Accountability for ESAs:
Is Accreditation the Answer?

Editorial Board

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Introduction

Editing a journal for an audience made up of creative, task-oriented, "can do" practitioners - that's you, our ESA audience - can be quite a challenge. Most of our readers want to know where good ideas and programs are in place. "What works?" "Who's doing it?" "How can I get more information?" "What do I need to do to get started - tomorrow?" We know that and readers have been good about sharing ideas with us. We hear about others at the AAESA national conference and invite presenters to prepare articles for us. We're trying to meet these paramount needs.

On the other hand we assume that organizations of importance - in our case, ESAs - need a sound research base to validate what they are doing and to understand the basic principles of organizational effectiveness for an educational entity that is unique in its roles and mission. Such understandings raise the performance level all ESAs and provide opportunities for continuous improvement.

Dr. E. Robert Stephens, the pre-eminent researcher on service agencies, has been suggesting for a decade that the accountability movement, which has had a growing impact on other government agencies, including public schools, would inevitably focus on ESAs. This is a trend motivated by many forces including the general public feeling that government is too expensive and ineffective. Though the generally prosperous condition of state and local governments in the last few years may have toned down the rhetoric about accountability, the inevitable downturn in the economy will surely unleash the beast of performance validation in perhaps its newest form, accreditation. Other examples of the insistence on accountability of institutions serving the public abound.

For example, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the foremost accrediting body for teacher preparation institutions, is changing its process of accrediting colleges of education from one basically focused on inputs to one based on outputs. At Oakland University we have now been told we must set student performance goals, assess their achievement, aggregate results and use this information to improve the quality of education we provide for students or risk losing accreditation.

Also, some of the bills introduced in Congress this spring to make managed health care more responsive to patient needs included provisions that require HMOs to report "... the percentage of coronary patients who suffer continual chest pain or repeated heart attacks, the number of treated asthmatics who return to normal work schedules without repeated visits to hospital emergency rooms as well as other specific data on mortality, morbidity and patient satisfaction" (*New York Times*, July 5, Section 4, page 1).

Thus, we begin this issue with a rigorously researched and nuanced article by Dr. Stephens and his colleague, Hobart Harmon, about the slowly growing movement in the states toward accountability for service agencies and particularly the newer efforts to accredit such agencies. It is based on some general theories of organizational effectiveness that are applicable to all service agencies, whether or not they are under the glare of accountability legislation. We then offer three state perspectives on the implementation of accountability/accreditation legislation in Texas, Iowa, and Oregon.

Now may be the best time for states not yet involved in such requirements to begin to conceptualize a system of accreditation that is theoretically sound, practical in its details, and positive in its goals. A state department/ESA partnership to "do with" rather than a "do to," top down, initiative will benefit everyone. Perhaps AAESA has a role to play in carrying out this endeavor.

Other articles in this issue deal with specific programs. We begin with a national perspective on service agencies in general and AAESA in particular from our executive director, Brian Talbott. Sue Showers and David Moore discuss how a service agency plays a key role in developing a new approach to teacher certification in Ohio. Frederica Frost and her colleagues look at a multi-agency, multi-level (local districts, service agencies, community colleges) attempt to change organizations by expanding the leadership skills and roles of teachers and other practitioners. Tom Kelly describes a state initiative in New York to share resources and expertise among service agencies all over the state. Bruce Vilders looks at a partnership between a service agency and university in Washington state to provide student teaching opportunities in rural areas, thereby helping to increase the share of competent teachers available to these areas.

We again thank the hard working members of our editorial board for their advice and suggestions to authors and to me, and we solicit suggestions for ways to improve the journal. These suggestions may be shared directly with me, with Brian Talbott, AAESA's executive director, or with members of the Council. A big thanks also to Barbara Hunter for assistance in copy editing.

Most importantly, we urge that copies of *Perspectives* be shared throughout the organization. There are many staff members of service agencies who have never heard of our journal. Members may purchase additional copies from AAESA or may recopy articles but only for use within their own agency.

Bill Keane, Editor
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

COMING OF AGE

by
Brian L. Talbott, Ph.D.
Executive Director, AAESA

As we near the close of the 20th century, I am awed by the growth of and need for regional service agencies across the nation. This is evidenced by the fact that AAESA is the fastest growing professional education organization in the country. Having been a superintendent of two different service agencies in the state of Washington for the past 22 years, I have seen the regional concept move from the pioneering phase through the implementation phase and into the partnership and expanded service delivery phase. As I travel the country as AAESA's executive director I see service agencies everywhere delivering quality services to districts and students. Your effectiveness is directly related to both the quality of the boards of education and administrators who lead each organization and the competence of the staff that each agency has been able to attract.

This nation's service agencies are very alike and yet surprisingly different. Though we share a common goal of serving school districts, our strength is found in our ability to deliver customized services reflecting state and local needs. This uniqueness is our strength and, at the same time, can be our weakness. It is a weakness because our educational system doesn't always embrace differences and tends to force fit educational entities into one-size-fits-all educational models. This is an important concept for educational service agencies to understand and protect as we become more effective in responding to our school districts' needs. At the same time, because of our impact at the local, state and national levels, we are finding politicians asking questions about our effectiveness and also challenging why we are receiving increasing proportions of the educational budgets. Many states like New York, Texas, Colorado, Oregon, and Iowa are looking at, or planning to look at, performance reviews and accountability standards.

In order to protect our uniqueness, flexibility and ability to deliver services, we have seen significant growth in statewide ESA organizations. In fact, today 10 states have their own executive directors. This has resulted in statewide coordinated efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the regional service centers in the areas of program delivery, governmental affairs, funding, and public understanding and credibility.

Your national organization has been built upon a strong foundation created by past AAESA council members and three outstanding executive directors. Each of these executive directors, Walt Turner, Lee Christiansen and Bruce Hunter, provided visionary leadership and built upon the strengths of AAESA's membership. One strength which was a cornerstone for the success of each of these executive directors, and continues today, is the spirit of volunteerism.

To enhance this spirit, AAESA implemented, under the leadership of past president Ginny Seccombe, a strategic plan that will take us into the 21st century. The plan, so critical to our future, is built on five major initiatives.

- We will strengthen our ability to affect education policy through appropriate and effective governmental relations activities.
- We will position the organization to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse membership.
- We will develop relationships and partnerships that promote the vision and agenda of AAESA.
- We will expand our capacity to provide relevant information and technical assistance to our members and our public/private partners.
- We will actively promote and support the role of ESAs in utilization of technology.

What does this all mean for you as a member of AAESA? You will see several manifestations of this strategic plan including increased governmental involvement and an up-to-date, user friendly web site. You will see improved communication through our publications and on-line service. Regarding our publications we are enhancing and expanding the effectiveness of AAESA *News* and the AAESA *Bulletin* by expanding the role of Barbara Hunter, our

extremely capable editor. In the area of research we will continue to work with Dr. Bob Stephens and invite others join him in expanding our base of research information. This past year Dr. Stephens wrote the monograph, *Expanding the Vision: New Roles for Educational Service Agencies in Rural School District Improvement*, one of the many services provided through his Institute for Regional and Rural Studies in Education. This year, Dr. Stephens will be joined by Dr. Bill Keane and Dr. Joe Lagana and together they will look at the new roles of metropolitan educational service agencies. And as evidenced by this outstanding issue of *Perspectives*, Dr. Bill Keane edits the only national publication devoted to issues related to the design and operation of educational service agencies throughout America.

At the national level we will remain focused on getting the definition of ESAs into every piece of federal education legislation affecting ESAs. You will see new partnership opportunities with both public and private entities.

As you can see, there is a lot to accomplish in order to be ready for the challenges of the next millennium. With your continuing commitment and volunteerism, ESAs have never been better positioned to effect change and meet the diverse educational needs of your constituencies. AAESA, as your organization, is poised to assist you in meeting your current and future needs. Like you, who serve the needs of your districts and the students who reside within your region, AAESA strives to provide quality services that support our customers — ESAs throughout America. As members you will play the essential role of helping AAESA shape the type of services, both old and new, that will be needed in the decade ahead.

STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES ON THE HORIZON

by
E. Robert Stephens, Ph.D., Director
Institute for Regional and Rural Studies in Education
Edmond, Oklahoma
and
Hobart L. Harmon, Ph.D., Senior Manager
The Rural Center at AEL
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Charleston, West Virginia

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late 1980s, a new chapter started to be written in the continuing search by state interests for the development of more effective strategies that result in greater accountability of public sector educational agencies. The current emphasis is unquestionably on the use of standards and performance measurement for assessing the organizational effectiveness of tax-supported governmental agencies. The widespread insistence on the inclusion of standards that establish performance expectations, and, additionally, call for meaningful ways to demonstrate results in newer accountability system is vastly different from popular strategies in earlier decades.

The emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, has been characterized by many observers (e.g., Emerson, 1989; Pipho, 1989) as a singular stress on efficiency when support was widespread for using management techniques in operating educational organizations and general governments. Prominent examples of the techniques championed during these two decades included function-object budgeting; planning, programming, budgeting systems (PPBS); management-by-objectives (MBO); zero-based budgeting (ZBB); and zero-sum budgeting.

Pipho (1997) suggests that the newer emphasis has clearly been on the "triumvirate of standards, assessment, and accountability" (p. 673) that together have occupied the attention of members of state policy circles for most of the past two decades. A recent special report published by *Education Week* supports Pipho's assertion. The status of selected state accountability measures in elementary-secondary education presented in the report *Quality Counts: A Report Card on the Condition of Public Education in the 50 States* (1997) indicates that at the present time, 33 states have adopted standards in the core subjects of English, math, science, and history; 45 states in 1995 had a student assessment program aligned with at least two of the four content areas; 15 states at this time require mastery of the core standards to graduate or be promoted; and various strategies are currently used to hold schools and/or districts accountable for student performance. In 1996, 47 required public reporting, 30 had some form of consequences for poor performance (pp. 34-35).

All highly visible public sector entities are being subjected to the new emphasis on performance accountability. In the case of general governments, many of the most influential professional associations in the field of public administration have supported using performance measurement of the activities of state and local governments. In a recent piece, Ammons (1995) cites a number of prominent groups whose advocacy has given substantial momentum to the movement. These include the American Society for Public Administration, the Government Accounting Standards Board, the Government Finance Officers Association, the International City/County Management Association, and the National Academy of Public Administration (pp. 2-3).

At the federal level, Congress has also been active with the passage in the early part of the decade of a series of laws designed to increase the accountability of federal departments and independent agencies(1). The most significant of

these is the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 that, as stressed by the Government Accounting Office, "forces a shift in the focus of federal agencies—away from such traditional concerns as staffing and activity levels and toward a single overriding issue—results" (*Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, 1996, p. 1).

Developments in public education in the late 1980s and 1990s have in many respects paralleled those in general government. The same pressures accounting for the interest in making general government more accountable also impact education (e.g., budgetary constraints, rising costs of many government services, the desire to downsize governments at all levels). Moreover, the major claimed benefits of performance measurement are viewed by many in state policy circles to be as applicable to education as to other public service fields (e.g., providing improvements in program and service quality, including an early reading of both strengths and weaknesses, aiding in resource allocation decisions, enhancing planning and budgetary practices, facilitating the evaluation of programs and services).

But there are still other precipitating causes behind the momentum to establish performance accountability systems that are peculiar to education. Perhaps the most prominent is the apparent success of those who have argued that the productivity of public elementary-secondary education has been in a state of decline for several decades, and that this situation must be reversed. One principal way to do this, they argue, is through an accreditation system that features more rigorous standards and performance measurement and, an increasingly popular strategy, state intervention in academically bankrupt schools and school districts.

The huge public elementary-secondary education enterprise in this nation has been the focus of most interest in the development of more rigorous state accountability systems that feature more demanding standards and performance assessment. Interest in measuring and reporting the results of a student's experience in post-secondary education is also strong, though not as developed in most states as in elementary-secondary education, or what is increasingly being called in some quarters, "government schools" (2).

Not all of the components of a very large number of state systems of elementary-secondary education, however, have been concentrated on the accelerated move to impose results-oriented accountability. The most significant excluded component that seemingly has been off the state radar screen are the state networks of educational service agency-type organizations (ESAs). For example, only a small percentage of the existing networks are covered by a state accreditation program.

The authors of this paper believe that state networks of ESAs will increasingly be placed under a comprehensive state accreditation program as part of the movement to establish more meaningful state accountability systems for all educational organizations. This assumption seems almost beyond challenge.

