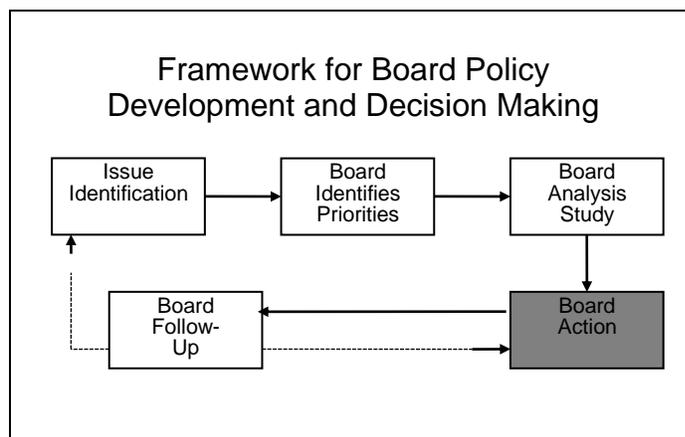


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 16, 2016



Agenda Item: Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency Accreditation

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

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

Presenter: Amy Williamson, Chief
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation to Mississippi Bend AEA.

Background: Mississippi Bend AEA was visited by an accreditation team to determine compliance with the requirements of Iowa Code Chapter 273 and Iowa Administrative Code 281—72.



STATE OF IOWA

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
RYAN M. WISE, DIRECTOR

November 3, 2016

William Decker
Chief Administrator
Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency
729 21st Street
Bettendorf, IA 52722

Dear Chief Administrator Decker:

Thank you for your cooperation with our site visit team September 27-29, 2016, as we interviewed staff from the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency (MBAEA) and schools served by the AEA to determine MBAEA's accreditation status.

I have enclosed a report of our observations of the AEA's strengths and our recommendations with regard to each standard of service in Iowa Code Chapter 273 and Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 281-72, including our recommendation to the Iowa State Board of Education that MBAEA remain accredited. This recommendation will be presented to the State Board at the Board's November 16 meeting. You and any of your staff you wish may be present for the Board's consideration of the report.

If you have any questions or concerns about this report please feel free to contact me.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Williamson".

Amy Williamson, Chief
Bureau of School Improvement

cc: Mississippi Bend AEA Board President
Ryan Wise, Director
David Tilly, Deputy Director
Sarah Brown, Chief, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports
Barbara Guy, Director of Special Education, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports
Cindy Butler, Administrative Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement
Holly Barnes, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement
Eric Heitz, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement
Betsy Lin, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports
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*Iowa Department of Education
Accreditation Final Report
Mississippi Bend Area Education
Agency*

November 3, 2016

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Executive Summary

An accreditation team from the Iowa Department of Education, including participants from area education agencies (AEAs) across the state, originally visited Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency (MBAEA) on March 20-24, 2015, to review the AEA's accreditation per Iowa Code chapter 273 and Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) 281-72. A draft report based on the March 2015 visit was provided to the AEA. In the draft report, the accreditation team determined that the AEA met three of the eight standards of service required for accreditation. The MBAEA Chief Administrator, William Decker, and Executive Director, Edward Gronlund, expressed concern that the original report did not take into account all evidence provided to the accreditation team. The AEA chief administrator and director of the Department agreed that the Department would provide a second review of the five standards for which the AEA was originally not determined to meet requirements. The second review was conducted as part of the Department's Differentiated Accountability process.

The follow-up visit to MBAEA was conducted September 27-29, 2016. The following report combines the findings from the original report on the standards that were met from the 2015 visit with the findings of the site visit team in 2016.

The accreditation team, on behalf of the director of the Department, has determined that MBAEA currently meets the standards of service for AEAs per Iowa Code chapter 273 and IAC 281-72 and recommends that the AEA remain accredited. The standards for service are:

- General Standards for Service: Met
- School and Community Planning: Met
- Professional Development: Met
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Met
- Diverse Learners: Met
- Multi-Cultural Gender Fair: Met
- Media Services: Met
- Technology Services: Met
- Leadership Services: Met

Introduction and Overview

Legal Authorities and Framework

Iowa Code chapter 273 and IAC 281-72 provide a process and substantive standards by which the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa State Board of Education accredit area education agencies.

