

Summary of 2011-2012 Teacher Advisory Meetings

The following is a summary of the 2011-2012 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.

Teachers participating in Teacher Advisory Meetings are asked to provide input regarding the Agency's identified "System Support Needs" and "Student Learning Needs". Teachers are also invited to provide additional needs assessment input.

Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency has identified the following needs for 2012-2013:

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 (60%^{points}), math (52%^{points}), and science (45%^{points}) achievement gap.
2. Low socioeconomic subgroup has a reading (20%^{points}), math (19%^{points}), and science (16%^{points}) achievement gap.
3. Minority has a reading (12%^{points}), math (8%^{points}), and science (8%^{points}) achievement gap.
4. Some large high schools have declining graduation rates.
5. Students indicate some school climate issues:
 - a. 61% responded unfavorably to school staff and/or student support.
 - b. 57% responded unfavorably to school adults stop bullying.
 - c. 34% responded unfavorably to school expectations and/or boundaries.
 - d. 34% responded unfavorably to self-confidence and 31% to self-esteem.
 - e. 27% responded unfavorably a commitment to school and/or learning.

Teacher input comments: Teachers stated they appreciated the support they receive from the Agency. They felt it was important to continue to identify ways to support instructional change at the classroom level.

Teachers emphasized the importance of Agency efforts to support reducing the achievement gap among students from poverty, low income households, and students with disabilities. Teachers mentioned workshops provided by the Agency have assisted their school and they encouraged the Agency to continue offering high quality professional development.

Teacher comments acknowledging “what is working” were:

What is working?

- AEA staff is there when they are needed.
- The teachers use the media services quite frequently.
- Teachers like that they can call the AEA if they need help or have a question.
- The new program where curriculum is matched with Iowa Core has been helpful.
- The consultants (special education and general education) are extremely helpful.
- The media specialists and media resources are helpful. They are used in kindergarten all the time and it’s appreciated that the van delivers the materials directly to the school. The variety of materials is great.
- The services that the AEA provides for early childhood are very helpful and you can tell that this makes a difference with the students.
- The communication between the districts and the AEA has improved this year and working well.
- The Media Center and Transition services are great.
- Book Flicks are great. More students need books on tape and these have been helpful.
- The AEA staff’s work with data teams at the district has been appreciated.
- The Transition program is going well. The coaching and work experience coordination is great.
- The AEA staff in our building follows through, are good listeners, are visible in the building, and are very professional.
- Have received more assistance from the AEA in writing quality IEPs. Collaborating with general education teachers has been very helpful
- The AEA has really helped with developing well written goals and monitoring them. Assistance with students who have emotional needs has been very beneficial. This helped with compliance.
- The school psychologists are doing a great job. We could use more of them.
- We are happy with the staff at our building and can’t think of any programs that can be cut due to budget constraints.
- The staff development at the AEA works well. There is always something that has to do with current training needs for teachers around the current initiatives.
- The AEA is always ahead on the newest courses and technology and anticipating what the teachers will need for training.
- The Lending Library has been great.
- The AEA is appreciated. The availability of knowledge and resources that the AEA has provided has been very helpful, and cutting the funding to the AEA is not going to help anyone. This is a stewardship of resources. It seems like the AEA has always strived to meet our needs.

Teacher comments regarding program and service questions and improvements were:

What needs improvement?

- **Several teacher comments were received regarding AEA staff numbers in the field:**

- **Sharing AEA staff sometimes becomes difficult, but they are doing a great job.**
- **The number of special education students is not decreasing, but the number of AEA staff in the buildings is stretched due to budgets.**
- **More time with the educational consultants and school social workers is needed to serve the number of students in the building.**
- **Pre-school teachers have a concern with their consultant being spread too thin. They feel like they have not gotten enough support.**
- **The school psychologist at our school is working well but is only there one day a week.**
- **The Physical Therapist at our school is spread too thin. We have to share equipment with other schools and don't always have the equipment that is needed for students because it is at another building.**
- **How is the number of AEA staff in each building determined?**
- **How often is enrollment looked at to determine how many AEA staff is assigned to each building?**

Unfortunately, the AEA system statewide has been cut many times during the past 10 years. Most recently, the legislature has cut AEAs statewide by \$40,000,000 in funding. 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 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.

