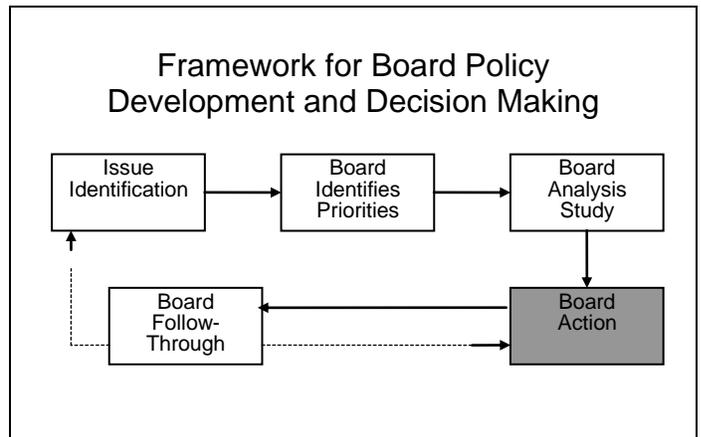


# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

September 15, 2011



**Agenda Item:** Keystone Area Education Agency (AEA) Accreditation

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

**Equity Impact Statement:**

Each AEA is required to address and support agency standards on multicultural, gender-fair approaches and meeting the diverse educational needs of students in their agency's Comprehensive Improvement Plan and in the services provided to local education agencies.

**Presenter:** Sharon Hawthorne, Consultant  
AEA Site Visit Team Co-Leader  
Bureau of Student and Family Support Services

**Attachments:** 1

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board approve the recommendations for AEA accreditation submitted by the Director and grant continued accreditation for Keystone AEA.

**Background:** Chapter 273.9 of the Code of Iowa provides authority for the State Board of Education to set standards and procedures for the accreditation of AEAs. These standards and procedures are contained in Chapter 72 of Iowa Administrative Code.

# Keystone Area Education Agency 1 Accreditation Report

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## 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.

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## 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,
    - Media,
    - School Technology,
    - Multicultural, Gender Fair, and
    - 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.
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## 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.

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**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.
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**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**
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**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 Keystone AEA 1, were reviewed as a part of the agency's accreditation visit::

- Dubuque County Juvenile Detention,
- Hillcrest Emergency Youth Shelter

**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.**

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# Overall Agency Strengths

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## **Support from Agency SpEd core team members**

Local Education Agency (LEA) staff and parents reported the support from special education (SpEd) core team members is a strength of the agency.

Multiple interviewees reported SpEd core team members work to meet the individual needs of students and families, birth through 21. Examples included:

- Agency staff provide support during the Iowa's System to Achieve Results (I-STAR) process and work with district staff to meet compliance for district Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
  - SpEd staff work closely with Vocational Rehabilitation and other outside agencies during secondary transition planning to assure the success of students once they graduate from high school.
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## **Dedication of Agency staff**

LEA and parent interviewees reported the agency staff is a strength. They demonstrate strong dedication to their work and provide valuable support and resources to LEAs throughout the area. A pervasive spirit of teamwork, collaboration, and close connections with LEAs prevails.

Comments during interviews included, "The consultant works with us, not for us," and "AEA staff becomes part of the school family."

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## **Leadership in Media and Technology**

Interviewees across all groups consistently cited leadership in media and school technology innovation as a strength for the agency.

Examples of this include:

- Support for 1-to-1 laptop programs,
  - Virtual Reality Educational Pathfinder (VREP),
  - Teach Town,
  - Try-to-Buy IPAD program,
  - IPADs for the van drivers,
  - 28 E agreements for technology support of LEAs,
  - Tele-therapy in speech and
  - Professional development in technology use for administrators.
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## **SINA Teams**

One strength of the agency reported by LEA and agency staff is the Schools in Need of Assistance (SINA) teams.

Numerous LEA staff noted that the optional agency SINA "Boot Camp"

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provides districts with resources if and when they are designated as SINA.

It was noted there is a team of six agency staff who are responsible for sharing the work for all SINA schools in the agency. In order to provide greater quality to schools, agency staff work in pairs with schools designated as SINA. The site visit team noted this collaborative support for SINA schools as a strength of the agency.

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**Dissemination  
of Information**

LEA and parent interviewees report the agency has many means to disseminate information.

Examples include:

- Agency website,
  - Google docs,
  - Adobe connect,
  - Skype,
  - Polycom,
  - I-movies,
  - e-line communication system,
  - van delivery,
  - Google sites,
  - online resources available year round to teachers and students.
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**Collaboration  
with AEAs 10  
and 267 and  
Archdiocese of  
Dubuque**

Agency interviewees reported agency staff works in collaboration with AEAs 10 and 267 and the Archdiocese of Dubuque to provide centralized Iowa Core professional development (PD) for all the schools within the Archdiocese.

The advantage of this approach allows each AEA to participate in the development and provision of PD without having to develop three separate PD sessions. It also provides a consistent set of expectations to all schools within the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

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**Collaborative  
Work across  
Agency  
Divisions**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported agency staff work collaboratively across the agency divisions of Instructional Services, Comprehensive Improvement and Strategic Planning, and Special Education.

This collaboration supports continuous improvement efforts to enhance student learning such as developing partnerships to address LEA goals, plan and provide professional development, implement the Iowa Core, and participate on district leadership teams.

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## Overall Agency Recommendations

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### **Options for Meetings and Delivery of PD**

Many groups interviewed mentioned the convenience of having meetings and trainings offered to them via Polycom, Iowa Communication Network (ICN), Skype, webinars, and conference calls. The agency has attempted to do more of this in the recent past, and it has been and will continue to be greatly appreciated by LEAs as they try to meet challenging budgets over the next few years.

Agency staff mentioned that these options help them spend less time traveling and more time focused on their assigned work.

Due to the positive comments received from all groups it is recommended the agency continue this practice and develop future opportunities. The agency may want to track these efforts by developing short stakeholder surveys about the pros and cons of this type of delivery of information to ensure they utilize it when appropriate and adjust to stakeholder needs.

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### **Triad Meetings**

LEA interviewees reported confusion about the purpose and outcome of the Triad meetings.

While there is a consistent process in place for these meetings, agency staff should consider further communication to external stakeholders explaining the purpose of these semiannual meetings and sharing the outcomes with each district.

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### **District Service Team Meetings**

Agency and LEA interviewees shared their involvement in District Service Team (DST) meetings in the districts. The site visit team would encourage the agency to review the process for DSTs to better align DST members to the needs of the district.

