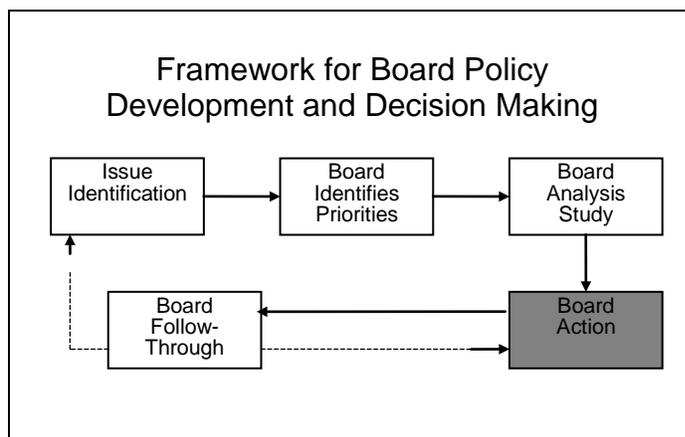


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

September 26, 2013



Agenda Item: Area Education Agency (AEA) Accreditation – Great Prairie AEA

Iowa Goal: All PK-12 students will achieve at a high level.

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code section 273.11(1) directs the State Board to develop standards and rules for the accreditation of area education agencies (AEAs). The Department of Education is directed to develop and establish, in consultation with the AEAs, an accreditation process for AEAs. Iowa Code section 273.10(1). The State Board shall determine whether a program of an AEA shall receive initial accreditation or remain accredited...based upon the recommendation of the Director of the Department of Education after a study of the factual and evaluative evidence...in terms of the accreditation standards adopted by the State Board. Iowa Code section 273.10 (3 and 3a).

Presenter: Sharon Hawthorne, Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation to Great Prairie AEA

Background: According to the AEA Accreditation Process used by the Department, each AEA is visited on a five-year rotation to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of Iowa Administrative Code 281—72.

Great Prairie Area Education Agency Accreditation Report

Purpose The central purpose of the accreditation visit is to help Area Education Agencies (AEAs) improve the quality and focus of their services, which will in turn assist schools and school districts to improve learning for students.

Iowa’s AEAs are a critical part of the support structure for schools and ultimately for children. With so much at stake, maintaining high standards or quality in programs and services is a top priority.

On-Site Visit Onsite visits are an essential part of the AEA accreditation process.

AEA site visits conducted during the school year reflect the requirements outlined in 281—IAC Chapter 72. As a result, the following procedures were applied:

- Assessment of the eight accreditation standards through review of their associated descriptors:
 - School-Community Planning
 - Professional Development
 - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
 - Diverse Learner Needs
 - Multicultural, Gender Fair
 - Media
 - School Technology
 - Leadership
- Assessment of common criteria that apply to each standard:
 - Agency services are equitably available.
 - The agency includes a process to monitor implementation of the services.
 - The agency has a process to measure the effectiveness of services provided.
 - The agency has a process to measure the efficiency of services provided.
 - Assessment of the services provided for established agency-wide goals.

Site Visit The agency can address accreditation expectations.

Desired Results The agency can consistently deliver services that, in aggregate, meet the eight accreditation standards.

The agency can use the site visit findings to continuously improve the quality

of services to positively impact student learning.

Levels of Accreditation

Accreditation applies to the entire agency, not to individual programs, services, or actions.

281—IAC Chapter 72 designates two accreditation options:

- The State Board of Education grants Continuation of Accreditation if the agency meets all standards and other requirements.
 - The State Board of Education grants Conditional Accreditation if the agency has not met all standards and other requirements.
-

Standards Met or Not Met

AEA Accreditation Standards

- School-Community Planning - **Met**
 - Professional Development - **Met**
 - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment - **Met**
 - Diverse Learner Needs - **Met**
 - Multicultural/Gender Fair - **Met**
 - Media - **Met**
 - School Technology – **Met**
 - Leadership - **Met**
-

Chapter 63

Chapter 63 of the Iowa Code outlines the program requirements for the provision of Educational Programs and Services for Pupils in Juvenile Homes.