Teachers having specific issues regarding special education services within their school, please contact your regional AEA administrator: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-242-6454, gkoenig@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector III: JoAnne Dixson, 563-344-6229, jdixson@aea9.k12.ia.us; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Several teacher comments were received regarding special education placement:**
 - **It is taking longer than expected to get kids referred for speech services.**
 - **There is frustration with the amount of time it takes when a child is identified as needing special education services to when the child actually receives the services. Getting the students tested takes a while and they are missing out on services during this time because of the lengthy process.**

Once a student is evaluated because a disability is suspected and if the child becomes eligible, special education procedures require a student receive services within at least 60 days of being evaluated. The Agency encourages teachers to contact the following AEA administrators with specific questions regarding a particular student's needs: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-242-6454, gkoenig@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector III: JoAnne Dixson, 563-344-6229, jdixson@aea9.k12.ia.us; and Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@aea9.k12.ia.us.

Special education staff members in each building are available to provide occasional and incidental support to general education teachers to set up simple interventions to assist the teacher in gathering data. The data will assist teachers in determining if the student is responding positively to the intervention or if the student is not responding and what are the appropriate next steps.

- **Behavior programs have become larger and the staff members are not sure if they are providing enough services for this group.**

The Agency has adopted a systems view in managing behavior school wide. Training and coaching of Positive Behavior Intervention & Support, PBIS, is done by AEA staff members. Each participating PBIS building has a coach to provide additional supports and to assist with trouble shooting challenges that arise. AEA staff members have received additional training to assist teachers with behavior concerns. Examples of specialized training are Laura Riffel's ABC data collection tool (Link to website: <http://www.behaviordocor.org/>), executive functioning (resource: [Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary "Executive Skills" Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential](#) by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare) and teaching lagging behavior skills (Resource: [Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them](#) by Ross W. Green).

- **SNAP for ordering could be improved. The search filters are awkward. The AEA staff is helpful, but we would like student data as soon as it is available.**

SNAP is a new AEA online circulation system for ordering materials from our K-12 or Professional Libraries. When searching the catalog system SNAP performs a federated search vs. an ABC order. Thus, the most accurate hits show up at the top much like a Google Search. On the right-hand side of the search screen there are a variety of ways to narrow your search – by collection, resource type, age level, subject, producer, and so on. We do not have student data in the SNAP circulation systems since we do not check out directly to students. For training on using SNAP, please contact Julie Larson, Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Cindy Blinkinsop, Head of Materials and Distribution, at 563-344-6439 or cblinkinsop@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **The Smart Board training that was offered a few years ago would be helpful to have again for new staff. This is currently being done through a local university and it's expensive.**

The Smart Board training is continually offered. Teachers can check the course list and register through our Staff Development website at <http://www.solutionwhere.com/mbaea/cw/main.asp> If teachers are interested in district/building specific training or courses, please contact the following media/technology consultants to set up dates and times: Robert Reppert, School Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6350 or rreppert@aea9.k12.ia.us; Julie Larson, Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Cindy Blinkinsop, Head of Materials and Distribution, at 563-344-6439 or cblinkinsop@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **The Communicator has not been seen in a while. Is the AEA still sending it out?**

The Agency sends three paper copies of the AEA Communicator to each school building and the principal distributes those copies. The Communicator is also available electronically by visiting the AEA9 website at http://www.aea9.k12.ia.us/en/publications_communications/communicator/ For additional information, please contact: Whitney Smith-Bringolf, Communications Facilitator, at 563-344-6403 or wsmith@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **We would like the speech pathologist at our district more. Hours were cut and there are kids that aren't being seen because of it.**

The Agency is providing full services for all students qualifying to receive SLP services within their IEP. AEA staff may provide some incidental or occasional support to teachers so that they may assist students within their general education classroom. New federal and state legislation has restricted AEA special education staff regarding working directly with general education students.

- **Kindergarten teachers are sometimes frustrated that when they bring attention to a student who is having speech problems, they are often told that this could be a developmental problem and testing the student is pushed off to the next year to determine if it's just the age of the child or an actual developmental problem.**

If teachers feel young students need attention, the Agency encourages teachers to address these issues with AEA staff. The Agency is aware of this need and we are developing training for teachers to address these student speech and language developmental problems. The training will also provide teachers with the knowledge, skills, and techniques to address developmental speech problems earlier and support the diagnostic data gathering to identify children with specific speech disabilities.

