

Progress; the next step

by Colleen Wilcox



Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like to have lived in Europe during the middle ages—to have lived among the ruins of a more advanced civilization, where the concept of “progress” was not taken for granted. What does it mean that a smaller percentage of students in our public schools today will graduate than in the prior decade? What does it mean that our children entering school today are the first generation in our history to have a shorter life expectancy than their predecessors?

Surely we know more today about what it takes to educate students—about safety and nutrition and academic standards and leadership. But I am not certain that has translated into meaningful change in our schools.

Like the U. S. Department of Education, we all have a wall chart showing all of our students 100 percent proficient by the year 2014. It seems so long ago that we were going to be first in the world in math and science by the year 2000.

In accordance with a recent court settlement, my staff and I have begun visiting every school in our county whose students have scored in the first, second or third decile on academic measures. We are looking to see if they have textbooks and instructional materials, if their facilities are safe and clean, if their teachers are qualified for their teaching assignments, and if parents and the public are appropriately involved. We are filling out checklists and writing reports. We are seeing a lot.

We are seeing the children—children who may or may not have heard that we aren’t first

in the world in math and science—children who might not be aware that we are not on target to be one hundred percent proficient by 2014. We are seeing children who are learning to read, and to draw, and to play—children who are thinking and feeling and experiencing what is before them.

It is a miracle to me how much these children learn, how remarkably they grow. I see the skills of their teachers. I know the support they receive, the circumstances that come together that make this learning possible. The structure of our public education system is there to support student learning. The miracle is how each child takes that very next step—how each child incorporates exactly what it is they need at each moment to learn the next thing, and then the next.

The year 2014 is less than a decade away. I want every child to be proficient in every subject and skill by that time. So do you. But that’s not what I want the most.

What I want the most is the miracle today. I want each child to take that next step, today.

Our children won’t progress very far unless their teachers progress, and their teachers can’t take their own next steps until we all take that step with them. As educational service agencies, we help provide the training and support our schools and teachers need to go forward. To move forward as educational service agencies, we need

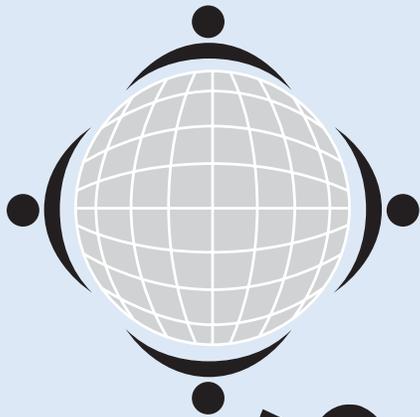
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NEWS

AESA



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Leading with data; measuring with success

The 2005 AESA Foundation Summer CEO Conference will bring an opportunity for ESA CEOs and their key staff members to consider how they are measuring the success of their agencies and the tools that are available for them to utilize in this process, such as Baldrige, digital dashboard and data driven management.

Our conference planners know that ESAs enjoy learning from each other. Therefore, four ESAs who are working in these areas will make presentations as to how they got started, their success to date and the areas that they have identified for further improvement. Readings will be provided prior to the conference so that all participants can arrive prepared. Facilitated discussions will allow those present to continue to learn from one another. Our facilitator is Susan Leddick of Profound Knowledge Resources, Inc. Many will remember Susan's fine work with us during the summer CEO conferences in Seattle, Washington, and Marco Island, Florida.

The conference will begin with dinner on Monday, July 25, and conclude just before noon on Wednesday, July 27. We will be meeting at the Heidel House, a retreat and conference facility on Green Lake in Wisconsin. As some participants like to bring their spouse/families or guests, please go to www.heidelhouse.com to see what local events and activities are available.

In addition to the learning opportunity, participants and their guests will enjoy the beauty of Wisconsin. Local arrangements are being coordinated by Joan Wade, administrator of CESA 6 in Oshkosh.

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 Heidel House at (800) 444-2812. The room rate is \$179. The reservation code is AESA. Note: Hotel reservations must be made by Friday, June 24, 2005, in order to obtain the conference rate.

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

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the support and sharing of experience that only we can provide for each other. When we share our experience and explore new possibilities through AESA, we all take our next steps.

Sometimes I worry that in public education we may not be making "adequate yearly progress" toward our common goals. Progress really can be more difficult than we envision when we set our goals. But when I go into the classroom, I see the miracle of children taking the next step. That's why we need AESA—to help us take our next step.

Colleen Wilcox is superintendent of the Santa Clara County Office of Education, San Jose, California, and Western Region representative on the AESA executive council.

ESAs connect at annual conference

You have returned from a stimulating, exciting AESA conference with your head reeling with information and new ideas. Your suitcase is finally emptied and the notes you collected are tossed in a corner of your desk. Now what? A nugget of an idea is brewing. That presentation you heard—could it work at your ESA?