The following facilities, located within the boundaries of Great Prairie AEA, were reviewed as a part of the agency's accreditation visit:

- Shelter School - Ottumwa
- South Iowa Detention Center - Montrose

No non-compliance with the requirements of 281—IAC Chapter 63 was noted during the review of self-assessment data provided to the site visit team prior to the visit.

Overall Observation of the Site Visit Team

Continuous Improvement

Data collected during the document review and AEA and Local Education Agency (LEA) interviewees indicated a surface level view of the effectiveness of its services and programs.

It was apparent to the site visit team the agency has begun a focus for systemic continuous improvement. However, the team concluded there was a lack of systemic data collection across programs and services during the accreditation cycle. This prohibits Great Prairie from engaging in the continuous improvement process across and within all programs and services.

Consider annual use of the State Wide AEA Core Work System to build capacity within the AEA and ultimately to provide a cycle of systemic continuous improvement for the program and services so to further impact Great Prairie AEA schools and districts. If more information is needed about this system contact Rod Howell or Sheila King from Heartland AEA at rhowell@aea11.k12,ia.us and sking@aea11.k12,ia.us

Overall Strengths of the Agency

Unifying the Agency

Great Prairie AEA has made great strides in unifying common vision and goals since the reorganization five years ago.

Agency interviewees noted the establishment of common goals and expectations along with opportunities for collaboration to align services throughout the various regions in the agency.

Determining LEA Needs

AEA interviewees reported services are aligned to the needs of each LEA there is no longer an “umbrella of services.”

The agency’s administrative council meets with each LEA’s administrative team to discuss local needs and tailor services to support those needs.

In addition, the agency is increasing the use of data to determine needs of individual LEAs. Examples noted included the following:

- Examination of student data
 - Cabinet/Board Visits
 - Technology audit
 - DE Customer Survey
 - District Reports and Plans such as Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIPs), Annual Progress Reports (APRs) and Site Visit Reports
-

Increased Use of Agency Services

AEA and LEA interviewees reported the agency is striving to increase use of services by all LEAs, including those who might have previously been reluctant users.

Strategies mentioned were:

- Building on areas of interest indicated by LEAs
- Sharing LEA data and services available to meet needs
- Sharing multiple formats for outreach

AEA interviewees expressed the agency has a goal of being persistent in a positive manner to encourage reluctant users to take advantage of agency services.

LETRS

According to AEA and LEA interviewees the agency has invested resources in supporting the implementation of Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) utilizing the components of Iowa Professional Development Model.

The agency is providing LETRS training on a rotating basis to build and sustain the capacity of teachers and agency staff. This has included both general and special education teachers as well as agency Core Team members. Early Childhood (EC) teachers and agency staff will be participating in the EC LETRS training during the spring of 2013.

AEA interviewees indicated the coaching component of LETRS provided by the AEA is the key to successful implementation.

Overall Recommendations for the Agency

Support for LEAs

AEA staff noted the changing needs of LEAs. As a result they are re-examining support strategies.

There has been a shift in the agency's delivery model that now assigns one behavioral and one learning support consultant to each LEA. The goal is to train all agency personnel to have capacity in their area of expertise, but also across all agency services.

The agency should consider staff concerns regarding the balance of assignments and equitable workloads and the provision of equitable support to LEAs. Additional consideration should be given to maintaining a balance between interdisciplinary collaboration and collaboration with disciplinary peers.

It is also suggested that the agency consider the feasibility of building the capacity of agency personnel across all agency services. It may be more productive to develop a database or catalog of "experts" in the various services provided by the agency rather than making all staff an expert in all services.

Agency Resources

AEA interviewees indicated diminishing agency resources which can result in the need for resource reallocation.

It is recommended the agency analyze multiple sources of data in order to ensure the core work services being delivered are efficient and effective in addressing the strengths and needs of the student population for this region.

Data sources analyzed to make informed decision regarding the allocation of agency resources and balance of core works delivered by the agency may include information from:

- Internal data teams
- Agency cabinet meetings with district cabinet
- Survey data
- Student achievement data
- Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP)
- Annual Progress Reports (APR)
- Department of Education Site Visit reports
- Visible Learning by John Hattie

To offset diminishing resources, the agency may consider utilizing its website to provide information and other resources supporting teaching and learning. The current structure of the website is more of a directory rather than a site

that provides links to information.