Authority for this visit comes from the above section of Iowa Code, as well as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) [20 USC § 1412 (11)], and the pursuant federal regulations. Iowa code provisions require that the accreditation of each AEA in the state be reviewed at least once every five years. One of the components of accreditation is an on-site review by an accreditation team. The on-site review is followed by a report to the Director of the Department and the State Board, whose members may determine to accredit or conditionally accredit the AEA.

Federal code and regulations also require that the Department exercise general supervision over AEAs and districts in guaranteeing students with disabilities access to a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment. Examination of these requirements is a component of the accreditation review and also part of the standard of service for diverse learners.

Background

An accreditation team from the Department, including participants from AEAs across the state, originally visited MBAEA on March 20-24, 2015, to review the AEA's accreditation per Iowa Code chapter 273 and IAC 281-72. A draft report based on the March 2015 visit was provided to the AEA. The draft report determined that the AEA met three of the eight standards of services required for accreditation. The AEA Chief Administrator, William Decker, and Executive Director, Edward Gronlund, expressed concern that the original report contained errors making the report inaccurate. The AEA chief administrator and director of the Department agreed that the Department would provide a second review of the five standards for which the AEA was originally not determined to meet requirements.

The follow-up visit to MBAEA was conducted September 27-29, 2016. This report combines the findings from the original report on the standards that were met from the 2015 visit with the findings of the site visit team in 2016. Between the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years the Department began conducting all accreditation visits through a Differentiated Accountability process, allocating more intensive resources as needed based on data for both compliance and performance. The 2016 visit to MBAEA was conducted as part of the Differentiated Accountability process.

Accreditation Committee Members

The MBAEA accreditation committee consisted of the following personnel:

Amy Williamson, Chief, Bureau of School Improvement, Accreditation Team Lead

Holly Barnes, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement

Sarah Brown, Chief, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports

Cindy Butler, Administrative Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement

Barbara Guy, Director of Special Education, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports

Eric Heitz, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of School Improvement

Julie Jensen, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports

Betsy Lin, Education Program Consultant, Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports

The Department's Attorney, Thomas Mayes, was available to the accreditation team as needed for consultation.

Summary of AEA Standards for Service

This section summarizes the accreditation team's observations for each standard of service for AEAs and reports strengths and concerns, if any, for each, as required by Iowa Code.

General Standards for Service [281-72.4]

281—72.4 Standards for services. An AEA shall provide services that meet these standards as evidenced by, but not limited to, the descriptors following each standard. These services shall be accessible to all schools and school districts within the agency's service region.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. In general, districts reported positively about the services they receive from their special education staff.
2. MBAEA superintendents reported positively about the responsiveness of MBAEA staff to the requests of districts. If the AEA doesn't immediately have what the district needs, the AEA will make contacts and connections with outside entities that can address the need.

Recommendations

1. Several board members lacked information about staff roles and responsibilities, services, needs, and finances of the AEA. Iowa Code sections 273.2 and 273.3 define the AEA board roles and responsibilities. As the AEA continues to reorganize and change services, it is important for the AEA board have a broad understanding of the functions of the AEA. The Department would be happy to work with the AEA through the differentiated accountability process to ensure the AEA board has a better understanding of their own role and responsibilities and that of the AEA administrators and staff.
2. Districts receiving MBAEA comprehensive school improvement services appear to have greater access to AEA services than districts who are not in the comprehensive program. Districts not involved in the MBAEA Comprehensive School Improvement services commented that if they asked for services, the AEA was responsive to their needs in a reactive manner, but not proactively. These comments raised questions of resource allocation and equity of services to all schools. The accreditation team recommends that the AEA consider a model for scaling service like the comprehensive improvement model to all districts.

