award

**Geoff Craven**, telecommunications and technical support manager for Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit at Lewisburg, PA, was the first recipient of the Brian L. Talbott Award presented at the 2009 AESA conference. *The AESA Council created the new award in 2009. The Council criteria calls for making the award to recognize contributions in the area of technology innovation and support to local school districts and service agencies.*



Craven leads a team of 13 staff whose everyday work advances the goals and philosophies of ESAs: *service* — developing and maintaining the technology infrastructure of his agency's office, as well as 22 remote sites where various program staff are located; *cost efficiency* — directing an E-Rate application program that saves constituent schools millions of dollars; *innovation* — designing, installing and supporting technology networks for school districts; *responsiveness* — providing technology support for statewide and national agencies through contracts with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, State System of Higher Education and Association of Educational Service Agencies; and *collaboration* — serving as a member of our technology group management team and coordinating the regional technology directors group.

Geoff Craven lives the CSIU's motto: *Enriching Learning, Enriching Lives*. His thirst for knowledge and his passion for helping others are reflected in everything he does for the CSIU and for the community. He demonstrates to professional colleagues and to civic leaders that the agency values staff that understands the importance of service and benevolence.

# Spreading the good news about AESA business partners

## Welcome! Academic Decathlon

The US Academic Decathlon, a non-profit organization started under the direction of former Orange County Superintendent of Schools Robert Peterson in 1968 that went statewide in 1979 and national in 1982 is AESA's newest Institutional Partner.

The Academic Decathlon® is a team competition wherein students match their intellects with students from other schools. Students are tested in ten categories: art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, science, social science, and speech. The theme for the 2010-2011 season is the Great Depression. Details about the competition are available on the US Academic Decathlon website at <http://www.usad.org>.

Gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded for individual events and total scores. Winning teams advance through the local, regional, and state levels of competition. The state champions compete at the national finals.

The Academic Decathlon® is open to high school students anywhere in the United States. A team is made up of nine students all from the same high school, and it includes three A students, three B students, and three C students. For more on eligibility, see the program's eligibility guidelines on its website.

## miSolution discount card saves YOUR money

AESA's miSolution program provided through its Business Partnership with Great American Financial Resources offers discount benefits in a variety of services for just \$10 per month for the entire family. The benefits are:

- Coast to Coast Vision that will save you money on vision needs, including eyeglasses, contact lenses, and laser surgery at more than 12,000 locations.
- New Benefits Retail and Mail Order Pharmacy that will save you an average of 30% on prescription drugs.
- Aetna Dental Access® gives you access to 76,000 dentists with 15%-50% discounts on routine specialty care.
- Consult A Doctor™ offers 24/7 access to its proprietary nationwide cross-coverage network of U.S. licensed physicians for telephone and secure e-mail medical consultations.
- VIP Health and Wellness for savings on vitamins and diabetic supplies.
- Roadside Assistance for roadside assistance 24/7.
- Travel Assistance providing peace of mind knowing help is merely a phone call away.

The program provides quarterly royalties to participating agencies, paid by AESA. The first royalty payments were made to participating agencies in January. For more information, go to the AESA miSolution website by clicking on the miSolution logo on the AESA website at [www.aesa.us](http://www.aesa.us). Agencies interested in participating in the program may contact AESA Executive Director Brian Talbott at [btalbott@aesaus](mailto:btalbott@aesaus).

## Nova designs degree programs for ESA members

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and AESA will be hosting a conference call Sunday, May 16 for candidates interested in NSU's master's and doctorate programs in organizational leadership that are customized for ESA members and constituents. The call will be at 7 pm Eastern (6 pm Central, 5 pm Mountain, 4 pm Pacific).

"A Sunday call is unusual, but we thought it was the best time for everyone, given the difficulty of scheduling a national call during the busy work week," said Brian Talbott, AESA executive director. To register for the call, email Talbott at [btalbott@aesaus](mailto:btalbott@aesaus).

The national cohorts of ESA participants in either the master's or doctorate program will be able to address their educational and business needs and unique non-profit leadership role:

- Find the course content you have been seeking including classes that incorporate the topics of entrepreneurship, non-profit accountability, accreditation, operations, and investing as well as techniques for influencing statutes and political agendas.
- Develop strategic action plans using cutting-edge education and business models that will organize, motivate and guide others to achieve organizational and team goals.
- Benefit from leadership perspectives of the information age and the success of international education and educators.
- Enroll in a program that was designed for you, with the guidance and support of your AESA leadership. Attend an international university that was voted #1 Online University in 2009 by Online Education Database, is the 6th largest not-for-profit accredited university in the country and has the most innovative, accessible, and technologically advanced programs in the nation.