



STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

August 18, 2009

Dean Meier, Administrator
AEA 267
3712 Cedar Heights Dr
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613-6290

Dear Administrator Meier:

Enclosed is a copy of the accreditation summary report for your agency. Accreditation status was determined by evaluating the eight standards and related criteria pursuant to 281—IAC Chapter 72. This report contains the following information:

- Agency-wide areas of strength;
- Agency-wide suggested areas of improvement;
- Standard-specific noted strengths;
- Standard-specific areas of recommendation; and
- Recommended accreditation status

The areas of strength and suggested areas of improvement/recommendation included within the report should be used by the agency as it prepares its new Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CIP). Within the continuous improvement process, the agency should view this report as part of its needs assessment information. The CIP should be submitted to the Department of Education (DE) by April 1, 2010. Additional information and guidance regarding the CIP will be provided at a later date.

The final page of the accreditation summary report contains the accreditation recommendation from the site visit team that will be presented to the State Board of Education. The DE will present the recommendation to the State Board of Education for formal action at the September 9, 2009, meeting. According to 281—IAC 72.11(3), an AEA has an opportunity to respond to this recommendation. **If you have any questions or concerns about the report, please contact me via phone (515-281-3333) or email (kevin.fangman@iowa.gov) by Tuesday, September 8, 2009.** Upon action by the Board, the agency will receive formal notice of its accreditation status.

Thank you for the courtesies extended by your agency to the site visit team. The Department appreciates the commitment and diligence of your agency to assist Iowa schools and school districts in their efforts to increase achievement for all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Fangman".

Kevin Fangman, Administrator
Division of PK-12 Education

Enclosure

Grimes State Office Building - 400 E 14th St - Des Moines IA 50319-0146

PHONE (515) 281-5294 FAX (515) 242-5988

www.iowa.gov/educate

Helping Communities Meet the Learning Needs of All Their Children and Adults



Area Education Agency 267 Accreditation Summary 2009

Site Visit Focus

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.

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:
 - 1) School-Community Planning,
 - 2) Professional Development,
 - 3) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment,
 - 4) Diverse Learner Needs,
 - 5) Media,
 - 6) School Technology,
 - 7) Multicultural, Gender Fair, and
 - 8) Leadership
- Assessment of common criteria that apply to each standard:
 - 1) AEA services are equitably available.
 - 2) AEA services include a process to monitor the implementation of the service.
 - 3) AEA services include a system of measuring the effectiveness of services provided.
 - 4) AEA services include a system for measuring the efficiency of services provided.
- Assessment of the services provided for established agency-wide goals.

Site Visit Desired Results

- The agency can address accreditation expectations.
- 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 Pursuant to 281—IAC 72.11(4)

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.

AEA 267 Summary of Findings

AEA Accreditation Standards	Met or Not Met
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

Note: The Allen Medical Center Adolescent Substance Abuse Program, Blackhawk County Youth Shelter, Central Iowa Juvenile Detention Center, Covenant Medical Center Adolescent Substance Abuse Program, Four Oaks Youth Shelter, Francis Lauer Youth Services, North Iowa Juvenile Detention Center – Classrooms A and B, and Woodhaven Youth Shelter were reviewed as a part of the AEA accreditation visit. Review of self-assessment data provided to the site visit team prior to the visit indicated compliance with all the program requirements of 281—IAC Chapter 63.

Agency-Wide Areas of Strength

1. Numerous interviewees stated appreciation for discretionary services offered through the agency. These include boiler, copier, and computer repair, student contests, and science summer enrichment program.

Agency-wide Suggested Areas of Improvement

1. Local Education Agency (LEA) interviewees noted some agency staff may be “spread thin.” Others mentioned services being “person dependent.” Agency interviewees identified areas for which limited staff member time is available (e.g., English as a Second Language [ESL], school improvement, special education Team Representatives, and gifted and talented). Some question existed among LEA interviewees whether there is sufficient support given the number of LEAs served by the agency. The agency is encouraged to consider the following suggestions:
 - Review the number of services provided by the agency in relation to the staff available to provide ongoing support for these services.
 - Prioritize services based on evidence of effectiveness (develop criteria for review first then apply these criteria to the services). This would include establishment of baseline data and formative measures to monitor progress.
 - Practice “selective abandonment” of services that lack evidence of effectiveness or show a decreasing level of need.
 - Provide a system of capacity building for internal agency staff to ensure quality services are provided by each employee. This includes ensuring staff have the necessary skill sets, knowledge, and background for their assigned job responsibilities.
 - Continue to be sensitive to the perception held by LEAs that inconsistency in services exists across the agency’s three service areas.