OBJECTIVES OF PAPER

The objectives of this paper are four: (1) Establish the major features of existing state accountability systems for educational service agencies; (2) Describe the main features of existing state accreditation systems for ESAs, the principal state policy instrument of choice for strengthening state accountability and oversight of ESAs; (3) Identify major challenges facing state interests desirous of strengthening ESA accountability practices through a state accreditation system; and, (4) Offer conjectures concerning the direction state accreditation practices are likely to take in the future.

The authors make a distinction between two key terms used in the four statements of objectives—state accountability systems or practices and state accreditation systems. The working definitions of the two terms follow.

State Accountability System. This term is defined to mean the cumulative set of state rules, regulations, and policies that express the state's intent to provide oversight of educational service agencies to ensure that they further the achievement of some prized state policy or policies. Various approaches are employed by the states including fiscal accountability measures, legal compliance accountability measures, and accreditation standards that focus on the processes and procedures used by the agencies and the outcomes of their efforts.

State Accreditation System. This term is used to mean the general statements of expectations held by the state that are applied in the decision to initially approve and/or continue to recognize that an educational service agency has complied with all existing state rules, regulations, and policies as well as demonstrated that it is honoring some valued practice concerning the processes and procedures it uses, as well as meets, exceeds, or fails to satisfy desired outcomes established by the state.

STATE NETWORKS OF ESAs

The description of existing state accountability practices as well as the discussion of major issues and conjectures concerning the future direction of state efforts concentrates on statewide networks of ESAs, or those that are virtually statewide in scope, meaning that three-fourths or more of the local school districts in a state are included in the service region of an ESA.

Table 1
Initial Statewide or Virtual Statewide
Networks Included in Project

State	Title of Units	Year Initially Established	Number of Agencies in Network '96-97
Arizona	County Offices of Education	1912	15
Arkansas	Education Service Cooperatives	1985	15
California	Office of County Superintendent of Schools	1959	58
Colorado[1]	Boards of Cooperative Services	1965	14
Connecticut	Regional Education Service Centers	1972	6
Georgia	Regional Education Service Agencies	1966	16
Illinois	Regional Offices of Education	1975	57
Indiana	Educational Service Centers	1973	9
Iowa	Area Education Agencies	1973	9
Kansas[1]	(various titles used)[2]	—-	11
Michigan	Intermediate School Districts	1963	57
Minnesota[1]	Educational Cooperative Service Units	1973	8
Montana	County Offices of Education	—-	56
Nebraska[1]	Educational Service Units	—-	19
New York[1]	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services	1948	38
North Dakota	County Offices of Education	—-	53
Ohio[1]	Education Service Centers	1995	71
Oregon	Education Service Districts	1963	21
Pennsylvania	Intermediate Units	1971	29
Texas	Regional Educational Service Centers	1967	20
Utah[1]	Regional Educational Service Agencies	—-	5
Washington	Educational Service Districts	1965	9
West Virginia	Regional Educational Service Agencies	1972	8
Wisconsin	Cooperative Educational Service Agencies	1965	<u>12</u>
		TOTAL	633

Notes: [1] Designates virtual statewide network which means ESAs include three-fourths or more of the state's total number of local districts in their service regions.

[2] The 11 ESAs in Kansas use various titles (six use Education Service Center in conjunction with a regional designation; others use various titles, in combination with some geographic designation.

Educational service agencies in 24 states met the criterion of being part of either a statewide or virtual statewide network. As shown in Table 1, 17 of the 24 networks are statewide in scope. A total of 633 organizations are included in the networks, representing what is probably a majority of operating ESAs in the nation. All geographic regions of the country are represented, though the New England and Southern states less so than other regions.

The 24 networks are the products of legislative action or administrative rule making by an agency of state government. The county offices of education in California and Arizona are constitutional offices but still subject to periodic legislative attention. As public entities that expend public funds, whether state, local, or federal, they are likely to be the type of educational organizations covered by some existing accountability measures. Moreover, and importantly, they are also the type of organization likely to be increasingly scrutinized and held accountable for their performance.

EXISTING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES FOR ESA NETWORKS

The description of the current status of state accountability practices for ESAs consists of three overviews intended to illustrate the general direction and tendencies of existing state activities. One of the three is admittedly of limited value. When taken together, however, the three suggest a number of important tendencies in current practices.

The first describes major features and the extent of use of current state oversight practices when viewed from the perspective of how these practices impact on the locus of control granted the networks to formulate policies governing their operations.

The second offers an assessment of the relative position of the networks concerning the locus of control for policy development when compared to that generally enjoyed by local education agencies.

The third describes the extent of use of current state accountability systems when organized by their placement into one of the six major state accountability strategies used in an accountability typology developed by Kirst.(3)

Locus of Control for Policy Development

One useful way to establish the general direction of state accountability practices for the ESA networks is to view these from the perspective of the locus of control enjoyed by the networks. Portraying ways in which the state tends to maintain some oversight over the operations of the network provides important information and insight on efforts by the state to create a meaningful check-and-balance on what the ESAs do and cannot do. That is, from this perspective, one can have a sense of the freedom and discretionary authority provided the ESAs to set policies governing their own affairs, as well as the nature of state intervention in ESA matters.

Presented in Table 2 are 21 examples of major state oversight practices placed within seven conventionally used policy categories. Also described in the table is the estimated use of each oversight practice.

What the table does not illustrate is whether and in what ways a particular ESA state network is covered by one or more of the 21 examples. Nor is it possible to ascertain what one or a combination of the 21 examples an individual state is presently using. Inquiries along these lines are beyond the scope of interest here.

Observations. The following observations, however, help provide background information on the nature of existing state accountability practices.

1. A fairly substantial number of the 21 state oversight activities would likely appear on most lists of meaningful accountability measures that ought to be used as a check on the activities of a type of organization designed to provide programs and services to local school districts in their service regions. Certainly the use of a required advisory council composed of representatives of local education agencies would be one of these. It comes as little surprise, then, that a strong majority (defined here to mean three-fourths or more) of the networks are estimated to work under this state requirement. Moreover, this practice not only impacts the governance prerogatives ordinarily assumed by an ESA governing board but shapes decisions in many other policy categories as well, as intended in the adoption of the state practice in the first instance. Another popular state oversight provision that would likely be supported in state and local circles is the near universal prohibition on ESAs against levying taxes

Table 2

Overview of State Accountability Systems from

the Perspective of Locus of Control for

Policy Development, 1996-97

Policy Category	Examples of Major State Oversight Practices	Estimated Extent of Use[1]
Method of Establishment, Alteration, or Dissolution	• use of guidelines for establishment, alteration or dissolution • use of guidelines allowing LEAs to secure services from another ESA, or opt-out of its ESA and join another • periodic assessment of the efficacy of the number of ESAs	SM VL L
Governance Practices	• required procedures for establishment of governing board • required use of advisory council composed of local district staff • required granting of budget review authority to advisory council	SM SM VL
Staffing Practices	• required adherence to state certification requirements in employment of staff • required adherence to state/federal employment and dismissal practices	SM SM
Financial Practices	• use of required budget format and accounting procedures • required annual audit • required submission of periodic cost-analysis study • prohibition on tax levying authority • restriction on use of other revenue generating sources	SM SM VL SM L
Programming Practices	• required engagement in state prescribed core services • required engagement in services requested by LEAs • use of guidelines allowing an ESA to market services outside its service region	SM SM VL
Acquisition of Facilities	• prohibition on acquisition of space through bonded indebtedness • restrictions on facility acquisition through purchase or lease-purchase	M M
Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting Practices	• required submission of annual report to LEAs • required submission of annual report to the state • required participation in periodic accreditation review • required submission of periodic compliance reports on federal/state funded programs	M M L SM

Notes:

[1]Estimated extent of use:

      VL: Very Limited (less than one-fourth of the 24 networks)

        L: Limited (one-fourth or more but less than one-half of the 24)

      M: Majority (one-half or more but less than three-fourths of the 24)

    SM: Strong Majority (three-fourths or more of the 24)

to support the agencies (only four networks can). This practice likely has its rationale grounded, at least in part, in the position that the service agencies ought not to compete with local districts for taxpayer support.

The extraordinary state requirements in Oregon designed to ensure that the ESAs are responsive to local districts have been held up as a prototype of ESA accountability in programming decisions (Stephens & Turner, 1991). A two-step program approval process must be followed before a program can be initiated through a service resolution. (A majority of program offerings makes use of this process.) The decision must first be approved by an advisory council composed of local district staff. It then must be approved by two-thirds of the governing boards of local districts (a provision designed to protect the interests of the smaller enrollment size districts) who also represent at least a majority of the students in the service region (a provision designed to protect the interests of the larger enrollment size districts in the service region) (p. 51).

2. State oversight is most complete in influencing the fiscal policies and practices of the networks. This is expected given the tradition of a strong state presence in the fiscal affairs of public education entities. Campbell and colleagues (1965) reached this conclusion more than three decades ago in one of the early assessments of the role of the state in the decision processes of local districts. This conclusion not only holds true to this day but rather would undoubtedly be made even stronger given the improved technical ability of most states to manage large databases.

3. State interest in keeping many of the ESA networks on a relatively short leash is also evident in the frequent use of other oversight practices. One prominent example is the periodic assessments of the continued efficacy of the number of agencies in the state networks. Probes of this kind have nearly always been initiated by the state. Another example of how the state's desire to closely monitor the efficacy of the ESA network relates to the options generally available to the service agencies for the acquisition of space (e.g., the frequent prohibition on bonded indebtedness). Certainly the restrictions on facility acquisition represent another state fiscal monitoring strategy. They also simultaneously illustrate, however, an important way to maintain a degree of fluidity in the network.

Comparison With Local Districts

The second overview used to help establish the current status of state accountability systems for ESA networks is presented in Table 3. In this approach, the relative position of ESAs vis-à-vis the general status of state accountability measures directed at local education agencies is compared. Use is made of the same conceptual and analytical framework as the preceding approach, the locus of control for policy development.

The general assessment offered is that the ESA networks tend to operate under greater state oversight than local districts in four of the seven broad policy categories: common governance practices, financial practices, programming practices, and the acquisition of facilities. Both types of agencies are judged to operate under comparable state monitoring in two of the three remaining policy categories: method of establishment, alteration and dissolution, and staffing practices, where state oversight measures are probably most parallel.

It is the seventh policy category where a mixed assessment prevails. Both types of organizations tend to be covered by specific planning or reporting requirements to their respective stakeholders, though these procedures certainly differ. The state evaluation requirements, however, are clearly what separates the two. The rapid expansion, especially in the 1990s, of state assessment programs for local districts has at this point not touched most of the ESA networks, as will be established below. Nor has the accelerated use of the concept of state intervention in poorly performing local districts been applied to many ESA networks. A recent report by the Education Commission of the States indicates that 22 states have developed academic bankruptcy laws allowing the state to intervene in districts or schools that do not meet state performance standards (States Bring Power to Take Over Schools, 1997). As will be reported below, only a few state networks of ESAs are covered by comparably provisions.

Use of the Kirst Typology

The third overview used to help establish the current status of ESA state accountability systems is presented in Table 4. Employed in this approach is the Kirst (1990) typology of six major state accountability initiatives. The six, according to Kirst, are to be viewed as broad strategy options that not only "must be tailored to specific state and

Table 3

Comparison of Locus of Control for Policy Development

Enjyed by ESAs When Compared to Local Education Agencies, 1996-97

Policy Category	Assessment of Relative Position of ESAs	Comments
Method of Establishment, Alteration,	tends to be comparable	However, some states regularly examine the efficacy of the number of units in the network, unlike the seemingly widespread recent moratorium on local district reorganization.
Governance Practices	tends to be more restrictive	There is a common mandated requirement of an advisory committee composed of local district representatives (other than those required to remain in compliance with federal/state categorical programs); some mandated advisory groups have budget review authority.
Staffing Practices	tends to be comparable	ESAs are generally covered by same state requirements concerning employment of certified staff and licensed staff only, and employment and dismissal procedures.
Financial Practices	tends to be more restrictive	Both units are generally covered by state requirements concerning budget preparation, and accounting and auditing procedures; however, ESAs more restricted in revenue generating options, especially the ability to tax.
Programming Practices	tends to be more restrictive	Many states have identified ESA core services; additionally, deep engagement in federal/state categorical programs influence program decisions; as do mandated advisory councils.
Acquisition of Facilities	tends to be more restrictive	There are more state regulations governing the manner in which many networks allowed to acquire, through purchase or lease-purchase, space to house their programs and services.
Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting Practices	tends to be mixed	Many networks are required to submit annual reports to local districts, and some are required to submit annual plans and budgets to the state for review, and in some cases, state approval.

local contexts" but "must also be combined and interrelated in a sensible way" (p. 7). Kirst makes use of the typology to both review past state accountability measures directed at local districts as well as to organize his discussion of promising developments.