LEAs appreciate consistency of staff assignments in order to develop relationships and to provide continuity each year. In addition, the agency needs to define expectations of the district service teams to ensure more consistency across all school districts and develop a line of communication between the DST and agency.

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## School/Community Planning (S/CP) Standard

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**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, and
  - reporting progress towards goals.
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**Strength:**  
**Connections**  
**with LEAs and**  
**Communities**

Agency staff indicated they serve on LEA SINA and School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) teams. In addition, the agency is organized in DSTs to help districts accomplish their goals. This provides connections with LEAs and their communities to focus on student/school/district improvement efforts.

One LEA representative reported, "Keystone AEA is present and involved in our district's planning with our community." LEA interviewees note the SINA audit and design process is also made available to non-identified schools/districts as a proactive approach to improving student achievement.

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**Strength:**  
**Specialty**  
**Teams**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported the support from the agency's Autism Resource Team, Behavior Resource Team, and the Brain Injury Team is a strength. Some specific examples are listed below:

- The Autism Resource Team provides parent information and sessions to support families as well as "high quality" professional development for AEA and LEA staff.
  - The Autism Resource Team works with hospitals, clinics and schools to provide services to students and parents.
  - Access to the agency's professional lending library is made available to community members, parents, and LEA staff.
  - The Brain Injury Resource Team provides community outreach.
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**Strength:**  
**Community**  
**Partnerships**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported the partnership between agency staff and community agencies is an effective support for children birth through age twenty-one.

Examples included:

- The Early ACCESS (EA) Council provides an opportunity for agency and Early Childhood of Iowa (ECI), formerly known as Community Empowerment, staff to collaboratively work together to provide services

to families in an effective and efficient manner. This partnership also provides and delivers developmentally appropriate materials to the preschool sites at no cost.

- EA staff have many valuable community partnerships throughout the communities within the agency.
  - Agency staff work with Department of Human Services (DHS) and public health to provide early intervention support to parents and families.
  - Agency staff assist districts in the State-wide Voluntary Preschool Program grant application process and the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS) verification process. The four-year-old-preschool programs connect with external partners in order to help provide services to school and community preschool programs.
  - EA Services provide early identification and intervention for infants and toddlers and support families and community partners in their response to children's identified needs.
  - Occupational therapists (OT), physical therapists (PT), and speech language pathologists (SLP) are therapeutic partners with parents.
  - Agency staff members help with the secondary transition process for students and have strong partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, Iowa Rehabilitation Services as well as local community colleges.
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**Recommendation:  
Triads –  
Communicate  
Process to  
LEAs and  
Monitor  
Implementation**

Agency interviewees indicated that the agency uses aggregated information collected from the spring and fall triad meetings to assist in identifying and planning for as well as responding to agency-wide district needs.

LEA interviewees indicated they would like feedback from the triad visits and a sense of the agency's planned response to identified priorities and needs as a result of the process.

Although many interviewees discussed the triad visits, the agency is encouraged to communicate the purpose of the process and monitor its implementation. LEAs might benefit from increased communication regarding this process; analysis of data collected, and follow-up.

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**Recommendation:  
LEA Analysis  
of Data**

While agency staff report using data to identify the focus for PD efforts, LEA interviewees indicated a need for support from agency staff for analyzing student achievement data and learning environment data. The analysis of this data could be used for planning, designing, and monitoring the implementation of PD activities that will assist LEAs in meet district/school-wide goals.

Consider continuing to provide support to LEAs to assist them in their efforts to become data- driven leaders though the integration of data analysis training into current PD offering as well as the addition of new PDofferings around

data analysis and data-based decision making.

## Professional Development (PD) Standard

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**Expectations:**  
**IAC**  
**281—72.4(2)**

The AEA shall deliver professional development services for schools, school districts and AEA instructional, administrative, and support personnel.

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; and
  - addresses professional development activities as required by the Iowa Code or administrative rules.
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**Strength:**  
**Research-based**  
**PD Aligned to**  
**LEA goals**

Both LEA and agency interviewees reported the agency staff support schools with research-based trainings/PD offerings aligned with school and district goals following the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM).

PD is provided in a variety of ways to meet individual LEA needs (train the trainer, on site, large group, via technology).

According to multiple interview groups, the agency is aware of current trends and research-based practices and designs PD based on these initiatives and the needs of LEAs.

Examples of research-based practices, provided by interviewees, included the following: Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), Instructional Decision-Making (IDM), Every Learner Inquires (ELI), Every Student Counts (ESC), Every Child Reads (ECR), and Creative Curriculum.

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**Strength:**  
**Supports for**  
**Needs of**  
**Diverse**  
**Learners**

LEA interviewees indicated PD offerings support the needs of diverse learners. Topics have included Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), children on the autism spectrum (TEACCH), child find, English Language Learners (ELL), and gifted and talented (G/T) education.

Additionally, LEA interviewees reported the agency provides one-on-one support in understanding how to meet the unique needs of specific students (e.g., Behavior Resource Team, Autism Resource Team, Brain Injury Team).

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**Strength:  
Authentic  
Intellectual  
Work**

Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) was reported by several interview groups as being an "effective and positive" PD opportunity provided by the Department of Education (DE) and agency.

Groups of teachers meet and follow up regularly with agency coaches and liaisons to study common efforts: student work, lesson plans, or assessments. Rubric evaluations engage the teachers in conversations and provide a framework for improving teaching and learning in classrooms.

Agency interviewees reported engaging in monthly Collaborative Learning Communities (CLC) meetings focused on how to assist school districts (e.g. instructional coaching). The agency is attempting to model this process with its own staff to support their understanding of CLCs as LEAs begin to implement this component for the Iowa Core.

The agency is in its first year of implementation; feedback from the agency administrative staff was positive. In addition, agency staff work collaboratively and across divisional lines on a work team (e.g. reading, math, science, learning supports) to plan trainings and support identified LEA professional development needs.

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**Strength:  
Co-teaching  
Training  
Cohorts**

Both LEA and agency interview groups reported the agency has developed co-teaching training cohorts in several schools. The cohorts have three years of intensive training and agency staff continue to support LEA cohorts with follow-up and monitoring after the third year.

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**Recommendation:  
Increase  
Agency  
Capacity**

Agency interviewees indicated that they would like increase their capacity by providing PD that incorporates differentiation to meet the various learning needs of student.

The agency is encouraged to analyze consultants' time to develop priorities in order to allow time to incorporate various approaches to differentiation into the agency's PD activities.

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## Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) Standard

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**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, and
  - using that information to guide school and school district goal setting and implementation of actions to improve student learning.
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**Strength:**  
**Iowa Core**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported that a variety of structures, processes, programs, and initiatives designed to support and advance Iowa Core objectives are provided to LEAs.

