

AESA NEWS

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Association of Educational Service Agencies

June 2004

Become a possibilitarian

The words of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale have always inspired me. As I exit my term on the AESA Executive Council, one of his quotes keeps popping up in my head. He said, "Become a possibilitarian. No matter how dark things seem to be or actually are, raise your sights and see possibilities — always see them, for they're always there."

The educational service unit administrators in Nebraska are used to hearing this kind of logic from me, but let me explain where I'm headed with that thought.

The last four years that I spent as a member of the executive council cemented my belief that the Association of Educational Service Agencies is an extremely important national leader in providing possibilitarian opportunities for educational service agencies, school districts, and children across this nation. Let's take it one step farther: AESA is a world leader. The reason it has reached such significance is the involvement of the membership. If you have been a passive member of this organization, it's time for a change. Your efforts do have a positive effect. You do make a difference. That's a fact I never noticed before accepting a leadership role on the council. But in the past four years I have been extremely impressed by the skills and abilities of my peers as they have moved this organization forward to recognition as a dominant "player" in the education community at a time when it was really needed. Even a small-time farm boy from Iowa transplanted to the plains of Nebraska found a possibilitarian niche.

So much has been accomplished by AESA since its inception. I would like to document some of the highlights that I have seen while serving on the council. Three main initiatives continue to provide the primary thrust of this organizational growth. The most established initiative is the Federal relations effort. This effort continues to grow in stature and attendance, but there is room for improvement. If you or a member of your state has not attended the AESA Legislative Call to Action conference in September or the AESA Federal Relations Meeting in January, you have missed



*Wayne Bell, AESA
central region council
representative,
Nebraska.*

Knowledge, trust and nimbleness

The AESA Summer CEO conference will provide an opportunity to learn about and examine these three characteristics in terms of our roles as leaders in ESAs. Participants will spend Tuesday, July 27, with Jean Frankel, a partner in the firm of Tecker and Associates. Ms. Frankel and her colleagues spend a great deal of time studying organizations and use their findings to help other organizations learn and change.

On Wednesday, July 28, AESA president Tim Gavigan will present to participants the strategic planning that has occurred for our organization. He will solicit your comments and observations on the direction for AESA. We will also meet in a variety of small groups to consider the presentations of Ms. Frankel and discuss the meaning of this in an ESA environment.

In addition to the learning opportunity, participants and their guests will enjoy the beauty of the Atlantic Ocean along Connecticut's southeastern coast. The Monday evening opening reception will be held at the Mystic Aquarium. This will be followed by a dinner with Bob Ballard, the noted undersea explorer, as our speaker. The second evening will feature a New England Lobster Bake at the Mystic Seaport.

You are invited to join in this opportunity for learning and fellowship. For program registration, please go to www.aesa.us to register on-line. Hotel reservations should be made by calling the Mystic Marriott at (800) 228-9290 or www.marriott.com.

The reservation code is [AESAESEA](http://www.aesa.us). Note: Hotel reservations must be made by Sunday, June 27, 2004, in order to obtain the conference rate.

The conference is being managed for AESA by the AESA Foundation.

Don't miss the AESA Summer CEO Conference, July 26-28, 2004, Mystic Marriott Hotel & Space; Gorton, Connecticut. Register today at www.aesa.us.

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an incredible opportunity to learn and help mold congressional attitudes and votes. The electronic communications network that originated from the efforts of this committee continues to keep all of us informed and allows us to be national players from the confines of our local ESA districts. It is my hope that all of you respond when you get the word from Kari Arfstrom that your help is needed contacting senators and congressmen. Having spent time at the meetings in Washington, D.C., it is easy to see that every effort you make creates new possibilities for your agencies and the publics that you serve.

The business partnerships spawned by the second initiative that have been incubated over the past few years provide numerous funding sources for AESA and also provide members with a plethora of opportunities. There was some concern a few years ago that business interests overshadowed program content at the national conference. That's a fine line the executive council always walks. This organization operates on a shoelace when compared to similar organizations. Partnerships are necessary to fund and staff the significant business we are about. As the program of services increases and dues structures remain flat, other revenue is required to maintain the impetus and influence of this organization.