- **Schools are having difficulties reaching students who are not actively engaged and would like assistance in solving this problem.**

Teachers interested in addressing student engagement issues within their school, please contact Nancy McIntire, Coordinator of Quality Learning, at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@aea9.k12.ia.us. Quality Learning Consultants will support your school's next steps in assessing student engagement. The Agency has multiple trainings and/or programs to assist a school with addressing student engagement through elevating content rigor and relevancy as well as changing instructional practices.

- **The media resources for business, art, and foreign language are out of date and limited. Many of the materials are on VHS and it is hard to find a VHS player in the schools anymore.**

Teachers' suggestions for media resources are being sought, please contact: Cindy Blinkinsop, Head of Materials and Distribution, at 563-344-6439 or cblinkinsop@aea9.k12.ia.us. Media materials and libraries are under continuous review and the Agency will forward these comments to the AEA review personnel.

- **Courses for renewing teaching licenses that would be beneficial to all instead of focusing on specific areas, such as reading, would be appreciated.**

The Agency continually explores opportunities for new classes. Teachers with ideas are encouraged to contact: Nicole Peterson, Head of Staff Development, at 563-344-6487 or npeterson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Betsy Justis, Staff Development Specialist, at 563-344-6481 or bjustis@aea9.k12.ia.us. Teachers desiring to offer new and innovative staff development courses may also contact AEA staff development to begin the process of becoming an instructor (instructors must have a master's).

- **More time with special education consultants is needed. It seems that general education teachers only work with AEA staff when the students have an IEP.**

The Agency is aware that teachers are faced with meeting a wide-variety of student learning needs. Federal and state legislation mandate that AEA special education staff work with students who have an IEP, except on an "occasional and incidental basis." This means, for example, AEA special education

staff can consult with the general education teacher on interventions, data collection and assist them in instructional and behavioral strategies. The Agency encourages teachers to explore *Response to Intervention* (RtI). Teachers interested in RtI please contact: Nancy McIntire, Coordinator of Quality Learning, at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@aea9.k12.ia.us. RtI is soon to be launched statewide for K-6 literacy by the Iowa Department of Education.

- **Iowa Core has changed student learning standards in the area of mathematics and it is unclear the role a Pre-Algebra course will have within this new sequencing of math learning standards. Pre-Algebra has been taught to address student readiness for Algebra.**

Another teacher comment was: focus on training upper elementary and middle school teachers to feel more confident with their math skills so that the students are prepared to come to the high school.

The Agency, in partnership with area superintendents, has initiated the Math Project to address Iowa Core mathematics student learning standards. The Math Project started with superintendents asking for common high quality training across all districts to address Iowa Core expectations. The Algebra issue was identified; therefore, the project began with the middle grades last summer (2011). The training was designed to directly address the Iowa Core and Algebra issue. For more information regarding the Math Project, please contact: Heather Cousins, Quality Learning Math Consultant, at 563-344-6409 or hcousins@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Linda Mannhardt, Quality Learning Math Consultant, at 563-344-6524 or lmannhardt@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Why don't we have a sit down with AEA staff before having a TAT to try to lessen the gap?**

The “reducing the gap” issue has been a source of exploration statewide and the Agency is working to develop effective ways to support teachers. The Agency encourages teachers to explore *Response to Intervention* (RtI). Teachers interested in RtI please contact: Nancy McIntire, Coordinator of Quality Learning, at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@aea9.k12.ia.us. RtI is soon to be launched statewide for K-6 literacy by the Iowa Department of Education. RtI includes a systemic process designed to support the TAT activities to address student learning needs through effective formative assessment and established intervention protocols.