An assessment of current state accountability systems for ESAs, when viewed through the lens of the Kirst typology, suggests that presently most states have concentrated on two of the six major strategies: accountability through monitoring and compliance with standards and regulations, and accountability through the locus of authority. All of the remaining four strategies are judged to have very limited use at the present time.

One of the factors that explains the strong showing of accountability strategies that rely on compliance with standards and regulations is that states in many ways tend to view an ESA as a local school district. In these cases, all regulations and provisions in a state's school code or by-laws governing local districts are applicable to an ESA (e.g.,

Table 4

State Accountability Strategies for ESAs from
the Perspective of Kirst's Typology, 1996-97

Kirst's Six Major Strategies	Assessment of Current Use[1]	Comments
1. Accountability as Performance Reporting	very limited	There is little use of performance measures in the small number of existing state accreditation standards.
2. Accountability through Monitoring and Compliance with Standards or Regulations	strong majority	A strong majority of states require annual reports, compliance reports where needed to satisfy federal funding of services, and have in place other regulations governing ESA practices.
3. Accountability through Incentive Systems	very limited	Popular strategies that reward exemplary local schools or local districts or local staff are not applied to ESAs; very limited number of states impose disincentives (e.g., sanctions) against poor performing ESAs.
4. Accountability through Reliance on the Market	very limited	A very limited number of states allow local districts to secure a service from another ESA; very few allow local districts to opt out of its service agency; very few allow an ESA to market its services outside its service region.
5. Accountability through the Locus of Authority	strong majority	A strong majority of states require establishment of an ESA advisory council with the explicit understanding that such a group is to loom large in setting the direction of the agency.
6. Accountability through Changing Roles	very limited	Popular examples of this initiative are not generally applicable (e.g., site-based management); states are reluctant to impose requirements of other policy examples that might be more applicable to a local school (e.g., school-site staff councils).

Notes:
[1]Estimated extent of use:

        Very limited: less than one-fourth of the 24 networks
        Limited: one-fourth or more but less than one-half of the 24
        Majority: one-half or more but less than three-fourths of the 24
        Strong majority: three-fourths or more of the 24.

fiscal accounting practices, certification and licensing of staff, safety codes). The primary reason for the strong showing of the accountability strategy that is aimed at changes in the locus of authority is, of course, the widespread requirement that ESAs establish an advisory council.

One could argue that the limited use of the other strategies is more a reflection of the lack of utility of the typology in accurately portraying the depth and breath of state accountability systems for ESAs. While not accepting this line of argument, it is important to stress that the results of the use of this approach should be placed alongside the results of the two preceding profiles. It is the combining of the three that is probably most instructive as background material for portraying the current state accountability practices for ESAs.

EXISTING STATE ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS FOR ESAS

In the preceding section, an attempt was made to describe various state oversight practices that together represent state accountability measures for the ESA networks. Here a description is provided of one of the many accountability measures that is likely to be given even greater prominence in the future—state accreditation of an ESA. The working definition of a state accreditation system cited previously follows:

> The general statements of expectations held by the state that are applied in the decision to initially approve and/or continue to recognize that an educational service agency has complied with all existing state rules, regulations, or policies as well as demonstrated that it is honoring some valued practices concerning the processes and procedures it uses, as well as meets, exceeds, or fails to satisfy desired outcomes established by the state.

State Accreditation Systems, 1989-90

The description of state accreditation practices that follows is based on extensive excerpts of a previous report (Stephens, 1990) on state accreditation systems known to be in place in the 1989-90 school year.

Other articles in this issue will describe features of recent revisions made in the accreditation practices in several states as well as one newly adopted system in a state (Iowa) not included in the 1990 report. This earlier report represents the only known examination of existing practices at the close of the last decade.

There were five objectives of the report. The first was to establish what appears to be the initial intent of the newly formulated state ESA accreditation programs. Next, a description was provided of the principal processes used by the states in the conduct of their accreditation practices. Emphasis here was given to what time frames were used, whether or not there was a requirement for a self-study or external team validation, and what, if any, sanctions were to be imposed on poorly performing units. The third was to establish the nature and scope of standards used with special attention here given to what emphasis, if any, is given to context, input, process, and product variables. This was followed by a discussion of whether or not the states made use of all-important indicators of quality for one or more of the standards. Finally, a number of observations about the present state-of-the-art systems for state accreditation policies and practices for ESAs were then offered.

Six state accreditation systems for ESAs were examined. The legal basis for all were to be found in regulations of the state education agency—Georgia, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin. Highlights of the study that focuses on the situation in the six states at the start of this decade are presented below, organized around the five major objectives.

Intent of the Accreditation. Improvement of the management and the effectiveness of programs and services and accountability were the two dominant stated goals of a majority of the six state accreditation systems. Illustrative of these twin overriding intents are the statements of purposes of the accreditation policies in effect in the earlier version of the Georgia system (*Georgia Comprehensive Evaluation System: RESA Standards*, 1989). The Georgia plan established that:

"The application of standards will assess not only a RESA's compliance with state law and GBOE policy but also the effectiveness of programs and services and the presence of exemplary educational practices" (p. iii).

The intent of the Nebraska (Rule 84: *Regulations Governing Accreditation of Educational Service Units*, 1989) system is instructive for two reasons. In addition to identifying self-improvement as one of the goals of accreditation, efficient use of resources of the state is also established, and reference is made that the level of performance called for in the accreditation system is to be recognized by all as minimal, not optimal (p. i). The apparent hope was that the ESAs in that state would exceed the called-for minimal levels of expectations, a common anticipation in most accreditation systems of whatever type.

The twin goals of self-improvement and accountability are also evident in the Wisconsin system (*Comparative Educational Service Agency Evaluation Manual*, 1985) that speaks to the benefits that should accrue to CESA personnel who as a result "may study the value and effectiveness of their programs" (p. iii), but, in addition, establishes a second goal of aiding "the state superintendent with meeting the responsibility of having to evaluate the CESAs every third year" (p. 2).

Processes Used. Both diversity and commonalties distinguish the processes used in the six states. For purposes of this analysis, the major processes employed by the states were organized into four principal stages that are not too unlike those used in the late 1980s by the two principal professional education accrediting bodies: the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (S*tandards, Procedures, and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units*, 1987), and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (*Standards for State Approval of Teacher Education*, 1986). Making use of similar categories to those used by these two national professional education accrediting bodies in prior years was not coincidental for, as will be evident, many of the norms established by the two organizations appear to have greatly influenced state practices concerning their ESA networks.

The four major stages of accreditation processes used are the self-evaluation report, the on-site review procedures, post on-site review procedures, and the use of results. The processes used in the six states in each of these four stages are presented in Table 5.

Standards Employed and Content Covered. The measurement of the quality of the operations and programs and services of a service agency of course should be at the very core of an accreditation plan. The six states approached the development of standards and the content areas generally covered by them in a variety of ways and in differing degrees of comprehensiveness.

Primary emphasis in all instances was given to three general expectations about the way the networks of ESAs were to perform: (1) legal adherence to existing state law and applicable federal statutes; (2) adherence to existing state board of education and state department of education policy; and, (3) the degree to which the agencies achieve some valued practice or judgment about what constitutes either quality, or effectiveness, or both dimensions, in the workings of an education service agency.

The priority given to legal adherence to existing state and appropriate federal laws and compliance with existing policies of the state board or state agency is not surprising, given the public sector nature of the agencies. Moreover, this emphasis is consistent with one of the overriding intents of the state accreditation plan to make the service units accountable. The stress in the standards on some valued practice is consistent with the state desire to reflect in its standards improvement in the working of the service agencies, the second of the twin overriding initial state interests for establishing the accreditation plan.

Little use appeared to be made at this early stage in the design of state standards governing ESA operations of other commonly used approaches to quality measurement for public sector organizations identified by Hatry (1974): the use of absolutes, the use of engineering standards, and comparisons with the private sector.

While the approaches used in the six states to establish standards were relatively uniform, diversity marks the scope of standards addressed by the states as well as the way the states had internally organized their standards. In describing the prevailing patterns, use was made of a fairly conventional perspective that an ESA, like other educational enterprises, consists of a number of basic, near-universal organizational structural characteristics, and that these organizations, like others, make use of a number of processes through which the work of the organization is accomplished.

Table 5

Selected Accreditation Processes Used by the States, 1989-90

Step Effective Date	Georgia 1990-91	Nebraska 1990-91	Ohio 1989	Oregon 1977	Texas 1985	Wisconsin 1985
1. Completion of Self Study						
• required	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes*	yes**
• frequency	periodically	7 yr.	5 yr.	5 yr.	5 yr.	3 yr.
2. On-Site Review						
• required	yes***	7 yr.	5 yr.	5 yr.	ns	3 yr.
• membership selection	SEA/ESA	SEA/SEA	SEA	SEA/ESA	SEA/ESA	ESA
• membership chair	SEA	ns	SEA	SEA	SEA	ESA
3. Post On-Site Procedures						
• permissable ESA rejoiner	yes	ns	yes	yes	ns	ns
• public disclosure/report	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
• required ESA response	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
4. Use of Results						
• sanctions levied for poor performance	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no
• recognition of exemplary status	yes	no	no	no	no	no

*plus a required annual performance report
**plus a required annual consumer evaluation of services
***plus a required annual legal compliance review by SEA

Key: ESA—education service agency
SEA—state education agency
ns—not specified

Source: Stephens, E. R. (1990). An examination of state accreditation practices for education service agencies. *Research in Rural Education*, 6(3), p. 5.

Although differences exist in the depth of coverage, a majority of the state accreditation systems had in place standards governing the following content areas.

1. The governance subsystem of the units, especially compliance with state legal requirements, that tend to be the same as for local school districts, and the requirement that the agency have written policies.

2. The management subsystem of the units, again especially with regard to compliance with state legal requirements that also tend to be patterned after local school district practices, and the requirement that the ESA administrator hold appropriate administrative certification.

3. The financial subsystem of the units, particularly compliance with state legal requirements including the need to follow uniform accounting, reporting, and auditing procedures.

4. The program and service subsystem of the units, especially compliance with state legal requirements and policies of the state education agencies, and the requirement for periodic program planning as well as periodic program assessment and evaluation.

5. The staffing subsystem of the agencies (again, especially compliance with legal or SEA regulations) regarding appropriate staff certification and the requirement that the units have a set of personnel policies.

As suggested above, the current standards in the states at the start of this decade varied widely in their comprehensiveness. In a relative sense, the Georgia and Texas (*State Plan for Regional Educational Service Centers*, 1988) standards were by far the most detailed. The Nebraska standards were the most limited in number.

The difference in the scope of coverage of various state programs can be explained in several ways. In many respects, the variations appeared to be a reflection of the traditions operating in a state system, especially those having to do with the posture of the state education agency. For example, in states where the state has traditionally maintained a low profile in its position on the volatile issue of accreditation of local school districts, it has tended to approach the question of the accreditation of ESAs in like manner.

A second major explanation for differences in the scope of coverage among the six states related to the statutory roles assigned to the networks. For example, the Oregon system of service agencies (*Standards for Education Service Districts*, 1984) had the statutory responsibility to serve as the local school district boundary board and to provide attendance supervision for member local school systems of fewer than 1,000 students. Consistent with the propensity of states to include standards calling for compliance with state law, the Oregon program included standards that address these roles.

A third major explanation of differences in coverage related to the requirements placed on the ESA networks. For example, in states where there was a requirement that the ESAs maintain an advisory committee of local district personnel to advise the service unit concerning its programs and services, one is likely to find a number of standards that attempt to assess the use of and the role played by such groups.

Use of Indicators. Stephens argued in 1989 that the centerpiece of new state performance accountability systems that will distinguish these programs from earlier state oversight efforts is the use of indicators that provide information on how well educational organizations are performing. The use of indicators of performance represent a critical added step to the use of process standards, the traditional method employed to assess effectiveness. Standards alone that focus on the presence of specific organizational behavior, as valuable a prerequisite as they are for assessing effectiveness, do not necessarily provide insight on the quality of the behavior or whether or not an organization makes use of the results of this activity. Indicators can provide this insight that is so essential for the measurement of organizational effectiveness.

In 1990-91, only one of the six existing state ESA accreditation programs attempted to establish indicators for its standards. Georgia's plan included indicators of legal adherence and, in addition, established what it calls indicators of effectiveness for some, but not all of its standards. (This makes sense for indicators are not appropriate nor are they necessarily important for all standards, just those where there exists a consensus that they are significant and tell something important about the workings of the agency.)

