

Summary of 2013-2014 Teacher Advisory Meetings

The following is a summary of the 2013-2014 Teacher Advisory Meetings. The Sector Coordinator from each of the Mississippi Bend AEA service areas and a member of the Quality Learning Department met with teacher representatives in each of the four AEA 9 sectors. ICN connections were available to teachers in Sectors I, II, and III. Valuable feedback was received from participants. If you have any questions about any of these or other issues, please contact Whitney Smith-Bringolf, Communications Facilitator, at 563-344-6403 or wsmith@aea9.k12.ia.us.

Sector I

Andrew
Bellevue
Camanche
Clinton
Delwood
Easton Valley
Maquoketa
Northeast

Sector III

Bennett
Columbus
Durant
Louisa-Muscatine
Muscatine
West Liberty
Wilton

Sector II

Bettendorf
Calamus-Wheatland
Central Clinton
North Scott
Pleasant Valley

Sector IV

Davenport



Teachers participating in Teacher Advisory Meetings were asked to provide input regarding the Agency’s identified “System Support Needs” and “Student Learning Needs”. Teachers were also invited to provide additional needs assessment input.

Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency has identified the following needs for 2014-2015:

System Support Needs

- A. Planning efforts to fully implement the Iowa Core
- B. Reducing initiatives and increasing coherence around the teaching and learning priorities
- C. Reaching students not actively engaged in the school’s curriculum and connecting students socially and emotionally to school (developing caring learning environments i.e., learning supports)
- D. Focusing on improving the academic performance, or reducing the achievement gap, of students from poverty and low income households as well as students with disabilities;
- E. Improving reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and career preparation (evidence-based instruction, rigor and relevance, formative assessment, and summative assessments);
- F. Implementing professional development which includes data-driven collaborative teaming, lesson study, and high quality feedback.

Student Learning Needs

1. Students with disabilities have a reading (44%^{points}), math (39%^{points}), and science (34%^{points}) achievement gap.
2. Low socioeconomic subgroup has a reading (13%^{points}), math (13%^{points}), and science (13%^{points}) achievement gap.

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3. Minority has a reading (15%^{points}), math (15%^{points}), and science (16%^{points}) achievement gap.
 4. Some large high schools have declining graduation rates.
 5. 2012 Iowa Youth Survey student feedback generated the following climate and culture priorities:
 - a. 46% indicated adults creating supportive school staff and student environments.
 - b. 68% indicated adults communicating school expectations and boundaries.
 - c. 70% indicated adults building student capacity to feel self-confident
 - d. 80% indicated adults constructing environments to generate student commitment to school and learning.

Teacher input comments: Teachers felt it was important to address the need to assist the growing number of ELL students and emphasized the importance of Agency efforts to support reducing the achievement gap among students from poverty, low income households, and students with disabilities.

Teacher comments acknowledging “what is working” were:

What is working?

- The AEA has done a good job with technology training and support.
- The significant and moderate disability teachers have received wonderful support with communication devices.
- The AEA math consultant has been great with assisting in understanding the Iowa Core.
- The AEA has been helpful with coming to our PD days and unwrapping the Core and talking about what needs to happen.
- Our administration has pushed for everyone to be well informed about the Core and the AEA has been very supportive with this process.
- Preschool is using GOLD and has received great support from the AEA in answering all their questions.
- The AEA has provided helpful input for interventions.
- We have received great support and training on writing IEPs, and our AEA staff has always answered any questions that we have.
- The AEA staff has been wonderful with helping with interventions and providing so many resources. They come to our staff trainings and answer any question that we have
- They are always there are willing to give input and stay longer to get things done. It is very nice to have a consistent team year to year.
- Our SLP is good at integrating into the classroom and not always doing pull outs with the kids.
- The ELA team has been great. It has been wonderful to have a coach and assistance with implementing the Core.
- Our SLP has provided great services to our building
- Our staff agrees that the AEA staff is supportive with working on interventions and strategies that we can use. Our AEA team is good and they bring a lot of expertise to the table.
- We had compliance this year and the AEA was a huge help and had great ideas.
- The math team has been assisting the teachers quite a bit and ELA has been helpful.
- The new IEP system has been difficult, but someone from the AEA personally came out and helped me and it was very helpful.
- We appreciate that any new suggestions with the new web IEP program have been addressed and listened to and we appreciate you listening to us and making changes.
- The PD that we had with the AEA technology consultants was great.