For example, the website could be used to help enhance the face to face presentations provided by AEA staff by posting Power Points used for a presentation that include helpful links.

Agency Data Team

AEA and LEA interviewees reported the agency has developed a formalized structure of data teams to support LEAs to collect, analyze, report and use various types of student data (academic, behavioral, social/emotional). Data teams were established and piloted during 2011-2012. The agency has continued to expand the data teams to support additional LEAs to expand the utilization of data to inform changes.

It is recommended the agency continue to expand the capacity of the data teams to focus on data driven decision making in order to use the data to make instructional decisions and enhance student outcomes, including academic, behavioral, social and emotional, across the agency.

Increase Community Awareness of Agency

During parent interviews it was shared the general community was not aware of Great Prairie AEAs services.

Outreach could be expanded to include Early ACCESS (EA) partners, pre-school and child care providers, educators, parents, social service agencies, hospitals, doctors, community media outlets and the business community.

Consider a publicity campaign using the local paper and cable stations in Ottumwa and Burlington to provide information to the community regarding the purpose of the agency. It may be beneficial to hold an open house for the community or develop a virtual tour of the agency's facilities and have it on the website. Check with local schools and school districts to learn how they put their schools in the local spotlight. One thing that could be spotlighted are the student art displays that are in your hallways.

School/Community Planning (SCP) Standard

**Expectations
IAC
281—72.4(1)**

The AEA shall deliver services for school-community planning.

The AEA assists schools and school districts in:

- Assessing needs of all students
 - Developing collaborative relationships among community agencies
 - Establishing shared direction
 - Implementing actions to meet goals
 - Reporting progress towards goals
-

**Strength:
Assessing
Learner Needs**

LEA and AEA interviewees indicated the agency has established an organization of support to assess learner needs. These supports include:

- Data teams work with LEAs to guide instructional practices
 - Leadership drives data collection and analysis
 - Involvement with the Response to Intervention (RtI) process to increase LEA practitioners' ability to make decisions based on the data
 - Collection and review of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) child and family outcome data to make improvements in Early ACCESS (EA) assessment system
-

**Strength:
Community
Relationships**

AEA, LEA and parent interviewees shared the agency has established community relationships and outreach support. Interviewees noted:

- Partnerships with signatory agencies for referrals, screenings, and trainings for Early ACCESS (EA) services
- Challenging Behavior Team works with Dr. Sean Casey from the Iowa Department of Education and Dr. Dave Wacker from the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics: Center for Disabilities and Development
- Indian Hills and Southeastern Community Colleges
 - Secondary Transitional Education Program (STEP)
 - Summer Enrichment program for talented and gifted
 - Joint Diversity Conference with Indian Hills Community College
 - Southeastern Community College support for career education
- Collaboration with other Area Education Agencies including sharing professional development opportunities
- Providing a variety of resources and community activities for parents with children receiving EA services to attend including brochures and handouts, websites, YouTube videos, support groups, camps, trainings, and guest speakers

**Strength:
Shared
Direction**

LEA and AEA interviewees indicated the agency is working toward a shared direction for implementing actions to meet goals and report progress. This included:

- Assisting districts with implementation of the Iowa Core
- Providing staff training on EdInsight and Heartland Educational Assessment Resource Toolbox (HEART)
- Addressing cultural proficiency with support of a team providing training and evaluating staff change using a cultural proficiency scale

**Recommendation:
Support for
Children with
Mental Health
Issues**

Some LEA interviewees expressed concern for the dwindling availability of support for children with mental health issues from the AEA.

The site visit team recommends the agency consider contacting outside agencies for additional support concerning mental health issues. Once a list of agencies is compiled inform districts of these resources and place links on the agency's website. One suggested contact is National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) at www.nami.org

Professional Development (PD) Standard

Expectations: The AEA shall deliver professional development services for schools, school districts and AEA instructional, administrative, and support personnel.
IAC
281—72.4(2)

The AEA:

- Anticipates and responds to schools’ and school districts’ needs
 - Supports proven and emerging education practices
 - Aligns with school and school district comprehensive long-range and annual improvement goals
 - Uses adult learning theory
 - Supports improved teaching
 - Uses theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching
 - Addresses professional development activities as required by the Iowa Code or administrative rules
-