- Explore use of a variety of service delivery options to help ensure proximity to service centers and the size of LEAs do not negatively impact agency service delivery, including opportunities for interagency collaboration.
2. LEA interviewees reported lingering concerns regarding the 2003 merger of former AEAs 2, 6, and 7. Examples included:
- Lack of identity as a single merged agency. The current name references the three former agencies and the current service sectors (e.g., North, South, and Central) are reflective of the former agencies.
 - Size of the area covered by the agency, which raised concerns about meeting and service locations
 - Perception that the southern districts, are not being served equitably in special education because there is no special school located in that part of the agency
 - Leadership is encouraged to continue addressing merger-related issues
 - Perception that useful services previously provided within former agencies have been eliminated

Consider the following recommendations:

- Adopt an agency name that would send a consistent message that the agency is unified
 - Look at delivery of agency programs and services systemically rather than how “we have done it this way in the past.” For example, do any of the existing service sectors break the old boundaries?
 - Have someone from outside the agency provide recommendations regarding issues such as reconfiguration of special education zones
 - Involve LEAs served by the agency in identifying what the agency can do to build a unified agency.
3. LEA interviewees were unable to articulate measures used by the agency to determine efficiency or effectiveness of its services. The agency is encouraged to continue discussions with its LEAs to develop shared understanding of agency efficiency and effectiveness. Although there may never be total satisfaction among all entities due to differing perspectives, purposeful conversation regarding these topics might be helpful in developing shared understanding. It is also suggested that measures of efficiency and effectiveness be identified as agency initiatives are introduced to provide baseline data and a means of monitoring progress.

Standard I – School-Community Planning

Noted Strengths

1. The agency provides many tools and resources regarding school and community planning on the agency website. One example is the School Improvement link, which contains a series of questions to guide the continuous improvement process.
2. Numerous internal interviewees noted the agency’s involvement in a pilot project (i.e., collaborative transition protocol) related to transitioning special education students. This project, which is in conjunction with the Regional Transitional Advisory Boards, community colleges, and Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab), works to ensure information collected by the LEAs and agency is consistent with the requirements of Voc Rehab to meet eligibility requirements for adult services.

3. Agency staff and most LEA interviewees indicated the school and community planning standard is embedded within the agency's services. The following examples were provided:
 - data gathering and analysis (e.g., Key Survey, Swift Knowledge, Heartland Educational Assessment Resource Toolbox (HEART) database, and Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment)
 - encouragement and coordination of community collaboration (e.g., providing guidance to school liaisons to support English language learner (ELL) students, assistance with statewide voluntary preschool program, dropout prevention task force, and Crisis Response Team)
 - facilitation of community meetings (e.g., LEA facility planning discussions)
 - facilitation of Perkins consortium meetings, including oversight of implementation requirements and documentation
 - support for schools/districts designated as a School in Need of Assistance (SINA) or District in Need of Assistance (DINA) as well as for those who self-identifyThe agency also offers an array of school and community planning tools and documents to LEAs via its website and/or electronically.
4. LEA interviewees involved with Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) mentioned the agency's support of LEAs to implement PBIS as a strength of the agency. Interviewees stated PBIS has been embraced by agency and that assistance is provided to any LEA wishing to participate (interviewees indicated approximately fifteen schools were included as of the time of the visit). Assistance includes training regarding the program, data collection and analysis (i.e., School-Wide Information System [SWIS]), and reporting data to parents and communities.
5. Interviewees indicated the agency has a strong Autism Resource Team. The agency has been proactive in identifying this area of support as a growing need for LEAs and families. The team assists with identification of children with autism and provides assistance to parents in seeking available community resources. The agency has also provided training to internal staff, teachers, and paraprofessionals regarding appropriate strategies to use when working with children with autism.
6. Agency staff noted the Middle School Leadership Teams project in Waterloo. The agency is gathering information through student focus groups on how student achievement can be improved within the Waterloo district.