- The math consultants taught us some new math strategies that have been very helpful.
- The AEA staff has been very helpful with IEPs. Whenever we have questions, they are always there to assist and support us.
- AEA Online, BookFlix, and the technology that the AEA gives schools access to are wonderful.
- We are very pleased with the speech services that we are receiving.
- The rotating periodicals are wonderful.
- The box books are great and the online databases are very helpful.
- The Smart Board training that we had with the AEA was very helpful. It was tailored to our school and was very useful.
- The AEA consultant that we have been working with for PBIS has been helpful with training and data collection with our staff. She follows through with everything and will find an answer to any questions that she doesn't know.
- We have a great consultant and if she doesn't know the answer to a question, she will find out.
- Our consultant works closely with us and helps with IEPs. She is very knowledgeable.
- Iowa AEA Online has so many online books and resources. It is great!

Teacher comments regarding program and service questions and improvements were:

What needs improvement?

- **Several teachers commented on the AEA providing more Iowa Core training:**
 - **Additional Iowa Core services including more training sessions, resources, and examples.**
 - **Including training for special education teachers to learn more about the Iowa Core.**
 - **Continue assisting districts with Iowa Core implementation.**

The AEA reorganized its service structure beginning August 2014 and added a literacy coordinator and numeracy coordinator to lead agency-wide teams of general and special education consultants to support Iowa Core implementation at the classroom level. The reorganization includes providing all schools with resources and support for Iowa Core training, resources, and curriculum. More information regarding this new support will roll-out during the upcoming 2014-2015 school year. Please contact Dr. Cindy Lewis, Literacy Coordinator, 563-344-6530 or clewis@mbaea.org; or Sarah Harbaugh, Numeracy Coordinator, 563-344-6375 or sharbaugh@mbaea.org for more information.

In addition, the AEA has several courses and workshops addressing the Iowa Core and implementation available through our Staff Development Website. The following link will take you to the directory: <http://www.solutionwhere.com/mbaea/cw/main.asp>. For questions on registering for courses and workshops, you may contact Betsy Justis at 563-344-6481 or bjustis@mbaea.org. If you need help in mapping out professional development for your district, please contact Nancy McIntire, Quality Learning Coordinator, 563-344-6455, or nmcintire@mbaea.org.

- **Several teachers commented on the availability of staff within schools:**
 - **More special education staff time within schools.**
 - **More SLP staff time to meet student needs.**
 - **More special education staff time to address increasing student behavior issues.**

Unfortunately, the AEA system statewide has been financially cut many times during the past 10 years by the Iowa Legislature. The Mississippi Bend AEA has worked diligently to continue to provide high quality services despite the reduction in funds and staff members. These funding cuts impact the

number of AEA staff in the field. AEAs statewide have shared evidence with legislators that clearly communicate these concerns. The most effective voice is a single teacher contacting their legislator directly and expressing their concerns about how cuts are impacting students and classrooms.

The Agency also has a formula that has been approved by superintendents for the distribution of AEA staff. The formula includes overall enrollment and number of special education students among other factors. The same process is done to determine the amount of time AEA staff is assigned to buildings. If there are concerns about staff attendance or schedules, teachers should communicate with their principal and the principal is asked to communicate with the sector coordinator for their area: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-344-6362, gkoenig@mbaea.org; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@mbaea.org; Sector III: JoAnne Dixson, 563-344-6229, jdixson@mbaea.org; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@mbaea.org.

- **Several teachers commented regarding statewide special education procedures:**
 - **It appears recent procedure changes have made it more complicated to complete the special education paperwork.**
 - **It appears the identification process takes too long.**

The AEA staff members continually assist special education teachers with the adopted Iowa Special Education Procedures manual and Documentation Guide. The manual and guide are located on the AEA website at <http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/index.cfm?nodeID=20225>. The special education procedures are mandated by federal and state law and administrative rules. The federal special education guidance has been that general education teachers have a responsibility to [a] participate in classroom interventions and [b] gather pertinent student learning data before the AEA can complete their evaluation. The AEA staff members must adhere to these special education compliance procedures. AEA staff members are continually working to collaborate with teachers to move the process forward as quickly as possible. If you have questions or concerns regarding this, please contact your regional AEA administrator: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-344-6362, gkoenig@mbaea.org; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@mbaea.org; Sector III: JoAnne Dixson, 563-344-6229, jdixson@mbaea.org; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@mbaea.org.

- **We would like to better understand the special education evaluation process.**

Another teacher comment was: The evaluation process of Early ACCESS students needs to be streamlined. From the time that the teacher is notified that a student is coming to the time that the IEP has to be written is not enough time.