- **Data team training was done, but there has not been any follow-up. 84% of the students in our district are free and reduced and 54% are minority and there are problems with achievement gap. We were told that we have reached our limit on IEPs.**

A school does not have an IEP limit. Students evaluated and identified with a disability will receive services. Teachers interested to more information regarding additional data team development may contact: Sector I: Georgie Koenig, 563-242-6454, gkoenig@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector II: Mary Cashman, 563-344-6260, mcashman@aea9.k12.ia.us; Sector III: JoAnne Dixson, 563-344-6229, jdixson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Sector IV: Jadie Meyer, 563-344-6245, jmeyer@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **The whole process of getting a student placed in special education services is almost taking the school year and it's making the kids less confident.**

The Agency follows the federal and state requirement that students evaluated for special education, if identified with a disability, will receive services within at least 60 days of their evaluation. The Agency encourages teachers to explore *Response to Intervention* (RtI). A well-developed RtI process will

provide teachers with the data necessary to proceed with effective interventions for students. It will also provide evidence and documentation of general education interventions to support the initiation of the special education identification processes. If teachers are interested in RtI please contact: Nancy McIntire, Coordinator of Quality Learning, at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@aea9.k12.ia.us. RtI is soon to be launched statewide for K-6 literacy by the Iowa Department of Education.

- **Alternate Assessment changes frequently and the changes this year have been frustrating. The online tool has not been working. The guidelines were that we would have a fall and spring visit and we haven't had the fall visit. It seems like there is not consistency with Alternate Assessment. Do you see this getting better?**

The Agency acknowledges the Alternate Assessment technology has had data entry difficulties statewide. A new online system is now available for special education teachers that address those past difficulties. If assistance or support is needed for the online system, please contact: Brian Foy, Assistant Coordinator of Low Incidences, at 563-344-6275 or bfoy@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **General education teachers are expected to do a lot and are overwhelmed right now. They feel they have a lack of knowledge about special education students but they are expected to work with them and have the tools. We have asked the administrators for more PD in this area but it has not happened.**

The Agency is aware that general education teachers are facing the challenges of elevating the rigor and relevance of 21st Century student learning standards. Also, teachers are faced with the challenges of educating all students at higher levels. The Agency will assist your school with identifying professional development to meet your needs, please contact: Terri Hansen-Blair, Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6484 or THansen-Blair@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Nicole Peterson, Head of Staff Development, at 563-344-6487 or npetersen@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **We are not happy with the loss of EBSCO. When trying to help AP students who are looking for literary criticism, we are not finding what they need for that sort of deep research.**

The IEC Media and Technology Advisory Committee selected to not renew the statewide contract. EBSCO increased their fee structure and they did not offer all the components that were requested; thus the committee went with GALE Research for K-12 online research materials. EBSCO is available through public libraries, and anyone with a public library card can access EBSCO through this source. Teachers interested in learning more about GALE Research, please contact Julie Larson, Quality Learning Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Several of the schools are not allowed to use YouTube.com because of streaming issues or it is blocked.**

The Agency supports school access to the internet; however, each school district sets the parameters for downloading and streaming privileges. Teachers are encouraged to work with your District Technology Committee on these issues as this impacts teacher and student access to resources.

Additional Questions/Comments:

- **Schools have gone to the Daily 5 and Café Reading and it would be beneficial to have these on the Kindle or iPad.**

Teachers may purchase Daily 5 and Café Reading for the Kindle through <http://www.amazon.com>.

- **Students need audible books. Is there a way to get this on the Kindle? Teachers have to use CDs right now and with the new technology, it would be great if it could be used for students who need audible books.**

Another teacher comment was: Other AEAs stream books to Kindles and iPads. A lot of students are using these and it would be helpful if the books could be streamed directly to them.

Teachers may access **BookFlix** through the statewide AEA system to provide PreK-3 online fictional storybooks with related nonfiction books that is streamed and can be used with any device that has Internet access. The books have text-to-speech capability, have a video of the book, meet the author link, and more. In FY2012-13, all AEAs will be providing **TruFlix** which is tailored to students in grades 4-6. In addition, **Learn360** also provides audible books (link to audio books is on the left-hand side). All schools in the state of Iowa have access to Learn360 through our statewide efforts. Please see your school teacher-librarian or the school secretary for the login and password for these databases. Also, on the main search page of our online booking system **SNAP**, there are several free eBook websites listed for consumer use. For more information about digital books and options; please contact: Julie Larson, Quality Learning Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Cindy Blinkinsop, Head of Materials and Distribution, at 563-344-6439 or cb linkinsop@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Could the AEA's work together and share different services and staff?**

The Agency is always exploring ways to improve services to teachers. The AEAs statewide have collaborated to provide statewide media and commodity purchasing, online learning, and specific training programs. If teachers have additional ideas, please contact: Dr. Edward Gronlund, Director of Strategic Management & Evaluation, 563-344-6315 or egronlund@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Could the AEA use Survey Monkey to gather teacher feedback?**

Teachers and administrators each year have an opportunity to respond to the AEA Satisfaction Survey. The survey is distributed and available to teachers and administrators in March. The Agency welcomes feedback through the statewide survey. The Agency continues face-to-face teacher advisories so that teachers may present issues that are better suited to be addressed through face-to-face conversations. Advisories provide the Agency a mechanism to resolve complex issues.