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STATE PERFORMANCE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The thesis accepted here is that there will be mounting pressure to strengthen existing state accreditation practices now in place, as well as ensure that all state networks of ESAs are covered by an accreditation system that will be characterized by performance standards as well as by performance measures. These additions will represent a major departure from most existing practices. They will place state accreditation programs for ESAs in line with developments in other public sector organizations.

The construction of a state performance accreditation system (SPAS), however, poses a myriad of theoretical, research, technical, and political issues. Our tentative list of the nature of these is presented in Table 6. First, though, consideration is given to what are viewed to be essential building blocks that will go a long way in ensuring that difficult challenges are addressed and the design of the newer systems is successful.

The Essential Building Blocks

The list of major challenges that follows is based on the one overriding assumption that the state, in collaboration with the ESA community and other stakeholders, has in place a strategic plan for the state network that, at a minimum, includes three absolute requirements:

- a vision statement that expresses the values and beliefs concerning what the ESA network might be for the state system of elementary-secondary education

Table 6

Status of State Accreditation Systems,
1990-91 AND 1996-97

Network	State Accreditation Standards		Comments
	1990-91[1]	1996-97[2]	
Arizona			
Arkansas			
California			
Colorado			
Connecticut			
Georgia	X	X	revised
Illinois			
Indiana			
Iowa		X	established 1996
Kansas			
Michigan			
Minnesota			
Nebraska	X	X	
New York			
			currently being proposed
North Dakota			
Ohio	X	X	
Oregon	X	X	revised
Pennsylvania			
Texas	X[3]	X	revised
Utah			
Washington			
West Virginia			
Wisconsin	X		earlier system apparently in abeyance
Total	6	6	

Notes:
  [1] Source: Stephens, E. R. (1990). An examination of state accreditation practices for educational service agencies. *Research in Rural Education*, 6(3), 1-9.
  [2] Source: Survey of AAESA State Leaders (1997, February 21). Arlington, VA: American Association of Educational Service Agencies (unpublished).
  [3] The state accountability measures in place in 1990-91 for the Texas RESCs were viewed to address many content areas ordinarily covered in an accreditation system. It was for this reason that the RESCs were judged to be operating under a system of accreditation, though not formally recognized as such.

- a comprehensive mission statement that flows from the vision statement, explaining why the network exists, and stating the expectations for the network in results-oriented terms
- a statement of the long-term strategic goals for the network, also in results-oriented terms.

The absence of these three essential prerequisites will virtually ensure that the potential benefits of a state performance accreditation system will not be realized. There is little use, for example, for engaging in a discussion of the overriding goal(s) of the SPAS without benefit of the results of these three critical deliberations. Further, it surely would be counterproductive for all interests—the state, the ESA community, the principal stakeholders—if an attempt were to be made to establish annual performance standards absent long-term strategic goals from which short-term goals ought to flow. Moreover, if ambiguity, confusion, or disagreement is present in the development of performance standards, it follows, then, there will be similar concerns and issues raised regarding the development of the all-important performance measures.

The object of a state performance accreditation system is presumably to assess the organizational effectiveness of the ESAs in the state's network. It is well established that, as Cameron and Whitten (1983) correctly stated sometime ago, "there is not a universal model" (p. 263) of the construct organizational effectiveness. This is so despite the continuing popularity of the topic that has received considerable attention in the policy communities, by practicing professionals, and in the research committees in all major disciplines in the social and behavior sciences.

The high interest in the topic notwithstanding, most observers would agree with Cameron and Whitten's observations that we are still without a meaningful definition of organizational effectiveness, and, it follows, have not yet produced a widely supported theory of effectiveness. Nor is there presently a universally accepted methodology for the assessment of organizational effectiveness. In fact, the construct is still surrounded by a great deal of controversy and heated debate. Organization theorists have advocated a perplexing number of conceptual schemes, analytical points of departure, and models for the study of effectiveness. Moreover, continue Cameron and Whitten, "a multitude of criteria for judging effectiveness have been advanced, each with its own advocates and opponents" (pp. 262-267). This situation in part helps explain the equally divergent number of perspectives that characterize much of the debate at all levels of government concerning what represents excellence in education and how best to achieve it.

These concerns notwithstanding, a decision must be reached concerning what theoretical approach(es) to organizational effectiveness is (are) to drive the construction of the state performance accreditation system for the ESA network, as well as one that is highly compatible with the purpose(s) of the system.

This difficult choice will be greatly informed when action has been taken on the three essential building blocks stated above. It is true, of course, that there may already be in place both a vision statement and a mission statement for the state's network. In situations where this is the case, these should be revisited, but in this case through the lens of their critical role in shaping the SPAS. The third building block, arriving at a statement of long-term strategic goals for the state's network, is likely to be a new experience in most states.

Major Challenges

What follows is a listing of what are judged to be a number of the major challenges facing state interests in the development of a state performance accreditation system. The list of major challenges that are cited in Table 7 is, by design, a lengthy one. The length of the challenges cited merely reflects the complexities surrounding the design of a SPAS as well as the seriousness of embarking on an endeavor that is intended to result in a design that will serve the interests of all parties who have a vital stake in the exercise—the state, the ESA community, and the stakeholders of the network. There are no shortcuts for achieving this worthy goal.

The questions are presented in what is judged to be a useful sequence. Moreover, it is important to stress that there are no right or wrong answers for a number of the questions, although, and importantly in some cases, the answer chosen for a specific question must be consistent with the choice made for another related question(s); and the choices made for all questions must be consistent with the very first question posed—what is to be the overriding goal of the SPAS, or are multiple goals to be pursued, and, if so, what are these?

Table 7

Major Challenges in the Development of a State Performance Accreditation System (SPAS)

Categories	Major Challenges
A. <u>Purpose of the SPAS</u>	1. What is to be the overriding goal of the SPAS, or are multiple goals to be pursued, and if so, what are these?
B. <u>Theoretical Issues</u>	1. What theoretical approach(es) to organizational effectiveness should be used to guide the design of the SPAS that (are) compatible with the agreed-to overriding goal(s) of the SPAS? 2. What conceptual and analytical framework will best capture the complexities of the organizational and operational domains and the program and service domains of the state's ESA network that is most compatible with the previously selected theoretical approach(es)?
C. <u>Implementation Issues</u>	1. What time frame is required for the implementation of the SPAS that will accommodate the expected need to build the organizational capacity of both the state and the ESA network to successfully initiate the system? 2. How can the SPAS and both the state's and individual ESA's fiscal planning and budgeting practices be aligned to assure that the annual and long-term budgetary decisions made by each are highly supportive of the school improvement agenda shared by each?
D. <u>Performance Standards</u>	1. How can the long-term, overriding state strategic goal(s) be translated into specific annual performance standards for the various organizational and operational domains and the program and service domains of the ESA network? 2. How can the state best accommodate state-specific goals for the network with those of an individual ESA in the SPAS? 3. What principles should be used to guide the development of performance standards for both domains?
E. <u>Performance Measures</u>	1. What principles should be used to guide the development of the performance measurement features of the SPAS? 2. What criteria should be used in the selection of the type(s) of outcome performance measures for the program and service domain? 3. How can the outcome performance measures for the program and service domains reflect the level of achievement of immediate, intermediate, as well as ultimate outcomes? 4. How can the outcome performance measurement features of the SPAS accommodate programs and services having multiple outcomes? 5. How can the SPAS best capture the non-quantifiable outcomes of both the organizational and operational domains and the program and service domains of an individual ESA, as well as those of the entire state network? 6. How can the SPAS best capture the possible unanticipated outcomes of both domains for an individual ESA as well as those of the entire state network?
F. <u>Data Collection and Analysis</u>	1. How can the existing management information systems maintained by both the state and individual ESAs be improved and then aligned to facilitate the collection, reporting, and analysis of valid and reliable SPAS data in a timely, cost-effective way that reduces the data processing burden on each to an acceptable level? 2. What is the most appropriate way to disaggregate the outcome performance measures of, especially, the program and service domains so that these will provide policy-relevant information. 3. What is the best way to distinguish and then measure and analyze the outputs and the outcomes of, especially, the program and service domains? 4. How can the impact of a specific program and service be separated from the impact of other factors external to it?

Table 7 (continued)

Major Challenges in the Development of a State Performance Accreditation System (SPAS)

Categories	Major Challenges
G. <u>Use of the Results</u>	1. Is the SPAS to be a high-stakes exercise and, if so, are sanctions to be imposed against a low performing ESA governing board and/or staff, and, if so, on the basis of what criteria, and what is to be the nature of these? 2. Are rewards to be granted a high performing ESA, and, if so, on the basis of what criteria, and what is to be the nature of these criteria? 3. Under what conditions, if any, should comparisons be made of the SPAS review/audit of one ESA with others in the state network?
H. <u>Processes</u>	1. What monitoring steps can be implemented to protect the interests of both the state and an individual ESA in the interim period between a full external review/audit?

SOME PRELIMINARY CONJECTURES ABOUT THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF SPASs

This paper closes with a brief discussion of a number of preliminary conjectures about the further direction of state performance accreditation systems for the 24 statewide or virtual statewide networks. The propositions cited represent what the authors perceive to be the dominant trends likely to occur across all 24 networks, not a prescription for each individual state. Variations will be present in state performance accountability systems just as they presently are in virtually all other contextual features of the environment in which the 24 function.

<u>On the Nature of Conjectures: One More Time</u>

Forecasting the future of any facet of the policy environment in which the 24 statewide or virtual statewide networks will function is always problematic. This is so for several reasons.

On the one hand, as suggested above, the individual state networks have in the past and will likely continue to reflect the political traditions and norms of their respective states. Thus, variations in state oversight practices for the network that are, after all, policy decisions that will be decided in the political arenas, will continue to characterize the 24. The political, economic, and educational traditions and norms of a state help explain existing variations in the nuances of a network's governance, structural, and programming features.

Additionally, forecasting the likely outcome of state policy deliberations in a single state, let alone a fairly significant number of states, is also highly problematic. Not only are there limitations in the use of most forecasting techniques, including the dominant one used here, so too are there clear boundaries in understanding the complexities of the policy making process, that, as suggested above, vary in important ways across the states.

These concerns notwithstanding, a number of preliminary forecasts are nonetheless offered concerning the future direction state performance accreditation practices are likely to take. We do so here on the belief that valuable insights will be gained by initially running forecasts up the flag pole for all to see, and then, hopefully, subsequently critique. There most surely is ample room for debate on any number of issues cited. The earlier exposure the issues receive, the better the final product.

The approach used here would be labeled by Dunn (1994) as representing judgmental forecasting. It relies heavily on informed judgment and produces conjectures. The more rigorous approach of extrapolative forecasting, which relies on projections on the basis of historical trends, is also reflected in the forecasts that follow. As argued by Dunn "the logic of intuitive forecasting is essentially retroductive since analysts begin with a conjectured state of affairs

then work their way back to the data or assumptions necessary to support the conjecture" (p. 241). Dunn also concedes, however, "that inductive, deductive, and retroductive reasoning are never completely separable in practice" (p. 241). Nor are they entirely absent here.

Moreover, as with any exercise that attempts to provide a glimpse of what the future might hold, a number of additional cautions should be noted. One the one hand, the conjectures offered obviously reflect the authors' world view of the strengths and weaknesses of the current state accountability measures for ESAs, as well as what will be necessary to bring existing programs in line with what is being either aggressively argued for or implemented by other public sector entities. Further, the authors' personal predispositions obviously reflect some of our own aspirations for the future, even though an attempt has been made to guard against this. This is true here no less than were others to be engaged in a similar exercise.

Major Conjectures

Ten conjectures on the future direction of state performance accreditation practices are offered. All center on what are judged to be some of the more critical policy challenges in the previous discussion of challenges. That is, they focus on what are viewed to be major policy issues present in the design of a SPAS, as opposed, for example, to technical issues. It is acknowledged, however, that most design issues of a technical nature, as well as those that are more research-oriented, are, or should, have their rationale embedded in a prior policy choice.

The first two conjectures will come as no surprise as they have already been explicitly stated elsewhere in the paper, but are repeated here for emphasis. The two, moreover, are perhaps the safest of the 10 cited.

1. All state ESA networks will be increasingly subjected to more rigorous accountability measures, due in large part to the general acceptance in state policy circles of the face validity of the benefits claimed by advocates of the need for greater accountability of public sector entities. Still another primary precipitating cause is the relatively rapid development of a consensus at the state and federal levels over the past decade around what must be included in an assessment of public sector organizations if the claimed benefits of more rigorous accountability practices are to be realized.