Iowa Core is an on-going theme in many PD efforts, with a variety of teams including LEA administrative groups (superintendents, principals, curriculum directors) and in local agency and LEA teams (CLC, Professional Learning Communities [PLC], and Building Learning Teams [BLT]). In addition, each LEA has an assigned agency contact for implementation of the Iowa Core, and training is tailored to LEA needs and identified areas of focus.

Many agency efforts clearly support Iowa Core work such as: AIW, PBIS, CGI, VREP, and Co-Teaching. Additionally, in some districts/schools, the agency staff has trained district/school staff to be Iowa Core trainers.

LEA interviewees noted the improved efforts and impact of Iowa Core training and support. Numerous LEA interviewees reported the improved effectiveness of this PD because it is occurring on-site and is more embedded in the classrooms and schools. Finally, the agency serves as an interface between the DE and LEAs for understanding, implementing, and evaluating LEA Iowa Core efforts.

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**Strength:**  
**Agency**  
**Response to**  
**Behavioral**

Agency and LEA interviewees indicated a strong effort around PBIS and Olweus to improve the instructional climate in classrooms and buildings. One interviewee shared how quickly the agency responded to some behavioral needs by collecting, analyzing, and working with the school to create a

<b>Needs</b>	customized plan to address these needs.
<b>Strength: GOLD Assessment System</b>	Agency and LEA interviewees reported the PD on the Teaching Strategies <i>GOLD</i> Assessment System has empowered preschool teachers to actively use the data collected from this assessment on a daily basis.
<b>Strength: Services Outside Required Content Areas</b>	<p>In spite of limited finances and staff allocations the agency attempts to meet the needs of districts by providing services outside of the required content areas.</p> <p>Examples included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• University of Kansas Strategies (KU)</li> <li>• Physical education (PE)</li> <li>• Technology training</li> <li>• Fine arts</li> </ul>
<b>Recommen- dation: Awareness of Opportunities</b>	<p>Some LEA interviewees indicated while there are many services and opportunities available, but felt they have to actively search out these opportunities.</p> <p>While the agency has responded by increasing communications, such as surveys, consider continuing to find ways to ensure all districts are aware of the opportunities available to support them.</p>
<b>Recommen- dation: Monitoring of Implementation</b>	<p>The agency's monitoring of implementation across all programs, particularly those introduced through PD, appears to be inconsistent. While some programs have strong implementation data (e.g. Co-Teaching) others appear to have little or none.</p> <p>The agency should consider developing a process for collecting and monitoring implementation data across all of their curriculum, instruction, and assessment PD activities.</p>

## Diverse Learner Needs (DL) Standard

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**Expectations:**  
**IAC**  
**281—72.4(4)**

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.

Services provide support to schools and school districts and include special education compliance with Iowa administrative rules for special education.

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**Strength:**  
**Early**  
**Childhood**  
**Community**  
**Partners**

EA interviewees indicated the integration of early childhood community partners from across their region and have established strong relationships with these partners.

Written agreements have been developed that clearly outline the responsibilities of the community partners and the agency.

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**Strength:**  
**Using ECO**  
**data**

EA and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) interviewees recognize the limitations of the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) data and continue to analyze multiple sources of data to effectively improve outcomes for children by using the data to guide decisions and improve the Early ACCESS and Early Childhood Special Education services.

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**Strength:**  
**Special**  
**Education**  
**Support Teams**

The document review and agency and LEA interviewees indicate the agency has SpEd support teams (e.g. Autism Team, Behavior Resource Team, Brain Injury Team, G/T Team) assigned to each school which operates effectively assisting schools in planning, implementing, and evaluating programming for students with disabilities.

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**Strength:**  
**Secondary**  
**Transition**

Interviews of agency and LEA staff and parents indicate the agency's Secondary Transition Services are strong. Parents of students of transition age report the agency staff has gone above and beyond when helping with transition from high school.

Examples include:

- Agency SpEd interviewees reported they annually use the ICN with parents for secondary transition planning. Last year 150 parents attended this ICN, some with children as young as 4th grade. During the ICN the roles of agency staff, teachers, and students are explained and the secondary transition issues parents and students should be thinking about are discussed. The agency has gotten positive feedback from ICN

- participants.
- Agency staff are continuing to develop secondary transition materials for parents.
  - SpEd interviewees reported using individual student data from transition assessments to identify the needs and develop post secondary expectations for students starting at age 14 and providing appropriate services to meet those needs. This has led to an increase in the number of students with IEPs graduating with regular diplomas and a decrease in the dropout rate of students with IEPs. The agency has assisted districts in developing transition type courses (notetaking, self advocacy, KU Strategies) to help students build their capacity, meet their post secondary expectations and succeed and stay in school.
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**Strength:  
Services for  
Diverse  
Learners**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported the agency provides:

- Interpreters to LEAs
  - Iowa English Language Development Assessment (IELDA) testing services and support
  - Book bags in Spanish
  - Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)
  - Second Chance Reading
  - Translation services
  - Media collection resources
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**Recommendation:  
Gifted and  
Talented  
Consultant**

Agency interviewees report there is one consultant for G/T who serves the entire agency. Consider the following ideas to enhance the provision of G/T services throughout the agency:

- Allow districts to assume the responsibility for sponsoring/ coordinating student events.
  - Review referral procedures to avoid possible under-identification of minority students.
  - G/T consultant contributing ideas to differentiated instruction (DI) PD to allow teachers to better serve students identified as G/T.
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**Recommendation:  
Early ACCESS  
PD**

SpEd Part C interviewees reported they have been studying:

- alignment of curriculum,
- child assessment, and
- interventions embedded in family routines.

The agency should continue to provide professional development in curriculum, assessment, and interventions that improves outcomes for children served by EA staff.

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**Recommendation:  
Suspension and  
Expulsion**

Agency interviewees reported systemic strategies are in place regarding suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities.

The agency is encouraged to further analyze data for every districts (even districts with student numbers so low that data cannot be made public) to determine effectiveness or ineffectiveness of current strategies.

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**Recommendation:  
Parent  
Involvement**

State Performance Plan (SPP) data for the agency shows a drop in the percentage of parents of children with IEPs ages 3-5 (86.49% in 2008-09 to 77.78% in 2009-2010) and parents of students with IEPs ages 6-21 (70.93% in 2008-09 to 68.57% in 2009-2010) who report that the districts facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for students with IEPs.

Parents of students with IEPs interviewed were complimentary of the services provided by the agency. Consider assisting districts with finding ways to involve parents of students with IEPs, such as having them serve on school/community committees or advisory groups.