Areas of Recommendation

1. During LEA interviews, members of the visiting team noted inconsistent awareness of agency services among interviewees (e.g., Authentic Intellectual Work [AIW] and PBIS). The agency might benefit from development of a communication plan/strategy to increase the awareness of agency programs and services among its LEAs. This could include information regarding the nature and scope of services available and provided. In addition, LEA interviewees indicated they are not always informed of the results of survey data (e.g., professional development evaluations) or how these data are used by the agency. The agency is encouraged to purposefully share this information with the LEAs.
2. LEA interviewees indicated it was difficult for them to plan for participation in professional development opportunities due to late notice regarding agency offerings. The agency is encouraged to create and publish a calendar of agency offerings for the upcoming year in the spring. This would assist LEAs with planning for substitutes, tying to district initiatives, and addressing student achievement needs. For this to be most effective, the agency will need to ensure district contacts hold meetings with LEAs to identify professional development needs in early spring versus the fall as is current practice.

Standard II – Professional Development

Noted Strengths

1. The agency has moved from “sit and get” approach to professional development to close alignment with the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM). This change has included the following:
 - course offerings must follow all IPDM components
 - agency presenters receive training in adult learning theory
 - a required implementation/application component
2. LEA interviewees made positive comments regarding services provided by the agency’s School Contacts including participation in district leadership teams, assisting with data analysis, and membership on School Improvement Advisory Committees (SIACs). Some School Contacts are viewed as a critical friend to the LEA and others considered part of the “district family.”
3. Media services and school technology support agency initiatives and professional development. These two areas were consistently described as strengths of the agency by LEA interviewees. Example of supports highlighted during interviews included mediagraphies, use of the Iowa Communications Network (ICN), Polycom, Play-a-Ways, e-Walks, digital white boards, student response systems, Key Survey, e-rate, and podcasts.

Areas of Recommendation

1. The team noted agency efforts to build capacity of both internal and LEA staffs to effectively deliver professional development within the context of increasingly limited resources. These efforts include maintaining a website for professional development (online catalog and registration), Professional Development Advisory Committee, and using data to determine professional development needs of districts. In spite of these efforts, concerns were raised by LEA interviewees regarding the consistency in the quality of presenters, location and scheduling of professional development offerings, and the agency’s need to prioritize what professional development will be offered. Consider the following suggestions:
 - Use data from the Predictive Index and end of course/workshop evaluations to identify staff strengths and match them with assignments.
 - Provide ongoing communication to inform LEA and agency staff of the rationale used to determine what delivery services will be used to provide professional development.
 - Explore different ways to present professional development to assist with determining locations and schedules (e.g., online courses, podcasts, wikis, Iowa Communications Network [ICN], use of Polycom, and grouping districts with common training needs).
 - Develop and implement a systemic approach to match data based district needs to professional development, determine how those needs will be met collaboratively by LEA and agency staff through identifying priorities and necessary resources, and sustain agency initiatives.
 - Continue to be sensitive that LEAs pull teachers and administrators out of classrooms and buildings to attend professional development offerings and the obligation to ensure professional development is of high quality.

2. Agency special education staff provides Level I, II, and III programming in districts belonging to a special education pool. In addition, the agency operates and/or provides oversight of several separate schools for students needing extensive special education services. Continue building the capacities of all districts to minimize the need for more restrictive programs. Build district capacity to address:
 - the behavioral needs of students
 - professional development needs in the area of multicultural, gender fair (MCGF) approaches to enable districts to effectively serve students from various backgrounds
 - disproportional representation in special education identification, placement, and discipline
 - Individualized Education Program (IEP) team decisions regarding least restrictive environment (LRE)

3. Findings from equity and accreditation team members indicated a need for the agency to build capacity of agency and LEA staffs to address equity and diversity issues. The following actions are recommended:
 - Ensure professional development explicitly addresses multicultural, gender fair (MCGF) approaches, either through stand alone trainings or by purposefully incorporating/reflecting MCGF approaches into all agency offerings.
 - Address the changing demographics of the LEAs served by the agency within content and delivery of the agency's professional development offerings.
 - Ensure membership of agency-wide advisory committees reflects the diversity of the agency population.