2. The policy instrument of choice of state interests in most situations for the implementation of greater accountability for the state network of ESAs will be the establishment of a state performance accreditation system that will include both performance standards that establish the expectations of the network, as well as performance measures for assessing whether or not the expectations have been realized.

3. Multiple goals will be pursued in most SPASs, in large part because most will feature performance measurement. We tend to agree with Martin and Kettner (1996) who assert that "performance measurement combines three major accountability perspectives into one: the efficiency perspective, the quality perspective, and the effectiveness perspective" (p. 3).

    Though the position of these two authors is directed at the value of performance measurement of a human service program, their view has equal utility for consideration of an organization engaged in the delivery of human services. This is especially so because, as argued by Martin and Kettner, the multiple perspectives "enable performance to be viewed from different perspectives by different stakeholders holding different opinions about the nature of accountability" (p. 3). Moreover, continue Martin and Kettner "performance measurement implies no hierarchy of preference among the three perspectives but rather assumes that all three perspectives are important to at least some stakeholders" (p. 3).

    Clearly, ESAs have multiple stakeholders having potentially divergent views, perhaps more so in important ways than many public sector organizations. This is so in part because as service providers that must accommodate the interests of multiple local school districts and, frequently, individual school sites within these districts. Each of these may have divergent needs and values, as well as differing viewpoints on the most appropriate and useful role of an ESA. Compounding this potential problem is the lack of a clear consensus in the professional community on a seemingly large number of contemporary pedagogical issues.

Nor must the equally multiple interests of the state as a principal stakeholder be minimized. The authors have argued in the past that many state networks, by design or through practice, are the platform where the inevitable clashes between state-local interests are frequently debated, and that this sometimes awkward position can account for the long-term conflict surrounding ESAs in a number of states. There does not appear to be anything in the future that suggests a lessening in the tension in state-local relations. What this means is that, at a minimum, the multiple and frequently conflicting interests of these two principal stakeholders must be reflected in the SPAS. This will be accomplished by an insistence that, at a minimum, all three perspectives—efficiency, quality, effectiveness—are addressed.

4. Most SPASs will ultimately tend to be comprehensive. This will be so for several principal reasons. On the one hand, the anticipated multiple goals of a majority of SPASs suggested above will require an inclusive set of performance standards. Secondly, the inclusion of both an efficiency perspective and an effectiveness perspective in the SPAS will require that evidence of inputs and outputs be monitored and reported, for, absent these, there is no other way to measure effectiveness. Also adding to the anticipated comprehensiveness of most SPASs is the growing pressure that the financial reporting practices of public sector entities provide information that will allow an assessment of "service efforts, costs, and accomplishments," the language used by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board in its advocacy of a design that will enhance the accountability of government agencies (*Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting: Its Time Has Come*, 1990). The growing support for money-flow studies in education has the same policy objective. Thus, it seems likely that performance standards focusing on the fiscal planning and budgeting practices will be included in any SPAS.

Additionally, it is through an inclusive state performance accreditation system that state interests can increasingly pursue the growing recognition that state policy must be cohesive if it is to successfully achieve state policy goals. The cohesiveness of state policy is, of course, one of the principal goals and logic of much of the systemic reform movement argued for by many, especially the Education Commission of the States (1990, 1991) and is seemingly widely acknowledged as essential in the professional literature. Nor has the need for greater coordination between federal support for systemic reform and state and local efforts been ignored (e.g., United States General Accounting Office, 1993). Thus, for this reason it is anticipated that the consolidation of the frequently numerous existing accountability practices as well as the strengthening of state oversight in the form of a comprehensive statement on performance standards and their measurement will be actively pursued.

5. It is anticipated that the essential features of most state performance accreditation systems will be quite similar to those required of federal departments and independent agencies called for in the Government Performance and Results (GPR) Act of 1993. This viewpoint is held for several important reasons. One the one hand, the practices of state governments continue to be greatly influenced by the norms and precedents established by federal agencies, though the process of evolution during policy diffusion, called by some "reinvention" (e.g., Hayes, 1996), would suggest that some changes will occur at the state level. Moreover, the fundamental features of the GPR Act are compatible with those championed by other influential advocates of greater accountability of public sector entities (e.g., Government Accounting Standards Board, Government Finance Officers Association, American Society of Public Information, National Academy of Public Administration).

Following the lead of the GPR Act, it is anticipated that most SPASs will require that, at a minimum, each ESA: (1) develop and periodically update a strategic plan that establishes the ESA's mission and long-term strategic goals and defines how these support the state's mission and strategic goals for the state network; (2) develop annual plans that describe the performance goals for each standard; (3) identify the performance measures that will be used to assess, annually, the status of performance for achieving each standard; (4) establish how the performance measures will be verified and validated; (5) provide an annual report that compares performance data with the performance goals for that year; and, (6) describe factors that may have caused a performance goal(s) to be unmet and what plans are being taken to meet an unmet goal(s).

The newly adopted accreditation program for the Iowa AEAs, as well as the newly revised system in place for the Texas RESCs, are both compatible with the six minimal anticipated requirements identified above.

6. The anticipated comprehensiveness of most SPASs clearly suggest that the system will have to be approached incrementally. The need to align both the state and individual ESA fiscal planning and budgeting practices alone, as well as other features of their management information systems, virtually ensures that the system will be implemented over a several year period. Our judgment is that the necessary alignment of the fiscal planning and budgeting practices of both the state and ESAs will be difficult, but not nearly as troublesome as the needed alignment of other aspects of the data systems currently maintained by many states and individual ESAs (i.e., the collection, reporting, and analysis of all inputs, outputs, and, especially outcomes). Equally challenging will be the time required to develop a critical broad consensus on the most appropriate performance standards and performance measurement features of the system (4).

7. States will make use of a variety of sources to establish performance standards and performance measures, and these will change over time. Initially, it would seem that the following sources will be used primarily because they are most likely to garner the needed broad-based consensus: the development of goals and standards and performance based on the goals of an ESA; and, standards and performance measures advanced by professional associations (what some refer to as normative judgment) (5).

Over time, however, there will be significant pressures to adopt, where possible, benchmarking as another major source for the development of performance standards and performance measures; that is, measuring the performance of one ESA against that of the best-in-class ESA in the state network. Benchmarking is currently a popular planning strategy in the private sector having utility in the public sector as well, so long as certain cautions, most of which are of common sense, are observed. The requirement that performance standards and performance measures reflect a broad consensus of the principal stakeholders of the state network should provide the necessary check that appropriate cautions are observed in the push for the use of benchmarking (6).

8. The performance standards and performance measures in the all important program and service domains will likely be selected from one of the high priority areas identified in the incremental phase-in of most SPASs. Further, this focus will unquestionably concentrate on ways that an ESA can intervene in and impact the variables that enhance the teaching and learning environment of the local school district and individual schools within these districts, and then describe how successfully it has done this. There should be little doubt that a focus on teaching and learning will increasingly be championed in state policy circles as the centerpiece of school improvement efforts in a state system of elementary-secondary education. Nor should there be any doubt that work will continue in the development of more sophisticated ways to insure that this focus remains (i.e., the design of money-flow studies).

9. States will respond in a variety of ways to the pronounced variations in the organizational capacity of individual ESAs in the state network to successfully address the requirements of their SPAS. Three policy options will likely receive most attention: (1) the designation of "centers of excellence," where one or a small number of ESAs will specialized in the production of core programs and services, and then be responsible for the provision of these to other ESAs; (2) the periodic assessment of the efficacy of the number of ESAs in the network, though the demographic and geographic features of large portions of many states place clear limitations on the use of boundary realignments or reorganization as do the advances being made in the development of a statewide telecommunications infrastructure in many states; and (3) the use of an equity factor in the allocation of state resources in support of the network. The potential of the use of one or more of the three policy options cited will likely be fully explored prior to the use of sanctions against a poorly performing ESA, the focus of the next conjecture.

10. The SPASs in most cases will be a high-stakes exercise. The precedent for the use of sanctions of some type is now seemingly well established in the field of education (e.g., against students who fail to meet graduation requirements, against school districts and individual schools in a growing number of states). Of special interest here, several of the "second generation" ESA state accreditation programs are high-stakes exercises in that sanctions may ultimately be brought to bear on continually poor performing ESAs. It is true that the threat of sanctions was present in several of the six "first generation" accreditation systems. What is different is that the newer systems are grounded in a much stronger conceptual foundation. This being so would seem to remove some of the concerns that the imposition of a sanction might be subject to legal challenge.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

An attempt has been made here to establish the major features of existing state accountability programs for educational service agencies. It is assumed here that in the future, a state accreditation system will be the principal state policy choice for strengthening state accountability and oversight of virtually all state networks of ESAs. Moreover, the new generation of state accreditation systems will stress two principal properties: performance standards on both the organizational features of an ESA and the processes it uses to conduct its work, as well as those for the program and service activities of an agency; and, the measurement of the actual performance of the agency against these standards.

Also included in the paper was a discussion on a selected number of the myriad theoretical, research, technical, and political challenges that confront state interests in the design of a state performance accreditation system. The challenges were framed in question form.

In the discussion of the list of challenges, it was stressed that it is absolutely critical that the state, in collaboration with the ESA community and other stakeholders, has in place a strategic plan for the state network that, at a minimum, includes three essential building blocks: (1) a vision statement that expresses the values and beliefs concerning what the ESA network might be for the state system of elementary-secondary education; (2) a mission statement that flows from the vision statement, explains why the network exists, and states the expectations of the network in results-oriented terms; and, (3) a statement of the long-term strategic goals for the network, also in results-oriented terms. Absent these three essential building blocks, the potential benefits of a state performance accreditation system are not likely to be realized.

The paper concludes with a number of conjectures concerning the outcome of the decisions to be made regarding what are viewed to be several of the most critical policy challenges in the tentative list of issues cited. They were presented here to stimulate discussion and provoke debate. The caution is offered that the conjectures will not necessarily apply in all state networks of ESAs. Variations in all facets of the state policy environment in which ESAs function will likely always be true.

Though there will be differences in how states approach the design of a state performance accreditation system, there should be little doubt that most state networks of ESAs will join the small number of existing networks now covered. Clearly the public is relentless in its insistence that all public sector entities be accountable for their performance. It is also clear that substantial refinements have been made, and will continue to be made, for the further development of even more sophisticated ways to hold public sector organizations more accountable.

The authors suggest that it is in the long-term interests of the ESA community to embrace the concept of a state performance accreditation system as a meaningful way to demonstrate for all the potential contributions an ESA network can make in addressing the needs of a state system of elementary-secondary education, and, importantly, be held accountable in doing so. This recommendation holds even should there be a hesitation on the part of state interests to move in this direction. Should this unlikely prospect occur, it is nonetheless in the interests of the ESA community in a state to voluntarily begin the design work leading to the implementation of a performance accountability system. The potential benefits of doing so warrant serious consideration by all those who share the vision that an effective state network of ESAs is an indispensable partner in efforts to bring about improvements in elementary-secondary education regardless of where it takes place—in both metropolitan as well as non-metropolitan areas.

ENDNOTES

1. A recent report by the General Accounting Office (*Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, June, 1996) summarizes several of what the GAO regards to be the most significant of the actions taken in the first half of the decade. Important Congressional action taken in the 1990s cited by the GAO include:

   (1) The Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act of 1990 that established the position of chief financial officers in 24 of the largest federal departments and agencies (that account for approximately 98 percent of the general gross budget). This act requires annual reports "on the financial condition of government entities and the

status of management controls" (p. 7); (2) the Government Management Reform Act of 1994 that added a requirement for the same 24 departments and agencies "to prepare and have audited financial statements for their entire operations" (p. 7); and, (3) the Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996 that requires "that agencies set goals, measure performance, and report on progress in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operations through the use of information technology" (p. 7).

2. A report by Ruppert (1994) for the Education Commission of the States summarized case studies in ten states where attempts were being made to develop student performance measures and other measures of institutional performance as part of the state's post-secondary accountability system. Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, has convened a series of workshops over the past several years to explore the status of the accountability movement in this segment of public education, the most recent one in 1995. The report of the last workshop (*The National Assessment of College Student Learning: State-Level Assessment Activities*, 1996) involved representatives from a cross-section of post-secondary institutions and state policy circles.

3. Material presented here in the discussion of objectives 1, 2, and 3 are taken from a draft of Parts I and II of a concept paper on *The Design of Standards and Performance Measures for Educational Services Agencies* (Stephens, 1997).

