

In 1997, the Iowa Legislature expanded the scope of services of Iowa's fifteen area education agencies to include "leadership and services in school improvement to schools and school districts so every learner may perform at higher education levels."

To remain accountable for this expanded role, the AEAs participated in developing an extensive accreditation process, to be conducted by the Iowa Department of Education. Iowa was the first state to develop a state accreditation process for its educational service agencies.

This brochure describes the AEA accreditation process. A companion brochure features the Grant Wood AEA (AEA 10) accreditation process and plan. Together, they present an overview of the exemplary leadership and equitable services that are offered to public and private schools and to children from birth to age 5 in this seven-county service area (Area 10).

IOWA'S AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES

Partners for Learning

AEA 267

3712 Cedar Heights Dr.
Cedar Falls, IA 50613-6390
319-273-8200

Grant Wood AEA

4401 Sixth St. S.W.
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404-4499
319-399-6700

Great Prairie AEA

2814 N Court St.
Ottumwa, IA 52501-1163
641-682-8591

3601 West Ave. Road
PO Box 1065
Burlington, IA 52601-1065
319-753-6561

Green Valley AEA

1405 N. Lincoln St.
Creston, IA 50801-1199
641-782-8443

Heartland AEA

6500 Corporate Dr.
Johnston, IA 50131-1603
515-270-9030

Keystone AEA

1400 Second St. NW
Elkader, IA 52043-9564
563-245-1480

Loess Hills AEA

PO Box 1109
Council Bluffs, IA 51502-1109
712-366-0503

Mississippi Bend AEA

729 21st St.
Bettendorf, IA 52722-5096
563-359-1371

Northwest AEA

1520 Morningside Ave.
Sioux City, IA 51106-1780
712-222-6000

Prairie Lakes AEA

500 NE 6th St.
Pocahontas, IA 50574-2204
712-335-3588

Director of State Services

Brent Siegrist
402-250-5566

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The Accreditation Process for Iowa's Area Education Agencies



agency goals



standards for service



action plans / quality indicators



report and site visit



results



GRANT WOOD
AREA EDUCATION AGENCY

Accredited

The Accreditation Process for Iowa's Area Education Agencies

Once every five years, Iowa's area education agencies submit a comprehensive improvement plan to the Iowa Department of Education. The accreditation cycle is staggered, so that a limited number of AEAs are submitting plans each year. There are fixed timelines for these plans to be submitted.

The plans are designed to reflect continuous improvement, with the expectation they will be dynamic documents in a constant state of revision, based upon analysis of data and the evaluation of activities and customer needs.

The process models continuous improvement, focusing on

- ▶ the identification of needs for schools, teachers and students;
- ▶ the establishment of agency-wide goals;
- ▶ the development and implementation of action plans to support those goals;
- ▶ the presentation of evidence that the plans were carried out; and
- ▶ the demonstration of progress as measured by Quality Indicators and progress toward goals.

IDENTIFICATION OF NEED

First, the accreditation plans describe how the AEAs conduct ongoing needs assessments, including reviews of local school districts' Comprehensive School Improvement Plans and Annual Progress Reports, data from various needs assessment surveys and other local research, a knowledge base of "best practices," and findings from the Department of Education's site visit reports to local districts.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AGENCY GOALS

In response to these assessments, AEAs are to develop agency-wide goals that focus on assisting districts and schools (public and nonpublic) with the school improvement process, improving teaching and student learning. These goals are to be met by providing services using nine standards for service and measured against a series of Quality Indicators.

STANDARDS FOR SERVICE

The Iowa Department of Education has established nine standards for service that direct the programs offered by all 15 AEAs. This statewide consistency, within a framework of individual district requests and needs, assures that every child will have equitable access to support, whatever the size, location or resources available to the district.

The nine standards for service are

- ◆ School-Community Planning Services
- ◆ Professional Development Services
- ◆ Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Services
- ◆ Services That Meet the Diverse Learning Needs of All Children and Youth
- ◆ Services That Foster Inclusive Schools
- ◆ Media Services
- ◆ School Technology Services
- ◆ Leadership Services
- ◆ Management Services

ACTION PLANS

Each AEA is to develop an action plan with activities that demonstrate progress toward meeting agency goals. These activities must be linked with needs assessment data and with the nine service standards, and must be measured against the Quality Indicators.

QUALITY INDICATORS

The plan also calls for baseline data and trends over time that demonstrate progress toward the following Quality Indicators:

- AEAs assist schools and school districts with specific student, teacher, and school needs as evidenced in local school improvement plans.
- AEAs assist schools and school districts in improving student learning by
 - improving student achievement in mathematics, reading and science;
 - reducing student achievement gaps in mathematics, reading and science;
 - reducing dropout rates;
 - preparing students for post-secondary success; and
 - assuring students complete a core program.
- AEAs assist schools and school districts in improving teaching in mathematics, reading and science.
- AEAs assist schools and school districts by delivering cost-efficient and timely services.
- AEAs determine customer satisfaction through high levels of participation; and high levels of satisfaction with the quality of AEA services.

ANNUAL REPORT AND SITE VISIT

Each AEA is to submit an annual progress report in preparation for the Accreditation Site Visit by the Department of Education team.

The site visit is conducted by a team of DE staff, representatives from schools in the AEA service area, and staff members from other AEAs. A public hearing, interviews and focus groups with AEA staff, local school administrators and staff, local school board members, families, and colleagues from other human service agencies may all be part of the visit which typically lasts for one week.

ACCREDITATION RESULTS

Final accreditation is granted by the State Board of Education, based upon the recommendation of the Director and the Department Site Visit Team.

Accreditation will be granted to the entire agency, not to specific programs or services. If an AEA loses its accreditation, the AEA board of directors will make provisions for continuation of services for the LEAs, with approval by the state board of education.