The AEA staff members continually work to support and assist schools with timely completion of the federal and Iowa special education procedures. The Child Find procedures and processes changed in 2009. At that time, general education interventions were written into the Iowa Code and the responsibility was placed on general education teachers. AEA staff can provide incidental and occasional support as teachers set up interventions and analyze their data. If a teacher suspects a disability, a conference is scheduled with the student, teacher, parent and AEA staff and the team reviews available data regarding the student's performance. If the team determines there is a suspected disability, the parent needs to provide consent for a Full and Individual Evaluation. The process takes up to 60 days and then determines the student's eligibility for special education. Please contact your regional AEA administrator with further questions: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-344-6362, gkoenig@mbaea.org; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@mbaea.org; Sector III:

JoAnne Dixon, 563-344-6229, jdixon@mbaea.org; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@mbaea.org.

If a child is on an IFSP, the Early Access Case Coordinator/Early Childhood Teacher contacts the district contact person three months, or 90 days, before the child's 3rd birthday. This starts the transition from Part C to Part B services, if needed. When the family signs the consent for evaluation, the team has 60 days to conduct the Full and Individual Evaluation and to determine eligibility. There is another 30 days for the IEP meeting to occur, which needs to be on or before the child's 3rd birthday. Therefore, the district contact person knows of these children 90 days before the IEP meeting and knows they are eligible 30 days before the IEP is due. Please contact the Early Childhood Coordinator, Mary Shihadeh at 563-344-6265 or mshihadeh@mbaea.org, if you have further questions regarding the IFSP or transitions at 3 years of age.

- **Teachers are asking for more student behavior support.**

Another teacher comment was: Providing an in-service on behaviors. Show how to do behavior sheets and how to do incentives. Please assist with ideas or examples so we can implement them in our classrooms.

The AEA team in each school has access to the Autism/Challenging Behavior Team on a consultative basis. We also have several AEA staff specifically trained in determining the function of a student's behavior and working with the teacher to develop a behavior plan. This team also looks at mental health issues. In addition, AEA staff in your building or district may have this background knowledge or can refer students and families to AEA staff or other resources in your area.

In the future, we will be offering classes for teachers to become more proficient in dealing with behaviors (this will be offered by our Challenging Behavior Team members). Please refer any questions to your AEA team in the building and they will either provide support or access other staff that have the ability to provide the service. Please contact Kim Hofmann, Special Education Coordinator, 563-344-6415, or khofmann@mbaea.org for more information.

- **When we request assistive technology, it takes a long time to get it into our building.**

The AEA continually has a high demand for assistive technology, so if a request for consult occurs, it may take up to two weeks to set up a time for an initial visit. The assistive technology team will establish a time to collaborate that best fits into everyone's calendars, so that enough time can be used to address the needs of the student and the building team. Follow up visits are scheduled at the initial visit, as determined by the need. If you have any further questions, please contact Brian Foy, Assistant Coordinator for Low Incidence Disabilities, at 563-344-6275 or bfoy@mbaea.org.

The AEA is expected and/or required to provide an array of special education services. The ongoing funding cuts to the AEA system by the Iowa Legislature have reduced the number of staff available to address school and school district needs. The AEA sincerely apologizes for these delays. The Agency has made many attempts to inform legislators that their ongoing cuts to the AEA system are educational cuts to local schools and school districts.

- **The district now controls the Title 3 funding and schools would appreciate more assistance.**

The AEA is continuing its assistance and support to schools and school districts after the Iowa Department of Education made changes to Title III programs. Martha Yerington, Title III ELL Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6582 or myerington@mbaea.org and Andrea Stewart, Title III ELL Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6371 or astewart@mbaea.org are available to assist schools and school districts with their Title III needs.

Additional Questions/Comments:

- **We would like to know more about TEACCH and more support for students with autism.**

The AEA team in the building has access to the Autism/Challenging Behavior Team on a consultative basis. Members of the resource team can provide assistance to teachers interested in TEACCH and other techniques that organize a classroom environment and provide structured instruction. Please contact your building team or the Challenging Behavior Team supervisor, Mary Cashman, at 563-344-6260 or mcashman@mbaea.org.

- **We need assistance with training students to use new technology.**

If you would like assistance with technology, please contact Shane Williams, Student Engagement Coordinator, 563-344-6531 or swilliams@mbaea.org or Robert Reppert, School Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6350 or rreppert@mbaea.org.