4. Perhaps one of the most ambitious, broad-based efforts to establish performance measures in the public sector is that imposed on federal departments and independent agencies as a result of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. The Act specifies a seven-year implementation period. Two recent reports by the General Accounting Office provide important insights on difficulties being experienced in the implementation activities of various federal agencies—many of which are likely to be experienced in the phasing in of a state performance accreditation system (*Managing for Results: Analytic Challenges in Measuring Performance*, 1997; and, *Managerial Accountability and Flexibility Pilot Did Not Work as Intended*, 1997).

5. There are, of course, numerous other potential approaches and sources that could be drawn upon for establishing performance standards and performance measures. These include: the use of absolutes, the development of what some refer to as engineering standards, the use of analysis to establish performance targets (Hatry, 1974; and Cameron & Whitten, 1983).

6. Kaufman and his colleagues (1996), for example, though supportive of benchmarking for the purpose of comparing the processes used by an organization with another leading organization, caution that "this might hold some interesting and subtle traps" (p. 203). They argue that one should first make certain that the objectives of the leading organization are compatible, the processes used by the leading organization are in fact the most effective and efficient, and, importantly, the other organization is not itself improving and one is "not just copying an old and less effective process" (p. 203).

Another potential rich source of standards and performance measures is to be found in the positions taken by various professional associations on what constitutes "good practice" in a particular domain, or one of its components. Ordinarily, standards put forth by professional organizations represent a consensus of the professional community in the specialty area. Ammons (1996), however, offers several concerns on the over dependence of this source in standard setting. On the other hand "these guidelines are sometimes vulnerable to self-serving motives." (p. 285). Further, cautions Ammons: "Typically, single-service standards ... emphasize process over product, or resource input over performance output. Even where standards for a particular specialty focus on performance objectives or prescribe reasonable performance expectations, they do so out of context, with little regard for the full mosaic of services" (p. 285). Several of Levin's (1980) 10 recommendations for use in evaluating cost analysis studies completed by other organizations also serve as valuable cautions on benchmarking.

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AN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM FOR REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS: THE APPROACH IN TEXAS

by
Judy M. Castleberry, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Education Service Center, Region 20
San Antonio, Texas
and
Felipe Alanis, Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner for Programs and Instruction
Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas

In spring 1997, the 75th Texas Legislature approved S.B. 1158 reauthorizing regional education service centers, clearly defining the purposes of the centers, providing a stable revenue stream tied to the Foundation School Program, the state's school funding vehicle, and establishing a system of accountability for the centers. Since the end of the legislative session, executive directors of the service centers and leaders at the Texas Education Agency have worked to put in place the mechanisms to carry out the legislative intent. One of the most challenging and interesting efforts has been focused on the accountability system.

Three sections of the law provide the framework for the system:

Sec. 8.002. Purpose. Regional education service centers shall:
(1) assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system; (2) enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and (3) implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner.

Sec. 8.101. Performance Standards and Indicators. The commissioner shall establish performance standards and indicators for regional education service centers that measure the achievement of the objectives in Section 8.002. Performance standards and indicators must include the following:

(1) student performance in district served;

(2) district effectiveness and efficiency in districts served resulting from technical assistance and program support;

(3) direct services provided or regionally shared services arranged by the service center which produce more economical and efficient school operations;

(4) direct services provided or regionally shared services arranged by the service center which provide for assistance in core services; and

(5) grants received for implementation of state initiatives and the results achieved by the service center under the terms of the grant contract.

Section 8.103. Annual Evaluation. The commissioner shall conduct an annual evaluation of each executive director and regional education service center. Each evaluation must include:

(1) an audit of the center's finances;

(2) a review of the center's performance on the indicators adopted under Section 8.l0l;

(3) a review of client satisfaction with services provided under Subchapter B; and

(4) a review of any other factor the commissioner determines to be appropriate.

During fall 1997, senior staff of the Texas Education Agency, working collaboratively with the executive directors of the education service centers, defined the standards and indicators by which service centers will be evaluated. In addition, a process for use of those standards and indicators was developed which is twofold: 1) provide the basis for the commissioner's performance evaluation of the executive director, and 2) define the content for presentation during the prescribed hearing by the regional board of directors.

For completion of the performance evaluation of each executive director, a form was developed for self-assessment. That form requires the director to rate his/her region/center's performance on each indicator as satisfactory, commendable, or outstanding progress. Following the rating, the executive director provides a brief (100 to 150 words) rationale for the rating.

Listed below are the standards and indicators by which the service centers will be judged:

Standard I. Student performance is increasing within the ESC region.
Indicators:

l. TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) performance within the region is moving toward the 90% standard of excellence in the Texas accountability system.

2. Gaps in TAAS performance among student groups are narrowing.

3. TAAS performance is increasing.

4. Dropout rates are decreasing.

5. Attendance rates are increasing.

Standard II. The ESC assists districts in increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of operations.
Indicators:

1. Efficiency and economy are improving in districts served by ESC technical assistance, program support, and core services.

2. ESC services and regionally shared services arranged by the ESC are improving economy and efficiency of school operations according to results obtained from external client surveys and other evidence.

3. Efficiency and effectiveness of ESC operations are demonstrated in fiscal accountability through appropriately priced programs and services, according to results obtained from external client surveys and other evidence.

Standard III. The ESC advances statewide initiatives in the region for the current biennium.
Indicators:

1. The ESC supports the Texas Reading Initiative (TRI).

2. The ESC supports implementation of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

3. The ESC participates in grant-funded projects to implement state initiatives.

4. The ESC supports the decentralization of authority and responsibility for public education through support to school districts within the region. (As part of the legislatively mandated downsizing of the Texas Education Agency, ESCs have been assigned technical assistance responsibility for specific program areas.)

5. Commitment to employment equity is evident in all ESC operations and initiatives.

The indicators refer to external client surveys, four of which are currently under development. The Texas Education Agency has contracted with the Texas Center for Educational Research for survey development, administration, and analysis of the results with completion expected by late fall.

In the initial cycle of use (December 1997 - January 1998), the self-evaluation (since client survey data were not yet available) and the personal conference with the commissioner of education were very effective in providing structure for the evaluative dialogue. Success stories were shared and areas of continuing challenge were identified.

The next cycle (December 1998) will include access to the external client survey results. Executive directors will consider these responses in the self-evaluation and the commissioner will include discussion of survey results in the evaluative conference.

The process continues with two additional major steps: the local board's use of the commissioner's evaluative feedback and the board's public report on center performance.

Following the evaluative conference, the commissioner provides a written summary of his assessment of the executive director's performance. If the assessment is satisfactory or better, the board is authorized to continue the employment of the executive director. Although the board may conduct a formal evaluation using a locally developed process, the trend appears to be use of the same self-evaluation report provided to the commissioner. Upon completion of the local evaluation with satisfactory results, the board may extend the employment arrangement.

While one might assume that an unsatisfactory assessment at either level might lead to termination of employment, that situation has not yet occurred. If the commissioner and the local board agree, the decision should be easy; however, should they disagree, some tests of the system would surely ensue.

The final step will provide a report to the public on each center's performance on the standards and indicators. Each center's board of directors must conduct a hearing prior to adoption of the budget for the following year; therefore, the hearings will occur for the first time in August 1998.

The accountability system is certainly in the early stages, but it holds promise for being highly effective. It clearly communicates expectations that flow from statutory purposes, and it stretches individuals and centers to exceed the "acceptable" level. The processes ensure face-to-face dialogue, with opportunity for offering and providing support. If continued implementation reflects the integrity and commitment with which the process has begun, it should indeed prove beneficial for the public education system in Texas.

OREGON'S REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES: EVOLUTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY FROM TERRITORIAL COMMISSIONER TO EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

by
James G. Maxwell, Ed.D
Superintendent (Retired)
Lane Education Service District
Eugene, Oregon

In their 160-year history, Oregon's education service districts have had several names including office of county school commissioner, office of county school superintendent, county rural school office, and intermediate education service district. The naming and renaming has, for the most part, been related to modifications made in the functions of the agencies. As functions of the agencies have changed and evolved so has the process for their accountability to the citizens.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In their earliest form, the duties of the regional agency were regulatory and administrative. The primary accountability was to the voters of the region. The county school superintendent was an elective office.

Later in the 19th century, a department of education was instituted within state government. It had responsibility for state level oversight and leadership of public education. The regional agency's role was expanded to provide support for the work of the state agency. Although county school superintendents retained substantial autonomy in conducting their work and remained accountable through the elective process, the level of accountability to a state-level authority was also increased.

During the early part of the 20th century, an additional level of accountability was introduced when county boards of education were created. Initially, these citizen boards were appointed by the elected county school superintendent. Later, the board positions became popularly elected. For a period, both the superintendent and the boards were elected. Later, when the position of superintendent became appointed by the board, the lines of accountability were clarified.

In the early 1960s, Oregon's regional education agencies were transformed from being largely administrative and regulatory entities to largely providers of programs and services. The agencies were renamed intermediate education districts and later, education service districts, to reflect their new roles. The transformation was accompanied by evolving measures of accountability.

The first measure involved accountability for the services provided to local school districts. Each service was subject to an annual sunset provision which involved a super-majority approval process by the member school districts. This was generally called "the resolution process" in reference to its provision that each service or program provided to schools required an affirmative resolution by two-thirds of the boards of the local school districts and that the affirmative two-thirds must represent a majority of the students in the regional service area. A second accountability provision required that each program offered under the resolution process be approved annually by the state superintendent of public instruction. The latter provision was later rescinded.

STATE STANDARDS

In 1977, a state-level accreditation or standardization process was instituted.

Authority. The statutes that currently authorize and govern Oregon education service districts contain a provision which states: "The State Board of Education ... shall establish standards to determine the adequacy of services and facilities provided by the education service districts." The statute states the criteria for the standards: "The State Board shall consider the most economic method of providing services and facilities, the quality of the services and facilities according the best educational standards, and the needs of the students." [ORS 217 (1)] Read in isolation, this section of statute appears to give the state board the primary role in determining the standards for ESDs. However, the statutes also lay down specific rules under which ESDs operate. For example, ORS 334.225 (1) specifies that, "The education service district board shall employ a superintendent who must hold an administrative license as a superintendent." These statutory standards primarily provide direction on how an ESD's internal operations will be conducted and include sections on such matters as fiscal procedures, powers and functioning of the board, and the management of real property. The statutory standards and those adopted by the state board carry equal weight in the standardization process.

Developmental Process. While the state board of education is clearly delegated the responsibility for developing and adopting standards, in practice the board has sought and accepted the advice of a wide spectrum of educators and the general public before any adoptions are completed. During the most recent revisions of the standards, the state board appointed a 25-person committee to work with board representatives in recommending the standards for adoption. The committee was chaired by a superintendent of a local school district and included representatives from the elected boards and staffs of ESDs. The board contracted with a retired educator to provide dedicated staffing for the work of the standards writing committee.

Following completion of the committee's work, the draft standards were circulated throughout the state for suggestions. Formal hearings were held to receive recommendations. Only after a thorough review by interested and affected parties did the board formally adopt the standards.

Characteristics. The standards are formally adopted as a section of the Oregon Administrative Rules (Chapter 581, Division 24). The rules in the division can generally be grouped into four categories:

1. Rules on the internal operations of an ESD. These sections contain requirements in addition to those contained in statute and govern areas such as budgeting and accounting practice and the role of advisors to the board.

2. Rules of how an ESD will relate with its component school districts and with other entities. These sections include rules for determining which services should be provided to local districts and how those services will be evaluated.

3. Rules defining specific services that each ESD will perform. These sections include required programs such as attendance and truancy and assistance to local districts with budgeting and accounting procedures.

4. Rules defining the administration of the standardization process. These rules and the process will be discussed in the following section.

Implementation Process. The state board of education has adopted a two-part process of accumulating information to assure that each ESD is in "substantial compliance with applicable statutes and rules" that constitute the standards.

Annual Report. The first part of the information accumulation process is a report filed annually by each ESD. The content of the report is detailed in a section of the standards, OAR 581-24-226, Assessment and Evaluation of Services.

(1) Each district board shall file by October 31 of each year with the Superintendent of Public Instruction an annual report to include a completed self-appraisal report and a service and performance summary.

(2) To adequately complete the report, the district shall have on file information regarding the process and implementation of an assessment procedure, including: (a) description of the services provided with appropriate documentation of the quantitative data gathered; (b) numerical accounting of district personnel by job description and service area; and (c) statement of operational costs for each service provided.

(3) In addition, the district shall have completed an evaluation of the assessment data in relation to the service goals, and shall have on file: (a) information obtained in the assessment activity; (b) summary of the reports from components (local districts) regarding services provided by the district; and (c) list of deficiencies with plans for correction.

This report serves two important purposes. It provides through an internal review process conducted by each ESD assurances to the state board, the ESD board and ESD constituents that the ESD is in compliance with standards. The reports collectively also provide a body of data that can be referenced in the development of statewide reports about ESD services.