3. Districts and AEA interviewees expressed concern about inconsistency of communication regarding staff roles, AEA district/school contacts, and AEA restructuring. Communication will be key to ensuring successful implementation of the new structures. MBAEA is encouraged to review its communication processes to identify ways in which communication to staff and district partners could be strengthened.

Summary

This standard is met. MBAEA will work on a continuous improvement plan as part of Differentiated Accountability that will include actions related to general standards for service as needed.

School and Community Planning [281-72.4(1)]

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.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. AEA and district interviewees spoke highly of the development and use of the MBAEA data team. The work of the MBAEA data team has allowed districts and schools to explore student performance data, including analyses of disaggregated data for subgroups, to inform services and enhance instruction.
2. AEA staff, district interviewees, and submitted documentation supported the AEA's efforts to build relationships with community partners – such as John Deere - that help districts.

Recommendations

1. Data are being used individually with districts, but not as a system to drive long-term planning or evaluate reorganization of services. The system-level data available to the accreditation team were from the customer satisfaction survey - which has decreased every year. Fewer than 60 percent of respondents from the customer satisfaction survey agreed with the following statements:
 - a. The AEA helps me prepare my students to experience success as citizens, in post-secondary education, and in the workplace.

- b. The AEA helps me use technology to improve teaching and learning in my classroom.
- c. The AEA helps me prepare cultural competency and/or equity protocols to ensure every student feels connected to school and supported by their school community.

In addition, the percent of survey respondents who believe AEA services have met professional needs has declined over the past three years from a high of 94.9 percent to 89 percent. The accreditation team recommends that the AEA take advantage of the Differentiated Accountability process to use system data to target professional learning opportunities in areas of need.

Summary

This standard is met. MBAEA will work on a continuous improvement plan as part of Differentiated Accountability that will include actions related to school and community planning as needed.

Professional Development [281-72.4(2)]

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 educational 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.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2015 site visit.

Strengths

1. The accreditation team commends MBAEA for providing strong professional learning opportunities in English language arts, mathematics, Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC), and the Distance Mentoring Model for Early Access.
2. District and AEA interviewees reported professional development in the areas of English language arts and mathematics are a strength of the agency. One interviewee noted that Math Studio “transformed my teaching” and the agency staff “go above and beyond to help support math instruction” for classroom teachers.
3. The feedback provided and the relevancy to best practices were positive results of the instructional coaching for English language arts. It was also noted the support for

accessing professional development and the process for registration, receiving credits, and follow-up has been helpful and timely.

4. Several district interviewees reported an appreciation for the support provided as they embarked on the TLC process, including TLC courses available for coaches and administrators to effectively implement TLC in districts.

Recommendations

No recommendations.

Summary

This standard is met.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment [281-72.4(3)]

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, compares those data to the external knowledge base, and uses that information to guide school and school district goal setting and implementation of actions to improve student learning

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2015 site visit.

Strengths

1. The accreditation team commends MBAEA for delivering curriculum, instruction, and assessment services supported by strong building leadership teams. District interviewees reported appreciation for the agency staff who work in their buildings. They felt agency consultants, overall, were responsive to their needs, created positive relationships, and kept in regular communication. Overall the agency consultants are committed and dedicated to meeting district needs and are appreciated by the teaching staff.
2. District curriculum directors indicated there is strong support for their work through monthly Curriculum and School Improvement Network (CSIN) meetings. This work is directly tied to initiatives all schools and districts within the agency are participating in (i.e., TLC, Iowa Core, and Early Literacy Intervention (ELI)) and the environments providing networking and support for district leaders.

3. Many interviewees indicated the Math Studio courses are having a profound effect on mathematics instruction for grades 6-12. The inclusion of extended professional learning, inclusive of coaching with immediate descriptive feedback, were reported by district interviewees as being successful in increasing student achievement. These courses appear to foster a trusting relationship between the classroom teacher and the agency consultant.

Recommendations

No recommendations.

Summary

This standard is met.

Diverse Learners [281-72.4(4)]

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.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. In the past year, the director of special education has been provided the opportunity to fulfill all requirements of the position as defined in Chapter 273.5.
2. Through document review and interviews with AEA and district staff it became clear to the accreditation team members that AEA staff are focused on identifying student needs through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) rather than on a procedural compliance basis.
3. MBAEA is to be commended for using a statewide established learning tool for Child Find which focuses on the state eligibility standards.