- **Are kids generally staffed out of speech-language services when they go to junior high and high school?**

The special education AEA staff and school district staff exit students once their IEP goals have been met and it is determined that service is no longer required as stated within the statewide procedures. Teachers seeking more details regarding students exiting speech-language services, please contact: Jennifer Hawley, Head of Speech-Language Pathologists, at 563-344-6309 or jhawley@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Do social workers work with IEPs?**

Yes, during the evaluation process, providing direct IEP services, and assisting general education teachers with occasional and incidental support.

- **Coming up with a plan for the RtI program, how it will be implemented and is RtI very important?**

Another teacher commented: What about the 20% of students who are not proficient?

Teachers will find information is just starting to emerge from the Iowa Department of Education regarding RtI. RtI provides a designed process for teachers to use effective interventions to address the 20% of the student struggling. The Iowa Department of Education is determining the universal screener for the state and what tools would be best for progress monitoring. Please visit the DE website at: http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2562&Itemid=2683 . Teachers may also contact the AEA for assistance: Terri Hansen-Blair, Quality Learning Consultant, at 563-344-6484 or thansen-blair@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **To reach students who are not actively engaged, the IRIS Project has helped in this area. Is the AEA involved in this?**

Another IRIS teacher comment: The IRIS Project mostly involved general education students but now all students can be involved. With funding running out, how can the AEA help?

The IRIS Project is a spin-off of the High School Reform Project. Funding is running out and the Agency is not sure where it is going to go in the future. Bellevue, Muscatine, Central Clinton and Davenport North have participated, and the AEA has provided support. The emphasis the past few years are for high schools to identify struggling students prior to reaching high school and developing learning supports to ensure success. The Agency is available to support IRIS, please contact: Nancy McIntire, Coordinator of Quality Learning, at 563-344-6455 or nmcintire@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **We are currently using Algebra probes developed by Iowa State that are working well, but they do not have probes for Geometry. Can the AEA help locate Geometry probes to give every two weeks?**

Unfortunately, Geometry probes are not available. Teachers may contact AEA Math Consultants for assistance: Heather Cousins, Quality Learning Math Consultant, at 563-344-6409 or hcousins@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Linda Mannhardt, Quality Learning Math Consultant, at 563-344-6524 or lmannhardt@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **With the pervasive use of technology, it would be nice to have the AEA team keeping teachers updated with apps on iPads or what is working with other schools.**

The Agency will explore ways to keep teachers up-to-date. The Agency facilitates the regional Technology Meetings. Teachers looking for specific support, please contact: Robert Reppert, Quality Learning Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6350 or rreppert@aea9.k12.ia.us; Julie Larson, Quality Learning Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us; or Cindy Blinkinsop, Head of Materials and Distribution, at 563-344-6439 or cblinkinsop@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **What data are we supposed to collect? Can the AEA help with that?**

Teachers interested in formative assessment and data-driven decision-making may contact: Nicole Peterson, Head of Staff Development, at 563-344-6487 or npeterson@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **Could protocol training through the AEA take place of the TAT? There is a facilitator who meets with a teacher who is having an issue with a student and a small group then meets to find possible solutions. We have also tried Instructional Coaching but nothing ever came from it.**

Teachers interested in utilizing an integrated system to address TAT, data teams, and Instructional Coaching may contact: Maggie Van Fossen, Assistant Coordinator of Integrated Services, at 563-344-6390 or mvanfossen@aea9.k12.ia.us.

- **The Learn360 elementary level program is lacking in content in terms of timeliness and the resources are dated. The Discovery Ed product is superior to Learn 360.**

Teachers seeking technology supports in the classroom may contact: Julie Larson, Quality Learning Media/Technology Consultant, at 563-344-6526 or jl Larson@aea9.k12.ia.us.

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