



ESAs: making a difference

by Brian Talbott, AESA Executive Director

The number of states with ESAs has grown over the past few years, and so has our reputation on Capitol Hill, at the U. S. Department of Education (USED), and with other Federal agencies. Language specifically pertaining to educational service agencies can now be found in all four major education bills. AESA is often called upon to submit language for consideration as bills move forward on Capitol Hill and when rules and regulations are being written or revisited. AESA is invited to many top-level meetings at the USED. We are constantly in contact with members of congress, their staff and department personnel. We have gone from being a sideline player to being in the midst of the action. This development of our role is directly related to the maturation of our government relations committee and the process of developing an annual legislative agenda, and the work of individual AESA members who take time to call, email, and meet with their respective congressional members about issues specific to ESAs.

AESA also has become more proactive in meeting the needs of our members by commissioning various white papers and legal briefs to assist ESAs as they strive to implement Federal laws, or assist their local districts with this task. This past fall, AESA commissioned the well respected law firm of Hogan and Hartson, LLP, to write a white paper on the role of ESAs in delivering supplemental educational services as provided in the No Child Left Behind Act. You can review the AESA

2006 legislative agenda, as well as the SES white paper mentioned above, at www.aesa.us. When NCLB was reauthorized a few years back, AESA commissioned two papers on the topic. They can be found online and are still pertinent.

Recently, I was reappointed to serve on the board of the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). USAC is an independent, not-for-profit corporation, designated as the permanent administrator of the Federal universal service support mechanism by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). USAC's mission is to advance the Federal policy of ensuring that all Americans receive the benefits of affordable access to telecommunications and information services. USAC operates four programs: high cost, low income, rural health care, and school and libraries. The high cost and low income programs provide consumers in all parts of the country with affordable telephone service, regardless of where they live or their level of income. The rural health care program ensures that qualified rural health care providers pay no more than their urban counterparts for comparable telecommunications services. The schools and libraries program, also known as the "E-rate program" makes tele-



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communications affordable for the nation's schools and libraries. This program provides discounts on the cost of services, with the highest discounts going to entities serving the most disadvantaged. I am honored that FCC Chairman Kevin Martin reappointed me to this significant position, and that I am able to represent the education sector in these important meetings.

While we have all read about the recent proposed cuts to education, technology and training programs in the President's proposed budget for 2007, here is what we are proposing that ESAs around the nation do to counter these proposed cuts. This is not a time to sit back and talk about how dismal education funding is, but rather this is a time to take positive action. This is an election year, and we need to show all of our congressional members and candidates what these Federal dollars mean to our students, local districts, and our ESAs. Show them the impact that proposed cuts would have on your services.

Invite your Federally elected members of congress and all congressional candidates to your agency this spring and summer. Have a

prepared list of the Federal funds your agency has received over the past five years and what the outcomes have been. Be sure to include all sources of funding at the Federal level, including E-rate. It would also be helpful to have a chart showing the Federal funds your local school districts have also received. If your Federal funding has been reduced show this graphically. Detail for them the role your agency has had in either assisting or procuring these funds. If your agency has been the fiscal agent, explain how this works and how your staff has been able to perform the services necessary to reach the goals of the stated Federal programs. Let us be the "go to guys" as former Secretary Paige called us. Instead of going negative, let's show how Federal funds are working at the local and regional levels. Let's show why cuts to these programs are not wise; and in fact if our students are going to be able to compete in tomorrow's economy, we must increase—not decrease—Federal funding. Let's show why we are the best choice in education and why ESAs are best positioned to leverage resources and advocate on behalf of the districts we serve.

Call for *Perspectives* manuscripts

The editorial board of *Perspectives* "A Journal of Research and Opinion" about educational service agencies is seeking manuscripts for the fall 2006 edition. Editor Bill Keane is looking for articles of all types, but especially interested in articles that are research-based which demonstrate the effectiveness and success of ESAs. Of special interest are research articles that utilize data to demonstrate successful ESA programs.

The deadline for draft articles is May 1, 2005, but early submissions are particularly welcome. Questions about manuscripts format can be addressed to our editor, Bill Keane, at Keane@oakland.edu.

Apply for the 2006-2007 Executives in Residence Program

AESA's Executives in Residence Program was designed to meet the increasing need for educational leaders to be active and influential at local, state, and national levels. The AESA council recognized the lack of preparatory programs in masters, specialist and doctoral programs related to the special skills, abilities, and leadership qualities necessary to administer educational service agencies. In addition, promoting and facilitating collaborative work among and between ESAs both regionally and nationally was seen as a critical need to be addressed by the executive council. Applications for the 2006-07 program year are now open. Please consider applying to participate or to host an executive in residence. The program brochure and applications for the individual or host ESA agency are available online at www.aesa.us.

Now in its third year, the Executives in Residence Program is endorsed by the AESA council (through the membership services committee) in an effort to continue to add value to AESA members. The three participants this year are David Kwiatkowski, CESA 8, Gilett, WI; Andy Pechacek, Region 4 ESC, Houston, TX; and Mike Smoczyk, NE Metro 916, White Bear Lake, MN.