Recommendations

1. Services to support schools in meeting the needs of students who exceed expectations and those for whom English is not their first language are minimal. Interviewees reported that working on the success of general education services supports the needs of diverse learners. While this is true, it does not negate the requirement of the AEA to

provide support related to diverse learners. It is recommended that proactive planning related to meeting the needs of these groups of diverse learners is conducted. The accreditation team members recognize that the AEA has shifted staffing in the areas of gifted and English language education, and we are happy to assist in both areas.

2. MBAEA was one of the first AEAs to begin use of the newly released professional learning modules for the state Eligibility Standards for special education. The AEA is encouraged to continue this professional learning to ensure consistency of identification practices across AEA staff and districts, as document review and interviews suggest inconsistency of practice. For example, district identification rates in 2015-16 ranged from 6.25 percent to 17.93 percent with an AEA average of 12.62 percent which is slightly higher than the state average of 12.54 percent. In addition, some interviewees indicated that some districts pressure AEA staff during the evaluation process including demanding the use of specific assessments. While eligibility decisions must be made by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and other qualified professionals, Child Find and eligibility evaluations are the responsibility of the AEA (IAC 281-41.407) not the district (IAC 281-41.406).
3. Although some professional learning on general supervision responsibilities has been conducted with the AEA Building Collaborative Team Leads, the majority of AEA staff interviewed were unable to describe - or unaware of - their general supervision responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Several participants indicated that they “had to go with what the district wants.” Also, there was no evidence of a systematic process to review district data to determine compliance with the IDEA and district needs for special education services. MBAEA is encouraged to develop written procedures for general supervision processes in the AEA, including the process for providing a formal citation of noncompliance. It appears processes for review of general education data and planning for continuous improvement have been developed and are in use with some districts. A general supervision process, led by data, can be used to implement tiered levels of special education supports to districts.
4. Many interviewees described MBAEA’s current approach to providing direct services while a staff person was on extended leave as “having another AEA staff person cover the additional roster.” This approach was reported as problematic in multiple ways: a) stretching the AEA person so far that provision of services was difficult, and b) reducing district access to special education services other than direct service delivery. Related issues include:
 - a. Some interviewees indicated that MBAEA does not ensure that direct services are provided as written in the IEP when AEA staff are on extended leave. Other interviewees, including principals and district directors of special education reported that services were provided, with the exception of a situation that occurred during the site visit. In this instance, Pleasant Valley School District did not receive full speech-language minutes during an extended leave and notified

MBAEA the last week of September 2016 (during the site visit). The MBAEA special education administrator indicated that the AEA would investigate to determine the time that each individual on the roster did not receive specified services and would arrange to make up those minutes. MBAEA is required to provide the results of the investigation to the Department by November 30, 2016. If compensatory services are warranted for any individual, MBAEA is required to provide documentation to the Department that the service has been provided. This additional documentation, if necessary, must be provided by June 30, 2017.

- b. Most interviewees described the current process of reassigning caseloads of staff on extended leave to other MBAEA staff as reactive. In order to meet the increased direct service demand, AEA staff needed to stop other indirect services such as support to district staff or administrative duties. In fact, the demand for those services does not diminish and AEA staff continue to try to accomplish service provision outside of work hours, or must tell districts that they cannot provide the service. Either way, the current process is difficult for AEA staff and has the potential of harming relationships with districts. It also has the potential of increasing district noncompliance as staff are unavailable to advise district practices. MBAEA should consider including a written plan for meeting future leave needs in their continuous improvement plan. The AEA should also consider how they will monitor that students continue to receive specified direct service minutes.
5. Many interviewees reported concerns that previous administrators at the AEA had stressed compliance as the purpose of the work, but that compliance is no longer the top priority of the organization. Although the Department agrees that compliance is not the goal of our work, it is a necessary obligation under the law. It is recommended that MBAEA administrators communicate, in both words and actions, that compliance with state and federal special education law and procedures is an expectation.
6. MBAEA reorganized this year, creating Building Collaborative Team Leads (BCTL) to serve as the point person for special education questions from AEA staff on their teams and district staff from districts assigned to the team. The majority of interviewees, however, reported going directly to the special education administrator or assistant administrator if they have special education issues. MBAEA is encouraged to fully communicate to districts and AEA staff the plan to increase capacity of staff to address special education procedural issues and develop a process to transfer responsibility to the appropriate staff. It is recommended that Student Service Leads provide guidance to AEA special education staff as the issues they encounter are typically complex and