Site Visit. The second part of the information accumulation process is a formal visit to each ESD.

... an on-site evaluation of the district shall be done at intervals not to exceed five years. The evaluation team named by the department (Oregon Department of Education) should use the annual evaluation report, district records, and the on-site evaluations in determining the degree to which these standards are met. [OAR 581-24-210 (3)]

The on-site visit will be conducted by a team chaired by a department staff person with additional members from the department, other education service districts and components ...[OAR 581-24-210 (6)]

Typically, the site visit occurs over a several-month period and includes at least three separate contacts between the site visit team and the ESD. The first contact is a meeting held at the ESD and involves the team leader and key members of the ESD staff. The purpose is to review the process and to have the ESD identify service areas to be given special attention by the team. Following this contact, the team leader recruits a team of three to five educators or board members who have the areas of expertise appropriate to the agency.

The second contact involves only the team leader and the ESD staff. The purpose of this contact is to complete a review of documents that will validate the level at which various standards are met. The team leader reviews district policies, personnel files, the budget, the fiscal audit and related documents and may interview selected staff members regarding the contents of the documents. The intent of this visit is to complete the review of each of the standards that can be met by a document review and to informally notify the ESD of any areas that may need attention.

The third contact involves the entire team over a three to four day period. Its primary focus is on ESD services and the processes used in determining the programs offered, their quality, and the method of evaluation. This contact includes interviews with ESD program staff and with representatives of each component school district. The completion of this contact is the end of the site visit and is the point at which the reporting process described below commences.

In practice, the purpose of the site visit has been expanded beyond assuring that an ESD is in compliance with standards. Through agreements reached between the state department and representatives of ESDs and local school districts, two additional purposes have been written into the procedures manual: (1) "to provide to the ESD technical assistance as needed" and, (2) "to identify and document promising practices." (ODE, Review of Standards, 1997)

The Product. The product of the on-site visit including the review of annual reports is addressed in [OAR 581-24-210 (7)]. "The chair of the team shall, within 30 days of the visit, present to the district a draft report of the team's findings. The district's response must be received by the department not later than 30 days after the district's receipt of the report."

The required reporting process is continued in OAR 581-24-215.

(1) The district's standardization status shall be determined by the state superintendent of public instruction and reported to the district not later than 90 days from the conclusion of the on-site visit. The official classification shall consider the annual report including the self-appraisal, service and performance summary, district records, the on-site evaluation, and the district's response.

(2) The classification shall be: (a) standard district; or (b) substandard district.

In practice, in addition to the information required by standards, the report may include suggestions for modifications to practices or programs, especially in areas that the ESD has requested special attention from the team. It also includes an appendix containing at least two descriptions of promising practices or programs that the ESD and the team believe will be of value and interest to other educators.

Sanctions. The legislature, in addition to requiring the state board of education to establish and implement a system of standards, also requires the board to implement a system of sanctions for ESDs that do not meet the standards.

When the state board determines pursuant to rule that an education service district is substandard, the district designated substandard shall file a plan to meet standards over a specified period of time. The state board may accept, reject, or modify the plan and order the substandard district to comply with the plan as approved by the state board. The state board shall establish by rule appropriate sanctions for noncompliance. [ORS 334.217 (2)]

Two types of sanctions have been adopted by the board.

The board (1) may withhold funds from the state school fund allocation or (2) may merge a substandard district with a contiguous standard district if, after the district has been provided substantial time and technical assistance, (it) has made unsatisfactory progress toward meeting the correction plan, or cannot find, other acceptable alternatives. [OAR 581-24-215 (5)]

In the history of using the standardization process, no ESD has been declared substandard; thus neither sanction has been applied. In part this is because of strong commitments by the state board and the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts (OAESD) that any area of deficiency be identified early and that, once identified, the ESD and the department of education will collaborate to make necessary corrections.

The state board, in cooperation with the ESDs, has also crafted another tool, the standards waiver process, intended to "encourage districts (ESDs) to develop carefully planned pilot or experimental services." When such a service would cause an ESD to be not in compliance with specific standards, it may petition the state board for a waiver from those standards. Generally, however, the board may not grant a waiver for a statutory requirement. The current waiver process has been used only one time since its inception in 1994.

SUMMARY

The accountability process for Oregon's regional education service agencies has evolved over the years. Initially it relied on the wisdom of the citizens to elect a competent official. Today, it is a multifaceted system that includes elected governing boards, annual program approvals by component school districts, and the application of written state standards.

Written standards have been in place for more than 20 years. A major review of the standards occurred in 1994 following amendments to governing statutes. Some changes were made in the content of the standards because of legislated changes in functions of ESDs. No significant changes were made in the overall process with the exception that the required annual report was changed from a format determined locally to one that is standard for all ESDs.

ESDs in Oregon are quite varied both geographically and demographically. They range from Multnomah with a budget of $48 million serving 85,000 students in a 465-square-mile area to Harney with a budget of $2.3 million serving fewer than 1,500 students in an area larger than 10,000 square miles. The state standards and the process for

their administration attempt to address this diversity. While certain operational procedures and a limited number of services are required of all ESDs, a major focus of the standards is on the processes that assure that ESDs and their component districts collaborate in defining service needs, determining which programs will be provided, and evaluating program outcomes.

This emphasis on collaboration extends to determining the content of the standards and the processes for administering them. OAESD has worked in partnership with the state board of education in writing and rewriting the standards. Association members also serve along with state employees on each site visit and in the preparation of the resulting report.

Any success that Oregon has experienced with its regional education service agency accreditation process has been and continues to be strongly related to its acceptance and sense of ownership by all of the affected educational partners and their willingness to be actively involved in its implementation.

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IOWA'S AREA EDUCATION AGENCY ACCREDITATION STANDARDS: MOVING TOWARDS ALIGNMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

by
Judy Jeffrey, administrator
Iowa Department of Education
Des Moines, Iowa

In 1975, Iowa's legislature dissolved the county education system and created 15 area education agencies. Since that time, each agency has responded to federal and state special education legislation and rules, delivered media services to meet the intent of Iowa rules, and created educational services to respond to the needs of local school districts and emerging educational needs. The rules for special education and media services were, in most cases, numerous, comprehensive and specific, while the rules for educational services were few, flexible, and broad. These differences in rules provided opportunities for AEAs to be flexible in service delivery while at the same time led to diversity in the type of educational services available to local school districts across the state.

Over the past 22 years, separate plans for each AEA division were required to be submitted to the Iowa Department of Education. The plans had different timelines, different responses from different divisions in the department, and usually had little coordination and collaboration between AEA divisions and department divisions when plans were formulated and reviewed. Although local school districts, non-public schools, and teacher education preparation programs were either approved or accredited by the state board of education, no such comprehensive review was stipulated in the Code of Iowa for AEAs.

The system just described was not unusual for the times. Separateness was the way we worked in schools. Special education teachers provided services to populations that were usually separated from the rest of the school population, media services were requested from schools with no expectation that technology would be integrated into the school environment, and math, science, and staff development were separate and not expected to be part of the whole. Today, much has changed. School improvement in a comprehensive fashion is now our work. The process of meeting the diverse needs of all students in caring school environments that are integrated, rich with technology, and aligned with community expectations is changing the delivery of services to schools and school districts. It is also the expectation that all of us are accountable, not only to the taxpayers that provide the financial support, but also to the parents, to the community, and most of all to the students.

These expectations, along with others, led to the passage of legislation during spring 1996 requiring the accreditation of AEAs by the state board of education. Accreditation standards and the process of accreditation are now detailed in Chapter 72 of the Iowa Administrative Code. The standards list the requirements for the educational, special education, and media services provided by an AEA.

Programs and services that meet the following standards must be accessible to all accredited public and non-public schools located within the AEA's boundaries:

1. school-community planning that includes methods and processes that assist schools in needs assessment, development of goals, evaluation, and establishing collaborative relationships;

2. professional development that facilitates growth of instructional, administrative, and support personnel through the development of skills, techniques, knowledge, and understanding of educational research and best practices to support school improvement;

3. curriculum development, instruction, and assessment in the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and science that advance research-based methodologies and provide the analysis of student achievement data, establishment of rigorous standards, use of qualitative and quantitative assessment techniques, and integrate technology;

4. special education that implements processes of identification, provision of support and itinerant services, procedures for individualized education programs, evaluation of services, professional development, integration of services, and a process of monitoring school district compliance;

5. instructional media services, which include consultation, delivery of information and resources both physically and electronically, instructional resources to support professional development and teaching and learning, and production and preparation of educational materials; and

6. school technology that provides a plan based on the needs of schools served to further school improvement efforts.

It is clear through the standards that those who receive the services of an AEA should have a great deal of input, not only into the development of the services, but in the evaluation of the services. Indicators of quality included in the rules require that AEA programs and services must address the following: specific student, teacher, and school needs evidenced in local school improvement plans; improvement of student learning evidenced through local school district student performance; improvement of teaching evidenced through the adoption or application of practices, strategies, and information in local school district classrooms and schools which were incorporated in the professional development activities of the AEA; cost efficiency and timeliness; and customer satisfaction.

The accreditation process requires a comprehensive three-year plan that coordinates the services offered by the AEA. Representatives of the department and the AEAs developed a technical assistance manual to assist in the development of the comprehensive plan. Each AEA plan outlines a comprehensive needs assessment, development of programs and services for each required standard with intended results, and provision of data on the quality and effectiveness of the programs and services. The first comprehensive plan for an AEA was filed on March 1, 1998.

To begin the process of accreditation, all AEAs were considered accredited on October 1, 1997. They are expected to continue the accreditation through the implementation of programs and services aligned with the accreditation standards, submission of a comprehensive plan, yearly updates, and demonstration of quality programs and services through the site visit. Site visitations will commence with the 1998-99 school year, with five AEAs visited each year by an accreditation team composed of department staff, peers from other AEAs, and representatives of the school districts served. The team will review the comprehensive plan of the agency and, upon completion of the site visit, determine whether the requirements have been met. Both oral and written exit reports will detail the strengths and weaknesses, if any, for each accreditation standard and will advise the AEA of available resources and technical assistance to enhance the strengths and improve the areas of weakness. The accreditation team will forward a recommendation for accreditation to the director of the Iowa Department of Education for state board consideration.

As programs and services are refined, developed, and implemented to meet the new standards and the needs of schools and school districts, the separateness described earlier should be less evident, with greater equity of services available across the state to local school districts. Because AEAs are an integral part of the state support system to local schools, the standards and accreditation process provide a common framework of AEA programs and services that can be expected by all AEA customers. Although the department and the state board must provide oversight, the accreditation process provides opportunities for collaboration and communication between the state department and the regional support system.

CAN EDUCATORS RESPONSIBLY LICENSE EACH OTHER?

by
Sue Showers, M.Ed.
Professional Development Consultant
and
David P. Moore, M.A.
University of Cincinnati Liaison
Hamilton County Educational Service Center,
Cincinnati, Ohio

THE VISION

Imagine a group of teachers and administrators discussing whether professional development activities are in concert with building and district goals. Imagine a teacher designing a five-year individual professional development plan aligned with her goals, students' goals, and her building's goals. Imagine that teacher meeting with other educators and discussing her professional development plan, having collegial dialogue and obtaining support, and then implementing her goals, designing a portfolio and meeting with her group occasionally. This is what educators in Ohio could be experiencing as Senate Bill 230 is implemented.

THE LAW

Under the 1987 standards, teachers could obtain one of three certificates (provisional, professional, or permanent). To renew a four-year certificate, for example, educators could take six hours of course work or 18 continuing education units and, for each year of experience, the requirement was reduced by one semester hour or three CEUs. Educators could submit any course work to meet the requirement; even real estate courses were acceptable. There was no coherence to credits submitted, no tie to student learning, and renewal was based on seat time.

In October 1996, with the adoption of the new Teacher Education and Licensure Standards, the state board of education initiated a new era of professional development. The standards, which became effective in January 1998, set out a continuum of professional development that begins with preservice education and continues throughout an educator's career, with the intent of continuous professional growth. In the future, a five-year license will be issued instead of the various certificates. Licenses will require that an educator complete six hours of semester credit, 18 CEUs or the equivalent of 180 hours of other professional development activities. Educators must submit a five-year plan based on the needs of the district, building, students, and himself or herself. No credit will be given for years of experience.