Standard III – Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Noted Strengths

1. Interviewees described support for meeting the needs of ELL students provided by the agency's English as a Second Language (ESL) coordinator as "top notch." The agency provides support for the development of district ESL plans, administration of the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), and locating instructional materials. The agency has also assisted with coordination and promotion of the ELL Cultural Festival in Waterloo.

2. The agency provides data organization and data warehouse tools for district use. Examples included Swift Knowledge and the HEART database for data gathering and analysis. Agency technology staff members have also been involved in discussions regarding development of Iowa Department of Education's Data Warehouse.

3. Interviewees reported the agency provided leadership and support for development and implementation of Voluntary Preschool Grants. The agency also provides support to preschool programs implementing Creative Curriculum and Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS).

4. The agency approach for School in Need of Assistance (SINA) and District in Need of Assistance (DINA) processes is a model for district and AEA collaboration. This process groups LEAs and provides opportunity for sharing. The agency is working to build LEA capacity so they can do their own (self) audits.

5. Interviewees reported that the agency provides tools and strategies that support their curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs. Some examples include:
 - Picture Word Induction Model (PWIM)
 - Kansas University (KU)/Strategic Instruction Model (SIM)
 - PBIS evaluation tools, such as the school-wide evaluation tool (SET)
 - Literacy Excellence

Areas of Recommendation

1. LEA interviewees reported the agency's educational services tend to be more reactive than proactive. Interviewees stated "the agency is only as good as what we ask them to do," which suggested to the accreditation team that a "services by request" approach is in place. The agency is encouraged to continue working proactively with LEAs to identify the highest leverage curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies, invest in those identified, and selectively abandon others.
2. Interviewees identified a number of available tools for collection and analysis of summative data. As formative assessment needs grow; more technology and support for gathering, collecting, and analyzing data from the classroom level and additional supports for formative assessment may be needed. The agency is encouraged to begin investigating what training and technological tools might be necessary to support teachers in implementing formative assessment.
3. Although the agency has begun to build the capacity to collect, analyze and utilize data in decision-making, it was unclear whether staff use the disaggregated data collected in a consistent way. Interviews with agency staff showed they were not always familiar with disaggregated data trends and could not speak specifically about what data were showing regarding achievement gaps or use of these data to inform decisions regarding delivery of services. The agency might consider internal professional development on data based decision-making and the use of disaggregated data.
4. Interviewees reported Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) meetings used to be well attended in each of the agency's three regional areas. These meetings provided opportunity for district curriculum coordinators and administrators to stay ahead of upcoming initiatives. Consider the value of these meetings to determine whether it would be beneficial to reinstitute them agency-wide.

Standard IV – Diverse Learner Needs

Noted Strengths

1. The agency identified "13 key behaviors" of special education Team Representatives. This was an attempt to reduce discrepancies in services across the sectors.
2. LEA interviewees identified the General Education Intervention (GEI) process and training as helpful in addressing the needs of diverse learners. They also noted the Team Representative model allows agency staff to be an integral part of the GEI process. Agency interviewees stated GEI training they have received has provided support for differentiated instruction, data collection, and assessment.

3. Interviewees highlighted several special education supports provided through the agency. Examples included:
 - assistance with manifestation determinations and functional behavioral assessments/behavioral intervention plans
 - support teams for low incidence disabilities
 - close work with LEAs by Team Representatives regarding compliance issues
 - training for completion of Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) following the compliance visit
 - assistance with re-writing Special Education Service Delivery Plans
 - Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
 - support for co-teaching, including emphasis on the benefit for all students
 - transition support for secondary students with special needs
 - access to assistive technology, such as Board Maker and Kurzweil
 - employment of a least restrictive environment (LRE) reviewer, who analyzes placement decisions to identify patterns and assure compliance with eligibility guidelines
4. LEA interviewees stated appreciation for access to the special schools for students with intensive needs in place within agency boundaries. These include Four Oaks, Devonshire, Castle Hill, River Hills, and Bremwood.
5. The agency has hired a Re-integration Specialist to work with students who are exiting Devonshire. Exit criteria are determined when students are staffed into Devonshire. When these criteria have been met, the Re-integration Specialist works with the student and resident district to provide a smooth transition back to school.
6. LEA interviewees appreciated the level of assistance provided by the agency in planning and implementation of Perkins (Career and Technical Education [CTE]) programs. This includes addressing the vocational needs of special populations, assuring district compliance with requirements, including templates and completion of documentation, preparation for DE site visits, and assisting with CTE advisory committees.
6. Interviewees reported Special Education services are an area of strength of the agency. There is strong internal staff awareness of district and agency special education State Performance Plan (SPP) indicator data. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are aware of the importance of aligning IEPs to the general education curriculum. The agency has provided training and support for areas such as co-teaching initiatives, awareness of LRE, use of Web IEP, and meeting Secondary Transition requirements.
7. LEA interviewees reported the agency supports multiple resource teams for students with special education needs and expressed appreciation for these teams. These teams provide specific expertise and in depth assistance to staff and parents, support for new students, and ongoing support for identified students through timely services. Teams mentioned included the following:
 - Autism
 - Behavior Resources
 - Brain Injury
 - Assistive Technology
 - Crisis Intervention
 - Early Childhood Education
8. The agency has mobilized a task force of 70 people to assist in reducing the high school dropout rate. This task force has collected and analyzed data, developed initiatives, and learned about strategies used successfully with at-risk students.