Strength: Multiple LEA interview groups reported agency staff has been helpful in supporting LEA administrators and teachers to implement research based practices and offer professional development for the following:
Research-Based Practices

- Gradual Release of Responsibility
 - Response to Intervention (RtI)
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)
 - Second Chance Reading
 - Data Teams
 - Instructional Rounds
 - Walk Throughs
 - Administrative Leadership Academy
 - Iowa Core Investigations and Deeper Investigations
 - Technology integration
-

Strength: AEA staff reported that they have participated in professional development to meet needs of Early ACCESS (EA) staff in areas of:
Early ACCESS PD

- Behavior (PBIS Infant/Toddler Training and PBIS Coaching)
 - Assessment and intervention strategies (Assessment Evaluation and Programming System-AEPS)
 - Screening Tools for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children (STAT)
 - Monitoring child progress (Early Childhood Outcomes)
 - IDEA law requirements (Early ACCESS Procedures Manual)
 - Writing Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) quality outcomes focusing on:
 - Using family friendly language
-

- Writing child and family outcomes
 - Developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) goals
 - Implementing strategies.
-

**Recommendation:
Availability of
PD**

LEA's appreciation for professional development provided by AEA was clearly stated. However, some frustration was expressed concerning the varying levels of availability of agency personnel for professional development activities.

Due to decreasing agency human resources and the geographic size of the agency the site visit team recommends the agency consider expanding their use of technology for the delivery of professional development, allowing more equitable access for all LEAs within the agency.

**Recommendation:
Study Early
Access Service
Coordinator
Responsibilities**

AEA interviewees expressed a need to study Early ACCESS (EA) service coordinator job responsibilities for transition of services. Areas to be studied:

- Transition of families from Part C to Part B services during the age of 2 to 3 years was described by parents as difficult. This difficulty is due to the change from home visits to center based interventions, along with parents adjusting to family partnership approach of Part B instead of the family-centered approach of EA.
 - Begin transition activities to prepare parents for a change in the system of services from Part C to Part B beginning at age two. For example, IFSP meetings can project phases of preparation for the transition to Part B services. This will also allow the service coordinator to begin separating themselves so the family is not as reliant on the Part C service coordinator after the transition.
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**Recommendation:
Coaches**

AEA interviewees reported having trained coaches was an essential component of the agency. The agency had been training staff to be coaches but this initiative was put on hold by the current emphasis on Response to Intervention (RtI).

The agency should consider resuming their study of "Coaches' Craft" for school based staff and start an EA staff study emphasizing the coaching of families. Participating in the statewide EA Distance Mentoring Model professional development opportunity would be another option that is available.

**Recommendation:
Early ACCESS
PD Plan**

EA Leadership commented the agency is drafting a five year professional development plan.

The agency is encouraged to continue to develop the plan based on:

- APR Performance Indicator data
 - Needs assessment data
 - Review of critical training needs as indicated by IFSP file reviews including alignment to outcomes, assessment data and early learning standards
-

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) Standard

**Expectations:
IAC
281—72.4(3)**

The AEA shall deliver curriculum, instruction and assessment services that address the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and science but may also be applied to other curriculum areas.

These services support the development, implementation, and assessment of rigorous content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science.

The AEA assists schools and school districts in:

- Gathering and analyzing student achievement data as well as data about the learning environment
 - Comparing those data to the external knowledge base
 - Using that information to guide school and school district goal setting and implementation of actions to improve student learning
-

**Strength:
Implementation
of Iowa Core**

LEA interviewees stated agency staff has been beneficial in the implementation of the Iowa Core. Examples included:

- Iowa Core Curriculum meetings
 - Use of Iowa Core Alignment Tool (ICAT)
 - Investigation and Deeper Investigation of Iowa Core Math and English Language Arts Standards professional development materials
 - Incorporation of 21st Century into instruction
 - Alignment of text books with Iowa Core
-

**Strength:
EA Parents**

Parents of children receiving Early ACCESS services expressed they feel:

- Empowered by the strategies and resources provided to them in helping with their child's growth and development.
 - Knowledgeable about what their child should be learning and receiving useful ideas for helping their child meet developmental milestones while anticipating future milestones.
-

**Recommendation:
Inconsistent
Delivery of
Support and
PD**

Multiple LEA interviewees reported specific agency staff is knowledgeable and highly skilled in content areas to support the implementation of instructional strategies.