The business partnership committee also is working on an exciting proposal that will be especially interesting for you entrepreneurial folks. It's called the AESA Solutions Marketplace: A Clearinghouse for ESA Products and Services. This is an exciting way to get national exposure for ESAs who develop products and services they want to market to others. This central database displayed on the AESA Web site should be extremely helpful for those ESAs looking for solutions to program needs as well as providing a funding stream for ESAs who have the means and initiative to be at the forefront of program development. The AESA Solutions Marketplace is another exciting example of membership meeting peer needs because of similarity and understanding of purpose.

Membership services, the third initiative, continue to expand as the council committee works to provide activities and training to meet agency requests. This committee is in the final stages of regionalizing operations for membership services to bring more and direct input into the process.

The research and development component of the membership services committee initiative is exciting. Little work has been done outside of the scholarly work of a distinguished few to catalog information and promote research for this organization. The membership committee is working to formalize this venture. Their leadership should provide a way for ESAs to better market the possibilities created by the skills and talents of our member agencies.

This committee also has implemented the pilot project for an aspiring ESA leaders program. This project should be an exciting way for ESAs to develop depth of knowledge for future leaders and will continue to provide possibilitarianism to further expand the influence of AESA.

Effective communication is always a challenge for a growing organization. AESA is no exception. One of the truly exciting things that happened last year was the receipt of a grant from the U.S. Department of Education that provided the means for AESA to create a concise communication link called the ESA Personnel Identification Process (EPIP). This communication system will allow AESA staff to link to key ESA staff in job function groupings so they can begin to share information about needs, existing and developing programs, and whatever else would benefit the membership. Knowledge is power, and with this new communications system AESA has become that much more powerful. I have already inputted the data about the key personnel in Educational Service Unit 10 into the system. I encourage you to do the same. If you have questions contact Peter Young or Aleck Johnson.

In conclusion, the Association of Educational Service Agencies is a fantastic, growing, vibrant organization. You have never had a better opportunity to get involved. The organization needs your regional support as it expands to meet growing membership needs. Do what it takes to get involved and to stay involved. I'm already looking for a new niche in the organization where I can continue to contribute.

The strength of AESA is the people who compose the membership nationwide. Be possibilitarianism. Make a dynamic difference. Contact the AESA executive staff or your regional executive council member and offer your services today.

TransACT offers new compliance and communication center on-line

The No Child Left Behind Act promised parents that they would receive timely and understandable information so they could be involved and make the best choices for their child's education. Keeping this promise has proven to be a daunting task for some school districts.

However, more than 2,500 school districts across the United States are meeting the "parents-right-to-know" challenge by using an on-line collection of model NCLB parent notices and compliance documents developed by TransACT Communications, Inc. at www.mynclb.com. AESA has partnered with TransACT to allow ESAs to purchase subscriptions for their member districts at a reduced price. Such purchases have been made by ESAs in Alaska, California, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Texas, representing approximately 300 school districts.

TransACT has established a robust "one-site" portal for managing NCLB parent communications and compliance. As one superintendent commented, "With principals and program managers using the TransACT service, I can count on all schools to provide common, uniform, and easily understood notices to parents that comply with NCLB requirements."

NCLB also promises that districts will communicate with limited-English-speaking parents in a language they can understand. This commitment reinforces the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent court decisions. Districts must try, when practicable, to provide LES parents with the same information in their home language that is sent to the

attention of other parents. Providing such information related to NCLB has become more practicable and affordable within the TransACT collection. Subscribers currently have access to 40+ notices in English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Hmong, and Vietnamese.

According to Dr. Vicki Holland, director of student support services, Region 9 ESC in Texas, the TransACT site is a valuable resource to which she turns for answers to many NCLB questions by her member districts. "The NCLB National Resources folder on the TransACT site provides a powerful search engine for finding information contained in the law, regulations, and the numerous Non-Regulatory Guidance papers published by the U.S. Department of Education."

TransACT has recently updated their Web site to include many new features and services. Now called the **Compliance & Communication Center**, the site not only offers NCLB compliance documents, but more than 60 general education (GenEd) letters and forms available in 23 languages covering health & medical, school administration, national school lunch program and special services. They also offer training for their products.