- **We would like more networking opportunities to share resources with other buildings and districts.**

The ELA and Math teams have designed opportunities for cross district networking in place. If you are not a part of the ELA or Math teams, please encourage your Curriculum Coordinator to express your concerns so that we might design something specifically for you and your discipline to network in a formal and/or informal structure and share resources. If you have ideas on how to develop networks, please contact Nicole Peterson, Assistant Coordinator of Teacher Leadership, at 563-344-6487 or npeterson@mbaea.org.

- **We need more training on how to support students with sensory needs.**

The Occupational Therapy Department will be working on interventions for fine motor, sensory and feeding issues that can be used in the classroom. Specific student concerns and requests for training should be directed to the occupational therapist assigned to each school building or Mary Shihadeh, Early Childhood Coordinator, at 563-344-6265 or mshihadeh@mbaea.org.

- **We would like more training on *RtI* or what is now MTSS.**

We would be happy to provide you and your school information about MTSS and how this impacts Phase I schools utilizing Iowa Tier Assessments (FAST/IGDIs). In addition, we would be happy to discuss the MTSS Framework and how your schools can begin to develop a structure that ensures adequate instructional time, discuss enacted and learned curriculum, assessments, collaboration, and align resources to support a Multi-Tiered System of Supports. For more information, please contact Karinne Tharaldson-Jones, 563-344-6428, or ktharaldson-jones@mbaea.org.

- **We would like more training on accommodations versus modifications and project based learning and how to include those kids with IEPs.**

Teachers must differentiate their instruction for all students as they instruct their classrooms on the Iowa Common Core. The Area Education Agency Special Education Procedures (Documentation Guide) may be found at the following link:

<http://www.iowaideainfo.org/vimages/shared/vnews/stories/4a8b1534597fd/Special%20Education%20Procedures%20Manual%20January%202015%202014.pdf>. Accommodations are defined as “supports provided to help a student access settings, opportunities and the general curriculum and validly demonstrate learning”. Examples provided in the Documentation Guide include: teacher prepared notes; peer readers; extended testing time; or occasional adult assistance. Modifications are also defined in the Documentation Guide as “changes made to the context and performance standards for students with disabilities.” Examples include: extensions of district standards and benchmarks, modifications in performance expectations in general education classes, modified requirements for earning credits.

Project based learning would be a method to deliver on their core instruction. Teams, including parents and general and special education teachers, need to determine what accommodations and modifications are appropriate for individual students as they develop IEP programming. They then must ensure that the student is provided instruction based on the services, activities, and supports outlined in the IEP. Further questions regarding project based learning and Iowa Core implementation should be directed to the Quality Learning Coordinator, Nancy McIntire at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@mbaea.org. Further questions regarding accommodations and modifications can be directed to the special education team serving your building or your regional AEA administrator: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-344-6362, gkoenig@mbaea.org; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@mbaea.org; Sector III: JoAnne Dixon, 563-344-6229, jdixon@mbaea.org; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@mbaea.org.

- **Since there is an increase in students on the spectrum, ADD, ADHD, Tourette’s, etc. it would be wonderful to have a workshop on behavior disorders. There was an autism conference with Jed Baker in Des Moines that was great—maybe the AEA could host this conference?**

At this time, we do not have any plans to offer a workshop on the Autism Spectrum with a national speaker. We do have an autism team who consults with specific school teams or school buildings. For more information, contact Mary Cashman at 563-344-6260 or mcashman@mbaea.org.

- **More training with ELL at the secondary level. It would be wonderful to get some sort of support or consulting for teachers on instructional strategies.**

Training for teachers on strategies to support ELL students should be within the district Corrective Action Plan that must be submitted to the AEA. Martha Yerington and/or Andrea Stewart will be happy to help teachers at all levels discuss strategies they can apply at the classroom level to support academic success of ELL students.

For more information, please contact Martha Yerington, Title III ELL Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6582 or myerington@mbaea.org and/or Andrea Stewart, Title III ELL Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6371 or astewart@mbaea.org.

- **We love getting magazines rotated to us, but we would like to keep them longer. Can the AEA look at online subscriptions so you can check them out virtually and check them back in virtually?**

The Professional Library routes 32 various journals to teacher librarians. Eleven of the 32 journals are available online through www.aeaonline.org using Gale Cengage Learning. If you are unable to obtain an electronic copy of your favorite journal, but would like to keep a hard copy more than one week, you may request to be placed at the end of the routing cycle. Please contact Kelsey Jo Buffington with questions and concerns at 563-344-6451 or kbuffington@mbaea.org.

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