require deep knowledge of special education in order to accurately problem-solve the issue.

7. During interviews, when asked about improving special education services and outcomes, AEA administrators reported that the focus on all students will improve outcomes for students with disabilities. While the Department agrees that improvement to the entire educational system provides support to students with disabilities, it is not sufficient to focus solely on general system improvements. Proactive planning for the continuous improvement of special education services is recommended to be an immediate focus area for the AEA. This would meet the AEA's responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of services in meeting the needs of eligible individuals and ensure services to eligible individuals [IAC 281-41.407(2)]. Similar to the proactive planning that occurs in regards to providing general education services to districts, it is strongly recommended that proactive planning occur to support the improvement of special education services provided by AEA staff and districts.
8. Multiple interview groups reported that AEA staffing of direct and indirect special education services has decreased dramatically over the past three years and also indicated that caseloads have increased. Also, staff from some of the smaller districts reported that the number of AEA staff in their district had been reduced drastically, in some cases only one person less than one day per week. They described feeling that time was scheduled only when the individual would be driving through to a bigger district. MBAEA is encouraged to review national recommendations for caseload staffing of various workgroups and compare current AEA caseloads. It is also recommended that MBAEA consider establishing a means by which to determine effectiveness of services provided to districts.

Summary

This standard is met. MBAEA will work on a continuous improvement plan as part of Differentiated Accountability that will include actions related to services for diverse learners as needed.

Multicultural Gender-Fair [281-72.4(5)]

72.4(5) The AEA shall provide services that support multicultural, gender-fair approaches to the educational program pursuant to Iowa Code section 256.11. These services assist schools and school districts to take actions that ensure all students are free from discriminatory acts and practices; to establish policies and take actions that ensure all students are free from harassment; to 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 to incorporate on an

ongoing basis activities within professional development that prepare and assist all employees to work effectively with diverse learners.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. In the past year, the equity committee has been more organized than in recent years.
2. In the past year, equity policy documents have been updated on the website.
3. In August of this year, MBAEA provided internal training related to multicultural/gender-fair to agency staff. The AEA is encouraged to continue to provide this internal training and expand the support to all internal staff.

Recommendations

1. Many district interviewees indicated a lack of awareness of AEA resources and support available related to multicultural/gender-fair needs. It is recommended that the agency develop a communication plan related to the importance of these considerations and agency services that can support continuous improvement in this area.

Summary

This standard is met. MBAEA will work on a continuous improvement plan as part of Differentiated Accountability that will include actions related to multicultural gender-fair services as needed.

Media Services [281-72.4(6)]

72.4(6) The AEA shall deliver media services. These services align with school and school district needs, support effective instruction, and 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. These services support the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science. These services also support and integrate emerging technology.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2015 site visit.

Strengths

1. The accreditation team commends MBAEA for making a variety of media services available to districts. District interviewees spoke highly of the variety and quality of the

- materials.
2. Multiple district interviewees reported the Media Academy was a strength. One interviewee stated, “The media specialists always walk away from the media academy with something new.” Interviewees also noted the current online reservation system is user-friendly and effective.

Recommendations

No recommendations.

Summary

This standard is met.