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## Multi-Cultural Gender Fair (MCGF) Standard

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**Expectations:** The AEA shall provide services that support multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the educational programs pursuant to Iowa Code section IAC 281—72.4(5) 256.11.

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; and
  - incorporate, on an ongoing basis, activities within professional development that prepare and assist all employees to work effectively with diverse learners.
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**Strength:  
Anti-Bullying  
and  
Harassment**

Agency and LEA staff interviewed mentioned several examples of how districts are supported through anti-bullying and harassment initiatives.

Examples included the following:

- Training and support for implementation (eg. climate surveys) of PBIS
  - Training and support for implementation of Olweus
  - Cyberbullying information
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**Strength:  
Media  
Materials**

Multiple agency and LEA interviewees reported materials available through the agency's lending library/media collection and on-line are up to date. Media Services personnel seek materials that teach cultural proficiency and portray cultural differences in a positive manner as well as assuring these materials are culturally appropriate and promote gender equity.

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**Recommendation:  
Diversity**

While diversity was not viewed as an issue of concern by interviewees, the site visit team received enough information to suggest the agency might consider challenging this assumption. Most interviewees expressed their view of diversity as that of race/ethnicity.

The agency might benefit from developing a systemic plan to accelerate and support the capacity of agency and LEA staff to better understand cultural diversity.

Consider the following suggestions:

- Develop the cultural competency and skills of all staff.
- Explore a broader view of diversity, including a thorough examination of the diversity within the district, such as socio-economic status, location of where people live, families new to the district, athletes and non-athletes, students with disabilities, students who do well and those who do not, and the effect this has on learning.
- Explore the difference between tolerance and acceptance.
- Interest teachers and students in developing a relationship with a school in another country, with other schools in Iowa, or schools in other parts of the United States who have high populations of racial/ethnic diversity or high populations of low socio-economic diversity to explore aspects of diversity through the use of technology.
- Consider embedding cultural competency concepts and activities through existing initiatives and classes/courses.
- The AEA does not currently have an Equity Committee. It is recommended the agency develop a committee composed of representatives from various stakeholder groups. The committee should meet regularly to develop goals based on needs assessment data collected from LEAs and determine what actions the agency must take to meet those goals.
- Some LEAs reported an increase in diversity in their communities. Agency staff report a desire for an increase in PD to build cultural competency to ensure staff are better equipped to support LEA needs. As agency capacity is increased support should be provided to LEAs to help them develop awareness and become knowledgeable about diversity in their communities.

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**Recommendation:  
Embedding  
MCGF  
practices**

While agency interviewees referenced infusing MCGF concepts into a variety of agency services, LEA interviewees provided few examples referencing the integration of these concepts within PD for content areas in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The agency is encouraged to consider how to embed MCGF practices into content area professional development, including, but not limited to the areas of reading, mathematics, and science.

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**Recommendation:  
Assistance to  
LEAs  
regarding  
Bullying and  
Harrassment**

When asked how the agency works to ensure students are not discriminated against, bullied, or harassed, some agency staff shared awareness of a variety of materials and resources. However, LEA staff shared limited knowledge of what on-going assistance is available through the agency regarding these issues.

Consider publishing a bibliography of resources relevant to this topic as well

as investigating outside agencies (e.g., Iowa Safe Schools and Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]) that could assist schools and districts with these issues.

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## Media (MS) and School Technology Services (STS) Standard

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<b>Expectations:</b> <b>Media Services</b> <b>IAC</b> <b>281—72.4(6)</b>	<p>The AEA shall deliver media services.</p> <p>These services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• align with school and school district needs;</li><li>• support effective instruction;</li><li>• 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;</li><li>• support the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science; and</li><li>• support and integrate emerging technology.</li></ul>
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<b>Expectations:</b> <b>School</b> <b>Technology</b> <b>Services</b> <b>IAC</b> <b>281—72.4(7)</b>	<p>The AEA shall supplement and support effective instruction for all students through school technology services.</p> <p>These services provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• technology planning,</li><li>• technical assistance, and</li><li>• professional development.</li></ul> <p>These services support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the incorporation of instructional technologies to improve student achievement; and</li><li>• the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science</li></ul> <p>These services support and integrate emerging technology.</p>
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<b>Strength:</b> <b>Media and</b> <b>School</b> <b>Technology</b> <b>Services</b>	<p>Media and School Technology Services were described by multiple interviewees as "excellent" and the staff was referred to as "exemplary." Technology staff members were mentioned as problem solvers and "on the cutting edge."</p> <p>Multiple interview groups stated the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Media and school technology staff listen to requests and use data to track usage</li><li>• Media center staff are willing to customize materials for individual students</li></ul>
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- Agency assists in:
    - identifying the assistive technology needs of students,
    - assisting districts to acquire the needed devices,
    - providing support to teachers who have assistive technology devices in their classrooms, and
    - training students to use the devices.
  - Web site is convenient and easy to use
  - Support Information Technology (IT) needs and technology infrastructure in districts (band width, etc.)
  - Provide technicians to schools through 28E agreements
  - Technology learning incorporated into monthly principal/curriculum meetings
  - VREP provides student with opportunities to learn and develop virtual reality and 3D applications for their learning and to support the learning of others.
  - "Try before you buy" program allows districts to try technology before it is purchased by the LEA
  - Purchases large ticket items schools could not purchase, such as star labs, guitar lab, heart system
- 

**Strength:  
Access for  
Preschool and  
Headstart  
Programs**

Agency and LEA Interviewees reported the collaborative partnerships with ECI have provided community-based preschool programs and Head Start with access to quality instructional tools, media collection, technology, and professional resources and materials.

The agency staff forged relationships with ECI to support the utilization of early childhood resources by providing on-site van delivery services to preschool and Head Start programs in the agency.

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**Strength:  
Media and  
School  
Technology  
Staff**

Media and technology services were mentioned repeatedly during LEA interviews.

- Agency van drivers were mentioned specifically in LEA interviews as "the ambassadors of Keystone AEA."
- The clerks were described as "second to none" and very knowledgeable about the collections and the needs of the districts and schools.
- Radio frequency ID's were recently added as the need arose due to high volume usage of materials.
- Van drivers have I-pad's enabling them to locate missing materials and assist teachers "on the spot."

Interviewees stated, "Technology staff is exemplary" and "They hold the hands of the not-so-techy people."

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**Recommendation:**

None at this time

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## Leadership (LD) Standard

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**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; and
- professional development of educational leaders.

AEAs develop and deliver leadership programs based on:

- local educational needs;
  - state educational needs; and
  - best practices.
- 

**Strength:**  
**Leadership**  
**Opportunities**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported many opportunities are provided for leaders to collaborate and learn.