TransACT's mission is to be the premier provider of Web-based school-to-home communications that enable districts to meet their parental communication requirements. Visit www.transact.com to learn more about their products and services or call Andrew Cary, national ESA sales manager at (410) 446-8923.

Educators' Call to Action: Federal Advocacy Conference

Whether this is your first Educators' Call to Action: Federal Advocacy Conference or you remember when it was called "I Care" and "We Care," plan to attend and participate September 15-17, 2004, in Washington D.C.

Federal Dollars are tighter than ever and September is the time when Congress makes final decisions on funding for education programs. Your voice matters. You and key members of your staff can alert your elected members of Congress to how these dollars impact real programs in your agency and the districts you serve.

Two new sessions, or caucuses, have been added especially for directors of migrant education and Head Start programs within ESAs. We encourage those staff members to attend this year and interact with insiders at the U.S. departments of education and health and human services.

Briefing sessions also are planned on education appropriations, the reauthorization of special education/IDEA, and other education topics including the Perkin's Vocational and Technical Education Act, the Higher Education Act, the

school lunch program, and other legislation being heard by Congress. Don't worry if this is your first time attending the conference, pointers and tips about how to meet with your senators and representatives will be shared. Please make your Hill appointments prior to coming to D.C.

Back by popular demand we will have an end-of-the-year wrap-up on court decisions from around the nation given by Maree Sneed from the law firm of Hogan and Harston LLP. We listened to your feedback when you asked for more time with the panel of presenters from the U.S. Department of Education. We've added additional time for your questions from these distinguished panelists.

Call the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave., (800) 233-1234, and reserve your room now! The room code is "AESA;" the rate is \$189/night. The conference registration fee is \$360 when paying on-line with a credit card and \$390 when paying with PO/check/fax/mail. You may register on-line at www.aesa.us. Look for a brochure with more information arriving at your agency by the end of the month.

Nominations now 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/or 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/or 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/or 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 (s) 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 23, 2004, and recipients will be recognized at the AESA Annual Conference, Exposition & Showcases in Phoenix, Arizona, December 1-4, 2004. Application forms are available on-line at <http://www.aesa.us/awards.html> or by mail upon request by contacting the AESA office at (703) 875-0739. Awards are based on merit and may or may not be given annually.

Calendar of events

AESA Summer CEO Conference, July 26-28, 2004

Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa, Groton, Connecticut.

(Please see conference article on this page 1.)

Register now for this exciting leadership conference at www.aesa.us.

Educators' Call to Action: Federal Advocacy, September 15-17, 2004

Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington DC

Please plan to attend this election-year conference when last-minute funding appropriations are being determined. Brochures were sent to all ESA members or you can find it on-line at www.aesa.us. Register now for this important event.

AESA Annual Conference, Exposition & Showcases — December 1-4, 2004

J.W. Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa, Phoenix, Arizona.

It is time to register for the one event you cannot miss, whether you are the superintendent, staff, or board member of an ESA. Why not highlight your agency this year and sign up for an agency showcase? Hosting a booth on the exhibit floor affords an excellent opportunity to showcase your products and services. Review the agenda and other information at www.aesa.us. Don't forget: now is the time to reserve your hotel rooms, too!

EPIP: Have YOU signed on yet?

The ESA Personnel Identification Program (EPIP) is well underway. At this point, over 20 percent of AESA member agencies have entered data into the system.

In this effort, AESA is requesting that our members enter into EPIP some basic information about their agencies such as the number of employees and the amount of the total budget. The gathering of this data will enable AESA to more accurately portray our impact to various audiences, including members of Congress or the U.S. Department of Education.

Additionally, we have identified some 15 areas in which our members provide service to their local school districts. In an effort to get current and clear information to the most appropriate ESA person, we have asked for the names and e-mail addresses of these key people.

Letters have been sent to the CEO/superintendent/executive director of each ESA member providing a user name and password, and asking this person to enter the requested information. If you have not received your letter, please contact ajohnson@aes.us or pyoung@aes.us.

EPIP will be a great tool for AESA and our members. All you need to do is enter your data. Please do it today!