However, the LEA interviewees reported inconsistent delivery of support and professional development across the agency to address reading, math and science instructional strategies to improve student achievement.

Continue building the capacity of agency and LEA staff to the extent possible

to equitably meet the needs of students across the agency in reading, math and science.

The agency should also consider assuring that staff are trained in how best to deliver professional development and follow up by providing support. This may include developing a measure to assess not only staff capacity but the quality of their delivery of professional development and follow up support.

Diverse Learner Needs (DL) Standard

Expectations: The AEA shall address the diverse learning needs of all children and youth, including but not limited to services which address gifted and talented students and meet the unique needs of students with disabilities who require special education.
IAC
281—72.4(4)

Services provide support to schools and school districts and include special education compliance with Iowa Administrative Rules of Special Education.

Strength: Agency, LEA and Parents interviewed reported the agency has provided training for those who work with students with special education needs. These include, but not limited to:
PD

- LETRS training on a rotating basis for teachers and agency special education staff
 - Training for special education teachers to learn about the Iowa Core and how it applies to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the provision of special education services
 - Iowa Core Investigations training specifically for Special Education and Title I teachers
 - Communication training for teachers of student in the Autism Spectrum
 - Training on Visual Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) strategies
 - Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) training for new staff members
 - University of Kansas (KU) Strategies
 - Doug Fisher – Gradual Release of Responsibility
 - Marilyn Friend – Co-teaching for both special and general education teachers
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Strength: Parents of students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) interviewed reported the agency provides a variety of resources to support them. These include:
Support for
Parents

- Support groups for parents
 - Agency Autism Team
 - A parent/student page on the agency's website
 - Suggestions for parents of activities they can do with their children at home
-

Strength: Agency staff reported the agency addressed the requirement of a 12-month calendar for Early ACCESS (EA) services by supporting flexible schedules of
Early ACCESS

staff regarding evening and summer coverage of services. The agency also contracts hard-to-find support services (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech Language Pathology) as needed.

Parents expressed appreciation of trusted relationship with EA service coordinators and direct service providers. Communication was an obvious strength with staff using a variety of methods to contact parents ranging from phone, texting, email and Facebook.

EA staff reported the agency and collaborative partners use teletherapy to provide speech, language and nutrition services to children and families. This delivery model saves travel time which allows direct services providers to provide more services.

**Recommendation:
Strategies for
students who
are ELL**

Agency and LEA interviewees indicated there is one English Language Learner (ELL) Consultant for the agency. Multiple interview groups stated that ELL services provided are effective. For example, the services provided ensure:

- LEAs meet ELL requirements
- Agency staff provide PD opportunities for LEA staff
- Agency staff meet with LEAs as needed
- LEAs develop plans and procedures in order to meet requirements
- Parental materials in the families' home language are available

In order to maximize the services provided by the ELL Consultant consider having her develop a list of recommended ELL strategies and processes that LEA and agency staff can use. This reference could be posted on the agency website and be used by agency and LEA staff to assist teachers who are working for the first time with students who are English language learners.

**Recommendation:
Core Team
Member Focus**

Agency interviewees reported the agency has established a Core Team model to better meet the needs of districts and schools.

Agency data indicated the most common IEP goal is for reading, the second most common is for behavior. One Core Team member will focus on literacy and the other on behavior. PD will be provided for core team members dependent upon their area of focus and pre and post training data will be analyzed to determine if their knowledge and understanding has increased.

While the vision is supported and understood by the agency's leadership, the agency staff is not completely knowledgeable or supportive of the changes in the structure of the agency delivery model from triads to dyads.

It is recommended the agency continue to build the understanding of the staff

to fully comprehend the reasons behind the decision to change the delivery system of the Core Team. This could be accomplished by:

- Having the Chief use his blog to discuss the reason behind the changes.
- Using the agency's opening meeting this coming fall to provide information around how and why the changes have been implemented.
- Posting interviews with those who have participated in the new model on the agency's website, this would allow both agency and LEA staff members as well as community partners to become familiar with how the Core Team model is working for LEAs.