Examples include:

- Evaluator training
  - Principal/curriculum director meetings with agendas that include PD with a technology focus
  - Google site used throughout the year with information from various meetings
  - Principal/curriculum director advisory group that provides input for PD (e.g. site visit prep)
  - Leadership PD on supporting math and literacy initiatives for building principals
  - Superintendent meetings to assure that a consistent message is provided to all LEA leaders
  - Superintendent Network
  - Principal Leadership Academy provides endorsement program
  - Support for SAI Iowa Leadership Academy
  - Iowa Core Leadership Team
  - Mentoring and Induction program, Journey to Excellence
- 

**Recommendations:**  
**Innovative**  
**Practices**

Agency and LEA interviewees recognized the agency for leading innovative practices in and across many disciplines. Interviewees reported the agency is supporting, expanding, and transforming current initiatives and innovative practices. While there are pockets of change happening, it is not occurring on

an agency-wide level.

Consider engaging LEA leadership in conversations that lead to the development of plans to implement innovative practices in their LEAs.

The agency is also encouraged to continue promoting and encouraging LEAs to expand their vision and increase efforts to seek innovative and transformational practices to better meet the current and future needs of students.

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## Accreditation Status: Keystone AEA

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**Team  
Recommendation**

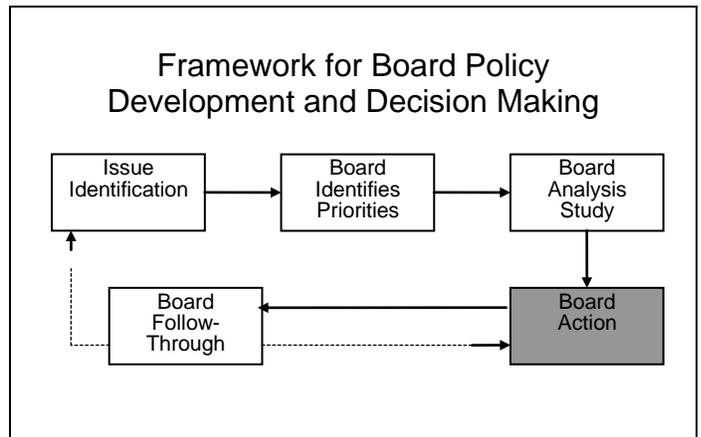
Keystone Area Education Agency is recommended for continued accreditation pursuant to 281—IAC Chapter 72.

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# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

September 15, 2011



**Agenda Item:** Green Hills Area Education Agency (AEA) Accreditation

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

**Equity Impact Statement:**

Each AEA is required to address and support agency standards on multicultural, gender-fair approaches and meeting the diverse educational needs of students in their agency's Comprehensive Improvement Plan and in the services provided to local education agencies.

**Presenter:** Sharon Hawthorne, Consultant  
AEA Site Visit Team Co-Leader  
Bureau of Student and Family Support Services

**Attachments:** 1

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the State Board approve the recommendations for AEA accreditation submitted by the Director and grant continued accreditation for Green Hills AEA.

**Background:** Chapter 273.9 of the Code of Iowa provides authority for the State Board of Education to set standards and procedures for the accreditation of AEAs. These standards and procedures are contained in Chapter 72 of Iowa Administrative Code.

# Green Hills Area Education Agency Accreditation Report

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**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.

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**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,
  - Media,
  - School Technology,
  - Multicultural, Gender Fair, and
  - 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.

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**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.

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**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 Green Hills AEA, were reviewed as a part of the agency's accreditation visit::

- The Clarinda Youth Shelter,
- Children's Square Emergency Shelter,
- Southwest Iowa Detention Center, and
- Clarke County Juvenile Detention Center

**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.**

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## Overall Agency Strengths

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### **Merger**

The merger of Green Valley AEA 14 and Loess Hills AEA 13 was done in a positive manner. During the agency and Local Education Agency (LEA) staff interviews there were no negative comments regarding the merger process. Much work was done to facilitate a smooth merger transition on July 1, 2010.

A Reorganization Plan was developed and followed. The former agencies worked with School Administrators of Iowa to develop a Theory of Action for the new agency.

Teams from both agencies compared philosophies, systems, and services. As a result the Comparison of Services document was created.

A merger website entitled, The Green Hills AEA Merger Information Site, was developed and all the documents, board minutes, and Communication Committee minutes supporting the merger work were posted.

The boards and management of both former agencies are to be commended for putting in place a merger process that was well thought out and included numerous dialogues regarding how things would happen in the new agency.

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### **Agency Staff**

LEA interviewees view agency staff as dedicated and qualified. Interviewees from small districts made many comments about not being able to do their work without the AEAs. Interviewees were reluctant to talk about receiving more services, they are concerned about keeping current service

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### **Media and School Technology**

Media and School Technology services were described by multiple interviewees as "excellent."

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## Overall Agency Recommendations

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### **Possible Inconsistencies in Equitable Availability of Agency services**

The agency administration is encouraged to continue to be mindful of possible inconsistencies in the equitable availability of agency services. Various interviewees commented on differences in services from area to area and questioned how these decisions are made.

One example was implementation of the Iowa Core, some LEA interviewees stated the need for a more systematic approach to supporting them in the implementation of Iowa Core, while others were satisfied with this process.

Interviewees stated the quality of professional development was inconsistent across the agency.

The agency is encouraged to continue to seek feedback from LEAs about planning, implementation, and follow up provided. The use of data will also support the accuracy or inaccuracy of perceptions as well as drive agency resource allocation and other decisions effecting equity of services.

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### **Lack of Consistent Communication**

LEA interviewees reported a lack of consistency in communication to stakeholders regarding agency services. They reported having to "be assertive to get some things." If districts ask, they get what they need, but little mention was made about outward communication.

The agency does react to needs of districts, but could be more proactive, communicate opportunities available, avoid duplication of efforts, and allow collaboration among LEAs.

The agency is encouraged to develop a comprehensive communication plan and identify a staff member to coordinate this plan to ensure a consistent and proactive approach to communication. Consider using the approaches used to communicate the merger as a model for this plan.

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### **Unclear agency vision and direction**

During agency middle and upper administrators interviews it was evident they have a clear picture of the vision and direction of the agency. Other agency and LEA staff interviewed appeared to have a less clear concept of the direction the agency is taking.

The administration indicated a need for more effective communication regarding this new vision to agency staff and LEA stakeholders.

Many changes have taken place over the last nine months; the merger,

the implementation of the Collaborative Conversations process and the LEA/AEA Collaboration Plans including the use of Consultants for Continuous Improvement (CCIs) to help LEAs identify agency services to be provided.