9. Special Education interviewees reported the agency has taken “an aggressive stand” with districts on providing teacher training about the secondary special education transition process. The agency also provided information about this process for district guidance counselors during the two Counselor Academies. Agency support service providers serving secondary special education students have also been trained. A component for the parents of secondary special education students to learn about transition planning is also in place.
10. The special education personnel from the agency have worked with districts that have student numbers too small to allow the data to become public. The districts were encouraged to analyze and use that data to make instructional decisions.
11. Sue Etscheidt from the University of Northern Iowa spoke with administrators throughout the agency about positive behavior supports and interventions and facilitated discussions regarding successful behavior strategies that can be implemented by districts.
12. The agency has in place a process to assure districts have tried multiple interventions with students with special education needs prior to making a separate school placement. This process requires completion of a Functional Behavior Assessment, implementation of a Behavior Intervention Plan, and collection and analysis of intervention data. Each IEP is examined by an outside reviewer who provides feedback to the IEP team. This process was developed in response to the agency’s high percentage (4.91%, state target is <3.70%) of special education students placed in separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements as shown on SPP Indicator B5C.
13. The agency has designated a person to serve as coordinator for the AEA Resolution Facilitator process. The agency seeks to support families by encouraging parties to use a format that allows dispute resolution at the earliest and lowest level possible without the involvement of a state process, such as a pre-appeal or due process complaint (hearing). The agency collected data and can show by using an AEA Resolution Facilitator, positive and effective results can occur.
14. The agency, through its Early ACCESS and Parent-Educator Connection (PEC) leaders, developed and implemented a highly effective *Transition Toolbox* to assist parents as their children transition from family-centered (Individualized Family Service Plan – Part C) to student-centered services (Individualized Education Program – Part B). This toolbox was developed to assure that parents understand the differences between the two types of services. State Early ACCESS leaders replicated the toolbox for statewide use in August 2008 and it is now an integral part of the Early ACCESS Procedures Manual used by all AEAs.
15. AEA 267 is the IDEA Part C Regional Grantee for an interagency system of early intervention services, known as Region 7. This region had the best overall performance in the state on the 2007-08 Part C SPP indicators. They met 6 of 7 compliance indicators showing high implementation of the federal IDEA Part C requirements and met or exceeded the targets for 7 of 7 performance indicators related to outcomes for children and families.
16. The agency has a communication and operational system that facilitates good communication and data-based change efforts among administrators and Early ACCESS leadership. Early ACCESS professional development, ongoing support to service coordinators and early intervention service providers, and a relatively stable workforce are strengths in AEA 267. These three structures, 1) data-based change efforts and good communication among the leadership, 2) timely and ongoing professional development, and 3) experienced providers and leaders, provide an effective structure that produces quality services and outstanding performance.