**Recommendation:
EC
Instructional Services Staff
working with
ECSE Staff**

Agency and LEA interviewees described the collaboration between instructional services and special education staff to support districts with the implementation of K-12 initiatives such as Iowa Core, LETRS, and use of data to show progress and identify needs. However, this is not evident for the students ages 3-5 and preschool programs.

It is essential the agency establish expectations that Early Childhood (EC) staff in Instructional Services communicate and collaborate with special education staff (Core Team, Regional Administrators, and Director of Special Education) about EC/Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs and students on a regular basis. The agency should consider establishing a process regarding the following:

- Sharing of information provided during State Early Childhood Leadership meetings
- Observations/concerns raised during visits to programs
- Information about new students
- Sharing of results of Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards visits
- Sharing parent concerns

**Recommendation:
IEP – Progress
Monitoring**

Agency interviewees reported the agency works with staff and teachers on developing IEPs that ensure students with disabilities receive services which allow them to progress in the Iowa Core. The direction of the agency is “to get out of compliance business and get into the coaching business” to help IEP teams to make decisions that will most benefit the student.

Agency I-Star data indicates progress monitoring is an area in need of improvement. The team recommends the agency continue the provision of training and coaching in the area of progress monitoring to ensure teachers use data to make instructional changes that allow the student to reach their annual goals.

The following actions may be continued or instituted:

- Provide teachers guidance on choosing strategies/methods/materials

and support for coaching that result in effective and consistent progress monitoring.

- Do random checks to ensure progress monitoring of IEP goals is being done so students benefit from specially designed instruction.
- Provide training to administrators/principals so they know what to look for when completing progress monitoring checks.
- Implement a consistent practice of reviewing progress monitoring with teachers across the agency.

**Recommendation:
Study Provision
of EA Services**

Early ACCESS (EA) leadership commented the challenge of providing services is that “staff is not where the kids are”. The geography of the agency is a challenge in addition to the number of staff available to deliver services.

It is recommended administration study EA system components to better coordinate and deliver services.

- Review models of service delivery and the distribution of service coordinators for assignments as agency staff are carrying maximum caseloads. Suggestions include:
 - Review other AEA models of service coordination
 - Consider a formula or weighted system for assignments
 - Collaborate with Early Childhood Iowa areas to facilitate the reduction of family support services to balance the number of children with more time-intensive needs
 - Collaborate with health partners who have family navigators that could offer support and resources to families
- Identify primary sources of referral data and develop a plan to expand areas of need within each region. Specifically, the plan should address raising awareness for referrals from:
 - The medical community with early identification of newborns and infants, and
 - Human Services Agencies for Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and foster care children.
- Collaboration with community partners, such as Early Childhood Iowa, to streamline coordinated intake of referrals and family support services to differentiate those children and families needing special education services versus community resources for family support.

**Recommendation:
Part C and Part
B – Core
Meetings**

Agency interviewees stated in order to provide a seamless system of services, Part B and C staff must attend agency Core meetings. However, interviewees reported that meetings were primarily focused on Part B requirements.

Core meetings need to be designed with both Parts B and C information so both areas of staff understand the foundation of birth-21 services leading to a child’s educational success. It is critical supervisor’s expanse of knowledge

include:

- Early ACCESS services Birth to 3 and Part B services 3-21
 - Variations of the law for IDEA Parts B and C
 - The need to work with other agencies and community partners
 - Involve families in the continuum of special education services birth-21
-

Multi-Culture, Gender Fair (MCGF) Standard

Expectations: The AEA shall provide services that support multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the educational programs pursuant to Iowa Code section 281—72.4(5)
IAC
281—72.4(5)

These services assist schools and school districts to:

- Take actions that ensure all students are free from discriminatory acts and practices
- Establish policies and take actions that ensure all students are free from harassment
- Incorporate into the educational program instructional strategies and student activities related to responsibilities, rights, and the respect for diversity which are necessary for successful citizenship in a diverse community and a global economy
- Incorporate, on an ongoing basis, activities within professional development that prepare and assist all employees to work effectively with diverse learners

Strength:
Cultural
Proficiency
Team

Evidence from the document review and agency interviewees indicated the agency has created a Cultural Proficiency team.