The agency should consider developing a process to review, revise and possible expand these changes. The process should include a communication component to assure that all stakeholders are informed about the changes and understand the impact on the LEAs within the agency.

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## School/Community Planning (S/CP) Standard

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**Expectations:** The AEA shall deliver services for school-community planning.

**IAC**

**72.4(1)**

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, and
  - reporting progress towards goals.
- 

**Strength:  
Community  
Outreach**

Agency and LEA groups reported efforts for community outreach differ by regional areas, representing a sensitivity and responsiveness to local needs, such as forming alliances with community partners, examples included:

- Community Youth Connections Program with nine separate grants
  - Supporting area Voluntary Preschool Programs
  - Co-planning and facilitating School Improvement Advisory Committee meetings
  - Treynor State Bank Institute/Treynor Community School Financial Literacy Program
  - AmeriCorps: Build Our Future Community Planning
  - Safe Respectful Schools
  - Collaborative Planning with Child Health Specialty Clinics
- 

**Strength:  
School-based  
Intervention  
Assistance**

The agency works with LEAs to provide school-based intervention assistance. These programs help meet the social/emotional needs of at-risk students by providing staff who can relate to students. School-based intervention programs and partnerships appear to be stronger in the more populated areas of the agency.

The agency has acquired a grant with one judicial district, and is applying for another to expand this effort.

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**Strength:  
Local  
Partnerships**

The agency has developed many local partnerships. Some of these partnerships included:

- Children's Square
  - Department of Human Services
  - Various Chambers of Commerce
  - Juvenile Court services
  - Public Health
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**Recommendation:  
Enhance  
Community  
Connections**

The agency has many community partners.

To further enhance connections with the community and develop relationships with the community as a whole the agency should continue to explore and seek opportunities to develop relationships with non-traditional community organizations to provide support for the students of diverse populations, for example, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Lutheran Services, and churches with large minority memberships.

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**Recommendation:  
LEA/AEA  
Collaboration  
Plans**

Staff demonstrated use of the new Collaborative Conversations software and noted it is still in development. The effectiveness of the new software's use and implementation of services need to be monitored and further evaluated.

It appeared from the agency staff interviews agreements stemming from the Collaborative Conversations were not being communicated to staff. The Collaborative Conversations software might be useful to share results of the collaborative conversations with the staff serving each district.

Continue agency efforts to improve the methods of documenting the LEA/AEA Collaboration Plans developed between the LEA and the agency regarding services expected and delivered.

The Agency's plans to provide continual monitoring of progress and services will be beneficial to both LEAs and the agency.

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## Professional Development (PD) Standard

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**Expectations**  
**IAC**  
**72.4(2)**

The AEA shall deliver professional development services for schools, school districts and AEA instructional, administrative, and support personnel.

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; and
  - addresses professional development activities as required by the Iowa Code or administrative rules.
- 

**Strength:**  
**Iowa**  
**Professional**  
**Development**  
**Model (IPDM)**

Many LEA and agency interviewees reported PD delivered externally and internally is aligned with the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM).

Collecting and analyzing implementation data, observation, and consultation were apparent.

It was reported Consultants for Continuous Improvement (CCI) model lessons in LEA classrooms.

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**Strength:**  
**Consultants for**  
**Continuous**  
**Improvement**

Interview groups indicated CCIs support the LEA in their planning and support of implementation.

LEAs reported the CCIs participate in District Leadership Team meetings.

CCIs have been trained to assist LEAs with Assessment Solutions in collecting and using data to make decisions.

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**Strength:**  
**Effective Use of**  
**Technology**

Multiple interview groups reported effective use of technology by the agency to deliver professional development, reduce travel, develop an understanding of what technologies are available for use in the classroom, and integrating technology into classroom instruction.

Some examples included:

- On-line resources such as AEA Online
  - Use of Webinars, Skype™, and Moodle-based classes
  - Agency provides LEA staff training and integration of technology
-

- (e.g. Google Docs) into instruction and communications
  - Agency provides support to LEAs in 1:1 laptop initiative
  - Software and hardware instruction provided throughout the agency
- 

**Strength:  
High Quality  
Research-Based  
PD**

Agency staff interviewees reported receiving high quality research-based PD. According to multiple interview groups, the agency is aware of current trends and research-based practices and designs PD based on these initiatives and the needs of LEAs.

Examples of research-based practices provided by interviewees included the following:

- Second Chance Reading
  - 6+1 Traits Writing
  - Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW)
  - Science Writing Heuristics (SWH)
  - Differentiated Instruction
  - Instructional Decision-Making
  - Every Learner Inquires
  - Every Child Reads
  - Cognitively Guided Instruction
  - Every Student Counts
- 

**Strength:  
PD to meet  
needs of diverse  
learners**

Many agency and LEA interviewees indicated PD is provided to agency and LEA educators so they can better meet the needs of diverse learners, such as students identified for receiving special education services, English Language Learners (ELL) and students who are gifted and talented (G/T).

Additionally, LEA interviewees reported the agency provides one-on-one support in understanding how to meet the unique needs of specific students (e.g., challenging behavior, children on the autism spectrum).

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**Strength:  
Data-based  
Decisions drive  
PD**

The agency special education staff interviewees reported making data based decisions to drive internal and external PD.

Some of the data sources used for these decisions included progress monitoring of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and results from Iowa's System to Achieve Results (I-STAR) IEP reviews.

Examples of the PD offerings included IEP annual goal setting, progress monitoring procedures, and effective IEP annual goal writing.

Early ACCESS (EA) staff is engaged in the same decision making process

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and has adjusted the process for Early Access.

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**Recommendation:  
Determining  
LEA PD Needs**

LEA and agency staff reported the agency is responsive and provides quality opportunities for LEA PD needs.

While this is viewed as strength, the agency might also consider a more proactive approach as well, such as looking at current data, future demographic data, proposed legislative changes, and state and national trends. A proactive focus will enhance the agency's systematic approach to planning, communicating, and providing PD opportunities to all LEAs based on district needs that align with the mission and vision of the agency.

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**Recommendation:  
Content  
Area PD**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported the agency has quality individuals assisting LEAs with English as a Second Language (ESL) and Gifted and Talented (G/T) services. They do a good job of communicating with LEAs and disseminating information, however interviewees expressed concern over the lack of time that would allow the ESL and G/T consultants to have a more collaborative role with district staff.

ESL and G/T staff stated they are not actively involved in the planning and delivery of content area professional development to LEAs. Consider including these consultants, their participation in these conversations would allow them to provide insight regarding strategies for ELLs and G/T students to all involved agency staff who in turn could share that information as they work regularly in LEAs.