Areas of Recommendation

1. The agency has identified “13 key behaviors” of special education Team Representatives; however, no LEA interviewees expressed awareness of these characteristics. To help emphasize the importance of these characteristics, the agency is encouraged to share this list with the LEAs. Since development of this list was an attempt to reduce discrepancies in services across the sectors, the agency is encouraged to collect data to show whether or not this has occurred. In addition, the agency might also consider how these behaviors might be tied to its internal staff performance evaluations.
2. Continue work to expand understanding of the breadth of “diverse learners” among agency and LEA staff. Comments received regarding diverse learners were generally focused on students who are receiving special education services. Diverse learners also include gifted and talented learners, students from different cultures, and students of poverty. Given the demographic changes occurring within the agency’s service area, the visiting team recommends the agency implement ongoing diversity training for all staff. This might be done through stand alone trainings or by infusing a diversity component into all trainings. Doing so would raise the capacity of staff to provide leadership for LEAs regarding diversity issues, including developing learning environments that are welcoming, inclusive, respectful, and effective for all students.
3. Agency interviewees reported Part C caseloads have risen to a level that is making it difficult for providers to implement best practices while maintaining increasing accountability for legal requirements. The one compliance indicator that is still a challenge is the 45-day timeline for the initial evaluation that determines eligibility for new referrals. The agency is encouraged to consider the following:
 - Explore the impact of high caseloads on the agency’s ability to meet the 45-day timeline.
 - Continue to implement the timeline alert system.
 - Examine financial supports available for Early ACCESS.
 - Monitor implementation of the web-based Individualized Family Service Plan during 2009-2010 to identify effectiveness and efficiencies.

Standard V – Multicultural, Gender Fair

Noted Strengths

1. Agency and LEA interviewees reported the agency provides leadership and supports that allow LEAs to meet Iowa Code requirements for bullying and harassment prevention. Examples cited include:
 - Building Tomorrow Survey and Bully/Victim Questionnaire to help provide comparison to external knowledge base
 - Review of district policies and procedures to ensure compliance with Iowa Code requirements
 - Training on cyber-bullying and harassment prevention
 - Olweus training
 - Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) training
 - Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training
 - Implementing an afterschool program in one district for girls exhibiting bully behavior

2. Interviewees and documentation provided several examples of supports available through the agency to address multicultural, gender fair needs of LEAs. These included, but are not limited to the following:
 - specialized courses (e.g., Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Youth Course)
 - Poverty I and Poverty II training
 - PBIS
 - Olweus
 - Cultural Competence book kits available through Media Services; online databases available in Spanish and English
 - Building Tomorrow survey (locally developed survey which mirrors the Iowa Youth Survey)
 - review of district policy/procedures prior to site visits
 - inservices for bus drivers, paraeducators, and food service workers regarding responding appropriately to diverse populations
 - assistance with instructional materials selection in regard to MCGF issues
 - conducting Welcoming Walk-throughs as requested (e.g., looking at signage and accessibility)
 - focused programs provided in metro schools (e.g., Study Circles to discuss equity issues, Youth Empowerment, and Student Ambassadors, and Cultural Competency training)

Areas of Recommendation

1. Interviewees did not mention supports provided by the agency to assist LEA equity coordinators in meeting their responsibilities. The agency is encouraged to expand its support into this area. This should include guidance beyond materials selection, such as how to address classroom environments, instructional delivery, inclusion of MCGF concepts into curriculum, and review of LEA data to identify possible disparate impact of local policies and practices.
2. Although the agency's board has adopted a policy supportive of MCGF education, the policy is focused on instructional materials and media services, with little reference to instruction, curriculum content, and the learning environment. This tends to narrow the focus of the agency's MCGF-related activities. For example, there was little evidence of agency assistance to school districts in developing and implementing curriculum activities for students related to diversity or for maintaining instructional programs that reflect, respect, and celebrate diversity. There was also minimal evidence the agency provides on-going technical assistance to school districts in implementing MCGF approaches to instruction (e.g., cultural competency) or including MCGF concepts in the local curriculum. The agency is encouraged to be more proactive in modeling the infusion of multicultural, gender fair (MCGF) aspects into existing practices. This would help provide LEA staff examples, experiences, and processes for inclusion of these concepts at the local level. Consider the following actions:
 - Include discussions of MCGF practices during development of the LEAs' contract for services.
 - Actively assist LEAs in seeking community partners to provide role models and help identify contributions of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
 - Assist LEAs in updating the multicultural, gender fair education goals contained within their Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIPs).
 - Purposefully model MCGF approaches into delivery of professional development offerings.
 - Develop understanding among LEA and agency staff that MCGF approaches include more than the use of inclusive instructional materials; they should be reflected in, written curriculum, instructional delivery, and the classroom learning environment.