This year the team's focus was on poverty, and its accompanying implications for students and families. This emphasis encouraged districts to change their mind set to assume an "asset-based" approach to helping these students and families.

Some other activities of the Cultural Proficiency Team include:

- Utilizing the Cultural Proficiency Scale and Assessment developed by Lindsey and Terrell
- Holding a Summer Academy for administrators of LEAs to build awareness of cultural proficiency and equity requirements of the Office for Civil Rights
- Providing activities at every regional meeting in GPAEA to build awareness of stereotypes
- Team members serving on the Advisory Committee for the Indian Hills Community College Conference on Diversity
- Supporting the use of EdInsight Equity Reports to encourage data teams in LEAs to be reflective of the needs of diverse learners

**Strength:
Cultural
Awareness**

LEA interviewees expressed appreciation for visits from the agency MCGF/Diverse Learner Specialist and the resulting cultural awareness in their buildings. It was noted, the visit “helped us recognize discrimination is not limited to skin color.”

Poverty simulations were conducted in many LEAs, helping to build capacity to work with students and families experiencing economic difficulties.

In addition, the agency consultant helped LEAs address equity issues as they prepared for LEA accreditation visits and worked directly with LEAs to ensure required language is included in nondiscrimination policies.

The agency has utilized the resources of the Midwest Equity Assistance Center which provides a variety of free services including workshops, seminars, conferences, technical assistance, and professional development for school districts.

The agency also invested in Rosetta Stone software for staff to use to become more linguistically diverse.

**Strength:
MCGF PD
Opportunities**

Agency and LEA interviewees indicate the agency’s MCGF/Diverse Learner Specialist has provided professional development for districts around MCGF standard requirements. These offerings include developing approaches fostering knowledge of, and respect and appreciation for, the historical and contemporary contributions of diverse cultural groups, including race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, and socioeconomic background. This information has been appreciated as reported by LEA and agency representatives during the interviews.

Offerings included the following:

- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
 - Poverty simulations
 - Bullying/Harassment
 - Cyber-Smarts (online bullying/harassment)
 - Recognizing Everyone’s Strengths by Peacebuilding, Empathizing, Communicating and Trustbuilding (RESPECT) Training for staff
 - Indian Hills Community College (IHCC), including the annual diversity conference
-

**Recommendation:
Equity Support**

Continue to build capacity for both agency and LEA staff to use strategies and processes that ensure equity when accommodating changing student demographics.

The agency is encouraged to continue to support the work of the Cultural Proficiency Team and to use disaggregated attendance center, program and course enrollment data to determine needs for MCGF support in the LEAs.

Consider identifying areas of over/underrepresentation by race, gender, disability and socioeconomic status in program and course enrollment and design strategies to assist districts in addressing those areas.

It is also recommended the agency continue to initiate training to build and extend internal capacity so MCGF services continue to be delivered to LEAs at high levels which are sustained over time.

Media/School Technology (M/ST) Standard

Expectations: The AEA shall deliver media services.
IAC
281—72.4(6)

These services:

- Align with school and school district needs
- Support effective instruction
- Provide consultation, research and information services, instructional resources, and materials preparation and dissemination to assist schools and school districts to meet the learning needs of all students and support local district media services
- Support the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science
- Support and integrate emerging technology

Expectations: The AEA shall supplement and support effective instruction for all students through school technology services.
IAC
281—72.4(7)

These services provide:

- Technology planning
- Technical assistance
- Professional development

These services support:

- The incorporation of instructional technologies to improve student achievement
 - The implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science
 - Integrate emerging technology.
-

Strength: Multiple LEA interviewees reported they receive support from the agency for using resources that align with Iowa Core integration. This includes multiple resources that support different reading levels and formats for differentiation of instruction to meet the needs of all students.
Resources for Aligning to Iowa Core

Strength: Agency interviewees indicated the technology team attempts to align services in order to meet technology needs of LEAs.
Current Technology

The team does walk-throughs to assess current technology.

The district technology coordinators meet 4 -5 times a year.