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**Recommendation:  
Effects of  
Poverty**

Agency interviewees reported that training related to the effects of poverty on learning has been provided in the past. These workshops and courses provide a basis for understanding the barriers to learning that affect students who live in poverty, and how either situational or generational poverty might affect the learning process.

Consider reinstating this type of training to both agency and LEA administrators and educators.

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## Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) Standard

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**Expectations:** 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.  
**IAC 72.4(3)**

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, and
- using that information to guide school and school district goal setting and implementation of actions to improve student learning.

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**Strength:  
Intervention  
Processes**

LEA and agency interviewees reported the emphasis on the use of intervention processes has provided agency staff and LEA teachers and administrators with a common vocabulary and assistance with data analysis. This has helped LEA and agency staff members to better describe and understand student achievement and meet the needs of individual students.

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**Strength:  
Data Analysis  
Tools**

Some LEA interviewees identified the Assessment Solutions database as their main tool for data analysis; the Heartland Educational Assessment Resource Toolbox (HEART) database is also used by some districts within the agency. Agency and LEA interviewees described continued PD opportunities on the use of databases for making curriculum, instruction and assessment decisions.

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**Strength:  
Iowa Core**

LEA interviewees stated the agency's staff has been helpful in preparing for the implementation of the Iowa Core; e.g., providing Leadership Modules, participating in Iowa Core Leadership Teams, and assisting with Iowa Curriculum Alignment Tool (ICAT).

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**Strength:  
Data Analysis**

Agency and LEA interviewees reported that the CCIs have been helpful in analyzing data from a systematic perspective and have worked with agency content specialists to assist LEAs in meeting the needs of students. The support has included the analysis of assessments beyond Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED), including the Iowa Collaborative Assessment Modules (ICAM).

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**Strength:  
Agency Staff**

LEA interviewees stated the agency's staff has been helpful in supporting reading, mathematics, and science content; e.g. CGI, SWH, AIW, and Second Chance Reading (SCR).

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**Strength:  
Support for  
Voluntary  
Preschools**

Early Access and Early Childhood staff reported the agency provides training and support in implementing voluntary preschool programs. Examples: Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS) visits, Early Childhood Institute, and the provision of materials and information on research based strategies.

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**Recommen-  
dation:  
Documentation**

During the Document Review the accreditation team did not consistently find current curriculum, instruction, and assessment resources and artifacts to review. Many of the documents were dated before the merger.

As the agency continues to merge processes and procedures this documentation should be kept up to date in preparation for future visits.

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**Recommen-  
dation:  
Student  
Achievement  
Gaps**

Agency administration reported concerns about student achievement gaps between the agency and overall state performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) and how these gaps are being addressed.

A possible disconnect between Special Education Building Representatives and Consultants for Continuous Improvement (CCI) may be contributing to the gap. The coordination and collaboration between these individuals could increase the agency's impact on the gap.

The agency may want to look at methods utilized in districts that have reduced these achievement gaps.

Consider continuing the practice of analyzing indicated data and extending it to include a closer analysis of gap data at agency, district, building, and classroom level. This allows for better insight into effective practices, for example co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and other inclusive practices. It would also allow practitioners to make instructional decisions to improve the educational outcomes for students.

## Diverse Learner Needs (DL) Standard

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**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**  
**72.4(4)**

Services provide support to schools and school districts and include special education compliance with Iowa administrative rules for special education.

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**Strength:** Agency and LEA interviewees stated the Special Education (SE) District Building Representative model provides districts with consistent and ongoing support of PD activities, instructional strategies, and analysis of program data. It also allows for the possibility of increased collaboration among agency CCIs, special education building reps, and LEAs.  
**SpEd District Building Representative Model**

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**Strength:** LEA and some parent interviewees reported the agency provides personalized and responsive support for all involved in the special education process including the student. LEA interviewees reported the creation of both the Autism and Challenging Behavior Teams was in response to LEA needs. These teams have assisted districts dealing with specific situations involving individual students.  
**Support for SpEd**

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**Strength:** EA interviewees reported the agency supports their EA and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) personnel with substantial PD to meet their needs. Current EA and ECSE PD focus is on evidence-based interventions and practices and the monitoring of children's progress.  
**Early ACCESS and ECSE**

Analysis of Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) data and ECO decision-making process will be a priority for professional development. Individual PD plans and activities are also supported by the agency. The agency is flexible by allowing individuals to access PD that is directly applicable to their job responsibilities.

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**Recommendation:** Agency and LEA interviewees reported there is some confusion around Section 504 plans and IDEA.  
**Section 504**

Consider providing PD to agency staff and district and building administrators to create an awareness of the differences between section 504 and IDEA. It is suggested agency personnel developing this PD include the Section 504 information on the agency website as well as accessing the Office

of Civil Rights (OCR) website <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html> to get information regarding the requirements of Section 504.

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**Recommendation:  
Mental Health  
Services**

Agency and district interviewees reported districts outside of Pottawattamie County do not have access to mental health services for students. LEAs have a growing need for services that assist in meeting the mental health needs of students.

Consider partnering with community agencies to provide outreach services to assist districts in meeting these needs. Also consider contacting Toni Merfeld, Consultant for Mental Health, at the Iowa Department of Education, she can be reached at 515- 864-6465 or by email at [toni.merfeld@iowa.gov](mailto:toni.merfeld@iowa.gov)

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**Recommendation:  
Disaggregating  
Data**

The document review completed by the Accreditation Site Visit Team showed that demographic trends and achievement gaps have been identified. However the data used to identify the educational needs of the LEAs served by the agency and to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs needs to be regularly disaggregated on the basis of gender, race/national origin, students with IEPs, and socio-economic status.

Consider continuing the collection, review and analysis of disaggregated educational data that can be used to:

- direct instructional and climate-related interventions in classrooms to better meet diverse learners needs.
  - make decisions regarding professional development.
- 

**Recommendation:  
Early  
Childhood  
Outcomes**

Interviewees reported agency staff has already begun to drill down into the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators C3 and B7 for ECO data. The agency should continue to explore this in order to comprehensively understand reasons for not meeting the state targets.

It is imperative the agency EA personnel recognize the ECO indicator is a measure to meet state/national program evaluation needs and clusters multiple domains into three categories. While the limitations are understood, the measure and process need to be honored so reliable and valid data are reported.

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## Multi-Cultural Gender Fair (MCGF) Standard

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**Expectations:** The AEA shall provide services that support multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the educational programs pursuant to Iowa Code section IAC 72.4(5) 256.11.