- Assist LEAs in review and revision of equity and affirmative action plans (e.g., develop templates, similar to what is done for special education, ESL, and Perkins/Tech Prep).
- Develop a verification process (i.e., procedures for monitoring implementation) to ensure MCGF concepts are imbedded within all agency initiatives.

Standard VI – Media

Noted Strengths

1. Agency Media Services was described as responsive to LEA needs and was identified as an “area of the agency where they have truly become ‘one’.” Interviewees noted the following as beneficial to LEA work:
 - materials organized through mediagraphies, which are also available via email updates (i.e., RSS feed)
 - timely support
 - twice weekly van delivery service
 - books identified by Lexile level
 - material acquisition based on usage and request data
 - print and production services, including access to a graphic artist and DVD creation
 - access to instructional technologies, such as Play-a-Ways, GPS systems, FOSS and GEMS kits, calculators, student response systems (“clickers”), and digital and flip cameras
 - routing of professional journals
2. Media Services staff members meet with LEA teacher librarians twice per year. These meetings have provided information regarding copyright information, library curriculum, and other emerging issues. Training is also provided to library paraprofessionals.
3. Agency and LEA interviewees identified the agency’s website as a strength. The website includes access to a variety of online databases via Iowa AEA Online, online systems for materials checkout from Media Services and registration for professional development offerings, and a digital resources portal. The agency is also beginning to develop RSS feeds to provide additional depth of support.

Areas of Recommendation

None noted

Standard VII – School Technology

Noted Strengths

1. All interviewees expressed appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the agency school technology staff and the services they provide. The agency attempts to be “ahead of the curve” regarding technology.

2. Interviewees reported that the agency technology staff partner with LEA technology staff to develop LEA technology plans, conduct technology infrastructure audits, provide instruction in pedagogy associated with technology, and install and configure technology infrastructure. The following agency supports in the area of school technology were specifically mentioned:
 - Support with assistive technology in the home setting as well as school setting
 - E-rate Support
 - Technology Advisory Committee
 - Allowing districts to check out new products prior to major purchases
 - Voice activation software
 - Web IEP training
 - Microsoft Settlement support
 - Technology Coordinators Network

Areas of Recommendation

None noted

Standard VIII – Leadership

Noted Strengths

1. Interviewees noted several examples of services provided by the agency to develop leadership based upon the Iowa Standards for School Administrators including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Evaluator training
 - Annual budget workshops
 - Superintendents' Network (i.e., Elmore project)
 - e-Walk training
 - Iowa Core Curriculum modules
 - Balanced Leadership training
2. The agency encourages development of teacher leaders through involvement in initiatives such as Every Learner Inquires (ELI), Literacy Excellence, Instructional Decision Making (IDM), Reading Recovery, and KU-SIM.

Areas of Recommendation

1. Team members identified a general theme that occurred across a number of leadership-related initiatives within the agency: LEAs' commitment to participating tends to decline over time. Interviewees indicated "networks" (e.g., principals and curriculum directors) are not offered consistently across each service area. Agency staff stated the rationale for not providing these opportunities in all service areas was low participation. LEA interviewees mentioned lack of relevant content contributed to lack of participation. Similar comments were heard regarding attendance at monthly superintendent meetings. Well established networks would provide additional avenues to communicate agency services, discuss emerging trends, identify regional priorities/needs, and deliver common leadership professional development. The agency is encouraged to conduct a formal review to identify why participation is low and develop a plan for addressing the findings. Consider having a stakeholder group validate the proposed plan prior to implementing changes.

2. The teacher mentoring and induction program provided through the agency was described as “broken” by LEA interviewees. Interviewees indicated the practice of separating mentors from mentees is “fundamentally flawed” and that greater support is provided for mentors than for mentees. Travel was also mentioned as a barrier to participation in the program. The agency is encouraged to review research related to mentoring and induction programs and select a program and approach that will be consistently used over a period of years. Consult with Mary Beth Schroeder-Fracek at the Iowa Department of Education (marybeth.schroederfracek@iowa.gov or 515-281-3160) for additional support.

Accreditation Status: AEA 267

Area Education Agency 267 is recommended for **continued accreditation** pursuant to 281—IAC Chapter 72.