LEARN, a Regional Education Service Center in southeastern Connecticut, has reasons to say yes. They have reaped the benefits of attending AESA conferences by following up on what they heard. Successful programs that other ESAs across the country are carrying out have led to cooperative ventures in Connecticut. A presentation by Strategic Energy, based on their electricity-purchasing consortium developed in partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania, sparked the creation of a similar consortium in Connecticut designed to save districts money. Region IV, an educational service center in Texas, demonstrated a database tracking system called escWorks. As a result, LEARN purchased access to it and is now using escWorks for workshop registrations, documenting interactions with families, tracking services for districts, and generating reports. LEARN has introduced it to other RESCs in the state.

“Systems Thinking” came to Connecticut after LEARN staff heard an AESA conference presentation by Jamshid Gharajedaghi and Susan Leddick. As a result, there have been numerous opportunities for them to present workshops on this method in the state. LEARN organized workshops

to include superintendents, board of education members, internal staff, members of the Chamber of Commerce and non-profit organizations. One district has used the Systems Thinking concepts for long range planning purposes.

A session at the 2004 conference in Phoenix has prompted LEARN to invite staff from Jefferson County (Ohio) ESC to demonstrate their Virtual Learning Academy, an e-learning program for grades 3-12. This could lead to possible adoption of a similar program in Connecticut.

AESA conferences are crossroads where ESAs share, discover, and develop ideas with the help of one another. LEARN is a good example of an ESA building on a strategy shared at a conference and incorporating it to benefit its own region. It can happen at your ESA. See you in Savannah in December 2005.

Article provided by Dorothy Dugas Robinson, director of Center for Instructional Technology at LEARN, one of Connecticut's six ESAs.

Responding to needs— announcing a NEW AESA event

For some time now, AESA board members and CEOs have been asking for an event that would address their needs as they work together for the good of their educational service agency. Such topics as board/ CEO relationships, the proper role of the board, managing conflict, ethics, diversity, selecting a new CEO and visioning for the future have all been suggested as worthy of exploration.

While AESA has provided concurrent sessions at the annual conference to explore some of these topics, feedback from participants has indicated that more time for the opportunity to learn from each other and for discussion was needed. The AESA council has therefore asked the AESA Foundation to create a pre-conference event just prior to the 2005 annual conference in Savannah, Georgia.

As of this date, planning for the PreCon is underway. Suggestions have been received from groups of board members and CEOs in a number of states. The planning committee, chaired by Ron Fielder of the Grant Wood AEA in Iowa, consists of both ESA board members and CEOs. This group will design a strong and meaningful program.

You will want to consider attending this event. It is recommended that both board members and CEOs attend together. The event will be held on Wednesday, November 30, 2005, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Westin Hotel in Savannah. The registration fee will be \$125 per person, which includes a luncheon.

You will soon receive your registration packet for the annual conference. You can register for the PreCon either using the form provided or save time and money by registering on-line.

Calendar



20th

Annual Conference



November 30-December 3, 2005

Savannah International
Trade & Convention Center



See y'all in Savannah!

☆ **This is the only national conference dedicated solely to Educational Service Agencies.** This conference addresses the unique characteristics of ESAs, including interaction with customer districts, state agencies, and federal agencies.

☆ **Presentation Strands**

- Enhancing All Student Performance: Planning the Details, Executing the Plans
- Technology: Blueprints for 21st Century Learning Strategies
- Entrepreneurial Initiatives & Collaborations: Designing Imaginative Team Work
- Emerging Success Stories: Architectural Wonders
- Governance and Leadership: Foundation for Superstructures Based on Standards, Accreditation, and Measurement

☆ **Concurrent sessions tailored to meet the needs of directors, staff and board members of your ESA.**

Register Now! Make your reservation today to help lay the foundation for more successful services by Educational Service Agencies. For more information and to register, visit www.aesa.us

AESA

AESA Summer CEO Conference - Save the Date!

AESA Foundation Chair Ron Fielder has announced that the 2005 summer CEO conference will start with dinner on Monday, July 25, and conclude by noon on Wednesday, July 27. The Heidel House Resort, Green Lake, Wisconsin, will be the site for this event.

The theme of the 2005 conference will be *Leading with Data/Measuring for Success*. During the sessions, ESA executives will share how they are using data and measurement systems to drive decision making and organizational development in their respective ESAs.

Educators' Call to Action: Federal Advocacy

This is the time of year to head to Capitol Hill where last-minute decisions are being made regarding education funding and programs. Come and join the excitement! September 14-16, 2005
Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington D.C.

AESA Annual Conference

Held this year at the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center with three hotels to choose from. This year's theme is *Architecture for Successful Service*. Over 80 concurrent sessions will be held. See page 3 for information on the new pre-conference event!
November 30 - December 3, 2005
Savannah, Georgia.

For further information regarding AESA conferences, please go to www.aesa.us.