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; and
  - incorporate, on an ongoing basis, activities within professional development that prepare and assist all employees to work effectively with diverse learners.
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**Strength: District Equity Coordinators Workshop** The agency has an equity committee made up of staff that chooses to participate and deliver an annual workshop for district equity coordinators. The workshop includes information on processes and procedures to support districts.

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**Strength: Media Materials** Multiple agency and LEA interviewees reported materials available through the agency's lending library/media collection and on-line are up to date. The agency's collection included books, DVDs and other materials that provide information on topics such as various ethnic groups, people with disabilities, gender equity and gay/lesbian issues as well as materials in several languages and ELL backpacks.

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**Recommendation: Inactive Equity Committee** While the Equity committee has been active in the past, agency staff reported the current Equity Committee has not met this year.  
It is recommended the agency place a greater emphasis on this committee and its work. The committee should meet regularly to develop goals based on needs assessment data collected from districts and determine what actions the agency must take to meet those goals.

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**Recommendation:** The agency course proposal form reviewed as part of the document review requires the inclusion of MCGF approaches as part of all agency professional

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**Course Proposal Form** development. However, a book is referenced to define the terms on the form, but this edition of the book is no longer available.

The agency may want to incorporate a link to the definitions or utilize EdVision (or other technology) to describe expectations and definitions for MCGF approaches referenced on this form.

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**Recommendation:  
Building Cultural Competency**

Some LEAs reported an increase in diversity in their communities, while others reported they do not have any diversity. Agency staff reported a desire for additional professional development opportunities to increase cultural competency to ensure staff are better equipped to support LEA needs.

As agency capacity is expanded, support should be provided to agency staff so they can support LEAs to develop awareness of diversity in their communities.

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**Recommendation:  
Integration of MCGF Approaches into Content Area PD**

While LEA interviewees referenced integrating MCGF approaches into some agency services, there was little reference to the integration of these approaches within content area professional development.

The agency is encouraged to consider how to embed MCGF approaches into professional development in various content areas, including, but not limited to reading, mathematics, and science. MCGF approaches should be embedded and emphasized in all agency processes. The agency might consider developing a MCGF goal for the agency to assist in focusing these efforts.

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## Media (MS) and School Technology Services (STS) Standard

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<b>Expectations:</b> <b>Media Services</b> <b>IAC</b> <b>72.4(6)</b>	<p>The AEA shall deliver media services.</p> <p>These services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• align with school and school district needs;</li><li>• support effective instruction;</li><li>• 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;</li><li>• support the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science; and</li><li>• support and integrate emerging technology.</li></ul>
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<b>Expectations:</b> <b>School</b> <b>Technology</b> <b>Services</b> <b>IAC</b> <b>72.4(7)</b>	<p>The AEA shall supplement and support effective instruction for all students through school technology services.</p> <p>These services provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• technology planning,</li><li>• technical assistance, and</li><li>• professional development.</li></ul> <p>These services support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the incorporation of instructional technologies to improve student achievement; and</li><li>• the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science</li></ul> <p>These services support and integrate emerging technology.</p>
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<b>Strength:</b> <b>Support to</b> <b>agency and</b> <b>LEA</b>	<p>Multiple interview groups gave many examples of support provided by Media and School Technology Services. Examples included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quick turnaround of materials</li><li>• Focus on customer service</li><li>• Support with resources they need</li><li>• Requests taken and acted upon</li><li>• Data used to track usage</li><li>• Staff has a positive attitude about use of materials-" If it's missing, at least it's in the hands of someone who may enjoy it."</li><li>• Staff is willing to customize materials for individual students</li></ul>
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- ELL backpacks include a variety of materials (books, games) and information about family activities
  - Both the media and school technology staff are very responsive to internal and external needs
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**Strength:  
Assistive  
Technology**

Multiple interview groups reported that the agency assists in:

- identifying the assistive technology needs of students,
  - assisting districts to acquire the needed devices,
  - providing support to teachers who have assistive technology devices in their classrooms
  - Training students to use the assistive technology devices.
  - Assessing noise levels in classrooms to determine need for amplification equipment.
  - Moodle, Google apps and other technological applications are prevalent throughout the agency.
  - Staff training and integration of technology into instruction
  - Web site is convenient and easy to use
  - A thumb drive loaded with all agency policies was given to every agency employee at the start of the year
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**Strength:  
1:1 Laptop  
programs**

Several LEAs have initiated 1:1 laptop programs with the assistance of the agency. Documentation from the agency indicated a concerted effort by the agency to support LEAs considering implementation or attempting to implement such programs.

One to One laptop programs in the LEAs reportedly focus on use and integration of technology into instruction using laptops instead of acquisition of hardware/software.

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**Recommend-  
dation**

No recommendations

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## Leadership (LD) Standard

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**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 72.4(8)**

Leadership services assist with:

- recruitment;
- induction;
- retention; and
- professional development of educational leaders.

AEAs develop and deliver leadership programs based on:

- local educational needs;
  - state educational needs; and
  - best practices.
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**Strength:** LEA staff interviewed reported the agency provides data collection tools and training (e.g., Ewalk, Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI)), opportunities to meet and collaborate (e.g., Instructional Rounds, Superintendents Advisory), and required training such as Evaluator Approval to superintendents and principals.  
**Data Collection and Training**

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**Recommendation:** The agency provides few opportunities for leadership development for district and building level administrators. Due to the demographics of many districts, administrators often have multiple leadership responsibilities such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment.  
**Few Opportunities for Leadership Development**

Consider added a component to the Collaborative Conversations which would help district leadership identify how to build their leadership capacity. This conversation could provide district and building leaders with information about upcoming opportunities and why participating in those opportunities would benefit their students, teachers, and other school personnel.

In order to build capacity of the leaders, the agency could consider offering opportunities to enhance leadership capacity, examples could include:

- Curriculum Network
- Superintendent learning embedded into business meetings
- Professional development for district and building administrators on the federal and state mandates regarding the district's provision of special education
- G/T Network and G/T Academy

- Support for the Iowa Association of School Boards' Lighthouse Project
  - Early Childhood Network
  - Principal's Networks (early childhood/elementary/middle school/high school)
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**Recommendation:  
No Evidence**

The accreditation team did not hear evidence of the following:

- School board support and training (e.g. Helping the school board understand the role of the superintendent as instructional leader)
- Induction of LEA Administrators
- Recruitment of LEA Administrators
- Retention of LEA administrators

The Team recommends the agency reviews availability of services in the above areas and seeks input from LEAs via Collaborative Conversations to determine if there is a need to provide support in these areas.

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## Accreditation Status: Green Hills AEA

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**Team  
Recommendation**

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

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