The team also monitors the use of media resources by asking the following questions:

- What resources are used most?
 - What are seldom used?
 - What should be increased or decreased?
 - What technology is available to support different levels of text?
 - What is current accessibility of eBooks, including Snap Check-out, available for students?
 - Is the professional library for all constituents up-to-date?
-

**Strength:
Emerging
Technologies**

Multiple LEA interviewees shared an appreciation for the agency’s visionary leadership with emerging technologies. The agency is encouraged to continue to seek out leadership opportunities and take advantage of partnership opportunities with other AEAs.

Examples given were:

- Expanding data base use for instruction
 - Google Docs
 - Support of One to One initiatives
 - Promethean Boards
 - Brite Bytes
 - Technology infrastructure walk-throughs for assessment
 - Links to AEA on-line resources
-

**Strength:
Media Center**

LEA interviewees indicated an appreciation for the agency media center. They noted the availability and diversity of instructional materials, both physical and electronic. They also appreciate the timely responses from the media center to meet individual school or district needs.

**Strength:
Teacher-
Librarian**

LEA interviewees shared that teacher librarian uses data to “open doors” for LEAs. The teacher-librarian collects data and shares it with the LEA and then follows up on any identified need. This outreach may include spending a day in a building and helping teachers make connections between their curriculum and agency resources. The teacher librarian monitors usage after these visits and reports any increase in the use of resources after a visit.

**Strength:
Assistive
Technology**

LEA interviewees reported the agency supports assistive technology and works with parents to help them generalize the technology to the home.

Assistive technology team provides resources (kits and new technology information) for teachers to use with the children.

The team also partners with itinerant teachers of children with visual and/or hearing impairments to assist them in integrating technology for their students.

**Recommendation:
Additional
Technology
Training**

AEA staff expressed a desire for additional technology training that would allow staff to keep up with the technology updated and implemented in LEAs.

The site visit team recommends the agency review its internal professional development schedule and consider including additional or inclusive training and updating for staff.

Leadership (LD) Standard

Expectations: The AEA shall deliver services that develop leadership based upon the Iowa Standards for School Administrators as adopted by the board of educational examiners.
IAC 281—72.4(8)

Leadership services assist with:

- Recruitment
- Induction
- Retention
- Professional development of educational leaders

AEAs develop and deliver leadership programs based on:

- Local educational needs
 - State educational needs
 - Best practices
-

Strength: Multiple AEA interview groups stated an appreciation for the agency leadership's efforts in soliciting all districts and schools cooperation in providing services. The Chief Administrator continually encourages AEA personnel to "Keep knocking on doors and walking into buildings" and "Listen more and talk less."
Efforts to Provide Services

Strength: LEA interviewees shared an appreciation for the support of district and school leadership. The agency assists districts and schools to focus on its leadership roles and how to guide change within the school and/or LEA.
Support for Leaders

In addition to the Leadership Academy interviewees shared an appreciation for:

- Superintendent Network
 - Curriculum Network
 - Technology meetings
 - Administrator mentoring program "Administrative Buddy"
-

Strength: AEA Interviewees reported the agency is working toward greater consistency in communication.
Greater Consistency in Communication

Regional meetings are used to pull everyone in as a whole group to build a strong foundation. Some activities include:

- Parking lots are used during meetings for staff to place questions. These questions are brought back to the Leadership Team so one

consistent answer can be given. These answers are shared across the agency.

- The Chief Administrator has a blog to share messages.
 - The Director of Special Education uses written messages and memos to keep staff aware of current information.
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**Recommendation:
Building Administrator
Challenges**

LEA interviewees indicated administrator academies have been beneficial in providing a strong framework for instruction and touching on educational topics pertinent to the time.

However, it is recommended the agency establish a more structured and ongoing cohesive time for building administrators to better support the unique challenges building administrators face on a day to day basis. This could include:

- PLCs for Administrators
 - Q&As on the agency website accessible only to administrators
 - Elementary, Middle and High School Principal Networks
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**Recommendation:
Change in Cabinet Focus**

AEA cabinet indicated the majority of their efforts have been spent in the area of special education. They expressed a need to expand the focus into providing more educational services for its LEAs.

The site visit team recommends the agency cabinet move forward with discussions on how to allocate equitable time for the provisions of educational services.

Accreditation Status: Great Prairie AEA

**Team
Recommendation**

Great Prairie Area Education Agency is recommended for continued accreditation pursuant to 281—IAC Chapter 72.