The purpose of the program is threefold:

- a) to produce quality ESA leaders prepared to enter formal leadership positions,
- b) to cultivate future AESA national leaders through current ESA executive mentoring, and
- c) to increase networking and communication across the nation's ESAs.

Highlights of the yearlong program include participation at the summer CEO Leadership Conference, the September Educators' Call to Action: Legislative Advocacy conference, and the December AESA Annual Conference. In addition, each resident will be required to participate in a one- to two-week residency at another ESA working directly with the CEO on relevant leadership issues. The residency requirement is intended to be experiential in nature, coordinated by the host ESA's CEO, and offer insights into the internal workings of CEO leadership challenges and issues.

The program will begin and end at the summer CEO conference, with participants being introduced to a variety of leadership topics over the course of 12 months. Applications for those who want to participate or ESAs wishing to host residents are available at www.aesa.us. The deadline for submitting applications is April 14, 2006. A limited number of individuals will be selected.

2006 summer CEO conference explores balanced leadership

Continuing a tradition of quality conferences, the AESA Foundation will sponsor an opportunity for ESA CEOs and their key staff to learn about balanced leadership and to see how these concepts are being carried out in ESAs throughout the nation. Balanced leadership identifies specific leadership responsibilities and practices that are correlated with student achievement.

The keynote speaker will be Tim Waters, president and CEO at Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning (McREL) based in Aurora, CO. Tim has done extensive research and is the author of a book on this topic which will be released soon. Knowing that our members enjoy learning from each other, a Call for Proposals will go out in the near future so that ESAs carrying out balanced leadership programs can be identified and chosen to make presentations to the conference. There will be many opportunities for discussion, both facilitated and informal.

Based on evaluations from prior years, the confer-

ence will be extended one full day. We will begin with a reception and dinner on Monday, July 24, and will conclude just before lunch on Thursday, July 27. We will be meeting at the Benson Hotel in Portland, OR. A conference rate of \$129 per night has been secured. The hotel will begin accepting reservations on March 1. Please mention the AESA conference when making reservations. Note that room reservations at the conference rate must be made on or before June 23, 2006. To learn more about this excellent facility, please go to www.bensonhotel.com.

In addition to the wonderful learning experience, participants will have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Pacific Northwest. Edward Schmitt, CEO of the Multnomah ESD in Portland, OR, and a member of the AESA council, has been working to provide participants with a menu of activities.

Registration will open on the AESA Web site on March 1. The conference registration will be \$365 (online with credit card) or \$395 with purchase order or check. Join us for this great learning and networking opportunity!

Council election results

Congratulations to the following candidates who were elected to the AESA executive council! They will take office in April 2006.

Eastern Region



Joan E. Schuman
Executive Director, Hampshire Educational Collaborative, Northhampton, MA

Central Region



Joe Crozier
Chief Administrator, Great River AEA 16 & Southern Prairie AESA 15, Burlington, IA

Western Region



Terry Munther
Superintendent Educational Service District 101 Spokane, WA

CALENDAR of events

Summer CEO Leadership Conference

Presented by the AESA Foundation
July 24-27, 2006, Portland, OR
(See article page 3 for further details)

Educators' Call to Action: Federal Advocacy Conference

September 13-15, 2006, Washington, DC
Hotel and registration information will be posted in June. Join your colleagues for this important event. September is when all the last minute negotiations are occurring in regards to appropriations. Come and hear how education funding is fairing and do your part to advocate for changes.

AESA Annual Conference

November 29 - December 2, 2006
Desert Springs J.W. Marriott Resort & Spa, Palm Desert, CA.

Start planning now for AESA's 2006 annual conference in Palm Desert, CA, November 29 - December 2, 2006. Rooms at J.W. Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa are available now for \$199/night. AESA has implemented a room reservation policy, so please read carefully before calling to make your reservations. Call the hotel directly at (888) 538-9459; please have ready your arrival and departure dates and that you are attending the "AESA annual conference."

Once again the AESA Foundation will host a leadership pre-conference event for ESA Boards and CEOs on Wednesday, November 29. The AESA golf tournament will occur on this day as well. More information about each event will be posted online as it becomes available.

AESA room reservation policy: All rooms must be reserved in the name of the person who will be staying in the room. No longer can a group of rooms be held under one person's name. You must know who will be attending prior to making your hotel reservations. If you have a group of ten or more attendees, you will be required to sign an affiliate agreement when you register for your block of rooms. This affiliate agreement outlines payment and cancellation procedures, including a clause stating that affiliates will be responsible for a maximum of 85 percent of the total guest room nights to which they committed to in the agreement. Please call Joe Martinez at (760) 341-1820 to arrange for the affiliate agreement. Reserving rooms, and when necessary canceling rooms, is the responsibility of the individual or ESA making the arrangements.

Call for presentations—Submit your proposals from March through the end of April. Notification of presenters will occur in June for planning purposes.

Exhibitor, Showcase and Sponsors Prospectus—The brochure will be posted and sent in May.

Conference registration—Opens later this spring. Brochures will be sent to all AESA members and past attendees.