Technology Services [281-72.4(7)]

72.4(7) The AEA shall supplement and support effective instruction for all students through school technology services. These services provide technology planning, technical assistance, and professional development, and support the incorporation of instructional technologies to improve student achievement. These services support the implementation of content standards in, but not limited to, reading, mathematics, and science. These services support and integrate emerging technology.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. Several interviewees expressed appreciation for MBAEA technology services, specifically assistive technology and the media academy.
2. Multiple groups commented on the benefits of the MBAEA data team by building systems to use data in real time. This has enhanced the ability of districts to respond to student needs.

Recommendations

1. A review of the fall 2015 customer satisfaction survey and interviews indicated concerns with how the AEA helps schools use technology to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Interviewees and document reviews did not indicate specific efforts address this survey concern. MBAEA is encouraged to provide districts with opportunities and strategies on how technology may be used to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

Summary

This standard is met. MBAEA will work on a continuous improvement plan as part of Differentiated Accountability that will include actions related to technology services as needed.

Leadership Services [281-72.4(8)]

72.4(8) The AEA shall deliver services that develop leadership based upon the Iowa Standards for School Administrators as adopted by the board of educational examiners. Leadership services assist with recruitment, induction, retention, and professional development of educational leaders. AEAs develop and deliver leadership programs based on local and state educational needs and best practices.

Strengths and recommendations are from the 2016 site visit.

Strengths

1. District superintendents and principals found the New York City Leadership Academy (NYCLA) facilitated by the AEA helpful in implementing teacher leadership supports.
2. Interviews indicated the AEA is working closely with administrators in the Davenport district to meet the leadership needs of their staff.

Recommendations

1. Multiple interview groups commented on MBAEA's efforts to support MTSS, a statewide initiative. In order to develop and deliver leadership programs based on state educational needs and best practice, MBAEA's MTSS materials and practices should align with statewide [MTSS](#) resources.
2. Some interviewees spoke positively regarding the principal leadership academy (PLA) and found the content beneficial. However, the principal academy is no longer available due to a lack of resources and staff reassignment. AEA documents and interviewees indicate a new training opportunity for intense on-site learning and some networking opportunities for principals is planned for 2016-17. The accreditation team recommends that MBAEA consider the past benefits of the PLA when designing future materials.
3. Multiple interviewees spoke of a teacher mentoring program through the New Teacher Center offered by the AEA as a support to new teachers in districts and schools. This opportunity was viewed by many as too expensive and not a good fit for their district needs. The AEA is encouraged to evaluate the cost effectiveness and ability of programming offered to meet district and school needs.

Recommendation to the State Board

The Department worked with Green Hills AEA during the 2015-2016 school year to pilot the Differentiated Accountability process for AEAs. Members of the accreditation team engaged in continued conversation with MBAEA staff throughout the accreditation process, and MBAEA has agreed to partner with the Department to develop a continuous improvement plan to further this development. The improvement plan will allow MBAEA to work on several of the recommendations above while also using this opportunity to inform the revision of the AEA standards for service in a way that aligns with evidenced-based implementation of MTSS for Iowa's students.

The accreditation team will continue to collaborate with MBAEA toward this end, and has also asked additional colleagues - some from Green Hills AEA - who are part of the Collaborating for Iowa's Kids initiative to help coordinate this effort. The follow-up team working with MBAEA to inform a continuous improvement plan that supports the development of the Differentiated Accountability system includes:

Holly Barnes, Iowa Department of Education
Cindy Butler, Iowa Department of Education
Mark Crady, Area Education Agencies
Andrea Danker, Green Hills AEA
Mark Draper, Green Hills AEA
Barbara Guy, Iowa Department of Education
Eric Heitz, Iowa Department of Education
Julie Jensen, Iowa Department of Education
Corey Johnson, Great Prairie AEA
Kelly Jones, Grant Wood AEA
David Van Horn, Green Hills AEA
Tina Wahlert, Green Hills AEA
Amy Williamson, Iowa Department of Education

The follow-up team, in collaboration with MBAEA staff, will not only engage in continuous improvement for MBAEA but also make recommendations about the coordination of the AEA standards of service, MTSS, and special education in the Differentiated Accountability model.

Within this context of collaboration to continue to develop a process that best serves Iowa's kids, the accreditation team recommends that MBAEA continue to be accredited.