These plans will be approved by a Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC). LPDCs were established to ensure that professional development would align with the ongoing continuous improvement of each school district and building. Each district or consortium of districts in the state of Ohio must have at least one LPDC committee. The committee must be made up of three classroom teachers and two administrators. If the district has a bargaining unit, the bargaining unit selects the teacher representatives. A district may choose to have more than one committee; for example, each building could have an LPDC committee or committees could be developed for grade level or subject areas. It will be the responsibility of the LPDC to approve the plan and the activities within the plan for an educator to receive a license. The activities in the plan may be broader than course work and CEU programs. Many forms of job-embedded staff development may now be used for credentialing.

THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITIES

The establishment of a local professional development committee offers many opportunities. It allows districts to be much more engaged in the licensure and professional development of their teachers. By requiring teachers to align their professional development with building, district, student, and their own needs, professional development is intended to produce higher student achievement. The broader definition of professional development includes alternatives, such as study groups, collegial coaching, and action research. It encourages a different climate in schools, which engages educators in thoughtful, meaningful, and reflective activities about their practice and students.

As with all opportunities there are challenges. The configuration of the LPDC, which requires a majority of teachers, has been a major concern to superintendents and other administrators, along with the provision that the teachers association chooses the teachers on the committee if a bargaining unit exists. Another challenge is finding the time for committees to review and approve activities.

HAMILTON COUNTY PILOT

In March 1997, the Ohio Department of Education, through a competitive grant process awarded $50,000 grants to 21 pilot sites in the state. The purpose of the pilots was to work with the department to pilot the LPDC process and assist in the development of standards, policies, and procedures for the operation of LPDC. The Hamilton County Educational Service Center (HCESC) formed a consortium with eight school districts and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to pilot the process. Our work consisted of several facets. We began in May 1997 with a planning meeting with the consortium to explore the new standards. It became evident from the beginning that it was a very ambiguous project. Other than the statute there was little other guidance on which to rely.

As we thought about the project, it seemed that to develop guidelines and procedures, districts needed to have a good conceptual framework for professional development. In June, the consortium spent two days studying the National Staff Development Council's *Standards for Staff Development*, learning the five models of staff development suggested by NSDC, and thinking about how to begin the process in individual districts. The NSDC standards, developed in 1994, provide guidelines on implementing effective staff development. The standards help to create the vision for effective staff development for all educators. All of the participating districts had similar needs for training, but each district wanted to develop its own policies and guidelines. In August, the consortium met again and studied the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), which describes the stages that individuals go through as they face change. CBAM helped participants to understand that when individuals are confronted with a change, they pass through predictable stages (personal, management, and impact concerns) and that there are specific strategies to assist people. At this meeting, we also generated another list of unanswered questions that we would work on getting answered at the next state pilot meeting.

By September, some districts had created information brochures about the new licensing standards and had begun to recruit educators to go through the pilot process. It has been difficult to recruit people to participate in the pilot program because, although the standards are in effect after January 1999, educators can have one grace renewal under old standards.

As part of the ongoing work of the consortium, quarterly information/update sessions have focused on major subject areas and national recommendations for that content. One of the concerns that has been voiced by content experts in our ESC was how the LPDC would be knowledgeable about the various content areas.

Another component of our consortium work has been designating a professional development specialist from each district. The specialists meet once a month to discuss individual district concerns and issues, develop suggested forms and guidelines, study additional research about professional development, and solve problems. This group allows us to have good communication between the districts and the HCESC. At its monthly meetings, this group brings all the pilot forms, guidelines, etc., so that each district can learn from the other districts. Another major task of this committee has been to develop guidelines for the alternative activities that will be able to be used in the future.

Still another component of our project has been to link with the University of Cincinnati's research and evaluation department to gather data and to produce a case study of the consortium work. A pre- and post-survey based on the NSDC standards was administered in June and will be administered again in May to determine if pilot sites changed and broadened their perception of professional development. Mid-year evaluations indicated that participating districts felt that they had been successful in setting up the LPDC, its processes and procedures, communicating the processes and procedures within the district, and piloting the process. Interestingly sharing beyond the district was seen as the most important facilitator, followed by teamwork and particular committee processes.

The above summary describes the work with our 10 districts in the pilot and our leadership efforts with them. In addition, our ESC has provided leadership at the state and regional level. As the director of the project and as past president of Staff Development Council of Ohio, Sue Showers was asked to work with the state as they developed the guidelines and procedures that will be distributed to the 624 districts in Ohio. The state has also held regional meetings in collaboration with the regional professional development center and the project director presented several of those meetings in collaboration with a certification representative. The project director also conducted workshops for the Ohio Educational Service Center Association, Ohio School Board Association, Staff Development Council of Ohio and Ohio Education Association, Ohio Personnel Directors, and other pilot sites about the process, the NSDC standards, and models of effective professional development.

Our ESC pilot has led in the sharing of information about the work of our pilot in our area through phone consultation and dissemination of draft guidelines. We have also created and delivered one-day workshops focusing on the future directions in professional development and the new licensure standards.

Model Building

Another facet of this project has been the "portfolio pioneers." As we worked with this project at various levels (state, regional, local) it was clear that there were many visions of the LPDC concept and different concepts about the ways individual plans could be developed. We recruited four teachers and they in turn recruited a project director to begin to develop some model portfolios that might be representative of the process. Our goal was to set an example of what we considered to be best practice to give a model for individual plans and portfolios. We have done research on portfolio development and have met on a monthly basis to share our work and thinking about the process. We also set as one of our goals to present our portfolio process at the next state Teaching and Learning Conference about our learnings to date.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the pilot year, several things have guided the work. From the beginning, we have viewed this as an ongoing learning and continuous improvement project. We have worked hard to develop an open communication system between the districts and encourage the sharing of documents, materials, etc. Spending time at the beginning to help pilot members build a solid conceptual framework about effective professional development was crucial to the work. Members agree that spending time developing the conceptual base allowed them to move forward with the project and feel that they were creating policies and procedures that support effective professional development. Perhaps the most important stimulus to our work in the pilot has been the vision for what this could mean for both students and educators in the state and sharing that vision with as many people as possible.

ONGOING ROLE OF HCESC

There are more than 500 districts, 13 of which in our service area, that were not involved in the pilot. This provides opportunities for leadership by our ESC and other ESCs in the state. In the future, HCESC will continue to work with the pilot districts. The professional development specialists have expressed the desire to continue working after the pilot. Another role for ESCs will be to continue to provide training for both pilots and non-pilots on effective staff development, models of staff development, teamwork, consensus building, goal planning, and portfolio

development. Another possible role will be to facilitate the establishment of LPDCs for consortium of agencies, such as Special Education Regional Resource Centers and private schools. Finally, because the state will no longer be issuing or tracking CEUs, our office will become a source for the issuance of CEUs and the necessary record keeping.

In conclusion, the participation of the ESC in LPDC work will increase the probability that job-embedded staff development and the professionalization of the teaching force will occur as a result of the new licensure standards. The potential now is for ESCs to take the leadership to assist, encourage, and identify models for real improvement in the teacher licensure system. However, if leadership does not come from the state and the ESCs, some districts will do the minimum required by law and the potential of the new standards will never be reached. Under this scenario, districts simply replace the state as credentialing agents. Ohio is one of the few states to give responsibility to educators to be involved in each other's licensure. This is a dramatic step in the professionalization of teaching. If Ohio can demonstrate higher quality professional development and improved collaboration between teachers and administrators, then it will serve as a model for other states to reform licensure.   The vision that we shared in the beginning of this article will be more likely achieved through working with ESCs to define high quality professional development, set appropriate standards, and continue to develop successful models.

THE GALILEO CONSORTIUM:
AN ESA LINK TO LOCAL DISTRICTS
AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by
Frederica C. Frost, Ph.D., Consultant,
Joyce Fouts, Ed.D., Consultant,
Michael P. Flanagan, Ed. Spec., County Superintendent
Wayne County RESA
Detroit, Michigan
and
Sharon C. Dodson, Ph.D., Research Associate
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Motivated by mutual concerns and the belief that multiple perspectives would enhance their problem solving, five local superintendents, two ESA superintendents, and two community college presidents discussed challenges facing their organizations. They asked what could make a difference and expressed their frustrations with the slow pace of change. Their concerns covered a broad range of issues:

- A community college president stated that research should investigate new ways of teaching and learning that reach beyond the instructor.
- A K-12 superintendent wanted to open the entire high school to change.
- An ESA superintendent wanted to create new alliances between educational institutions to facilitate systemic reform.
- A K-12 superintendent was concerned about the relatively few numbers of people applying for principalships.
- An ESA superintendent expressed a desire to reduce transportation costs for school districts.

This CEO group met regularly over a two-year period to discuss their concerns[1]. Finally, they realized the common thread of their dialogue: a desire to develop leadership with the potential to address their current problems as well as challenges not yet envisioned.

This article summarizes how a small group of ESA superintendents, local superintendents, and community college presidents designed a vision that ultimately encompassed leadership development, systemic change, and inter-organizational collaboration.

THE CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

In collaboration with John Burkhardt from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the CEO group started by asking a seminal question: "What is effective leadership? " Although Warren Bennis (1989) has asserted that leadership is "the most highly researched topic in the behavioral sciences," the concept remains elusive. Many models of leadership offer tantalizing theories and assumptions, for example:

- Thomas Sergiovanni (1992) suggests two reasons for our continuing lack of understanding of leadership in educational settings: "We have separated the hand of leadership from its head and its heart ... and we have separated the process of leadership from its substance."
- Warren Bennis (1989) believes courage is essential: "Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing."
- Robert Greenleaf's servant leadership model (Frick and Spears, 1996), based on the assumption that human beings have the ability to act with other than their own self-interest, portrays the leader as a servant to the values and ideas of the organization and its community.

- Robert Kelly (1992) sees followership as both a precursor and an essential ingredient of effective leadership. In fact, he states that effective following is really the same as leadership, as both leaders and followers act on the basis of ideas, values, and commitments.
- The idea of leaders as followers is not new; 19th century French politician Alexandre Ledru-Rollin said, "There go my people. I must find out where they are going so I can lead them." Similarly, Benjamin Disraeli, the 19th century English prime minister, said, "I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?"

Theories regarding the ideal relationship of the leader to the organization also vary widely. Depending upon the model, leaders stand positioned at either the top or the bottom of an organizational pyramid, at the center of a wheel, or at the center of a single line. Sometimes they're invisible, "Leaders are best when people don't know they exist ... a good leader talks little when the work is done, the aim fulfilled" (author unknown).

Collectively, the CEO group shared a discomfort with both the differences and adequacy in current theories of leadership as well as methods used to prepare people for educational leadership positions. Furthermore, they realized that their organizations needed to be receptive to creating and nurturing leaders. One conclusion appeared clear: they needed a new model that would address not only the development of leaders but a process for restructuring the entire organization as well.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Patrick Dolan's (1994) model for structural reform appeared to offer an ideal means for providing both support for developing leaders and a vehicle for total system reform.

Dolan suggests inverting the traditional organization pyramid using board, union, and superintendent working as a team, "torqueing" against weaknesses in the system while providing employees with more information, control, respect, and a chance to grow. According to Dolan (1994), the following comprise the major parameters of change:

- A pre-existing social structure is always in place when you begin.
- The system will resist change in fundamental and powerful ways.
- Each organization's system is unique and requires careful attention to its particular characteristics, history, relationships, and leadership patterns.
- Although they may be unique, organizations nevertheless share fundamental attributes; understanding these generic characteristics is a good place to begin reform efforts.

According to Dolan, creating pressure toward systemic movement is accomplished by:

- Understanding the system in place and its dysfunctions.
- Designing the scaffolding or temporary structures that require opposite behavior or processes.
- Creating opportunities for key leadership to reflect together on these activities.

Dolan's model defines the board, superintendent, and union as the primary power bases of an educational organization; all three must be engaged in any successful reform effort. Dolan suggests the establishment of an oversight committee with representation from these three groups to create a safe forum for engaging in dialogue, devising solutions, and testing new plans.

Building on Dolan's guidelines, the CEOs developed a leadership academy that would operate in concert with organizational change.

DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

The CEOs selected the name the Southeastern Michigan Galileo Consortium for two reasons. First, Galileo challenged our assumptions about the solar system, and, second, the probe that bears his name continues to challenge our minds and spirits as it explores our universe[2].

In spite of the Inquisition, Galileo's ideas survived. In order that the ideal of public education should survive as well, the CEOs started with three assumptions:

- Recognize instructors as leaders in their classrooms, communities, and campuses or schools.
- Redesign public education systems as learning organizations to successfully accept appropriate and constructive forms of leadership.
- Establish models of cooperation among education organizations for greater flexibility and effectiveness in meeting student needs.

With the dual goals of transforming both leaders and organizations, the CEOs envisioned an academy that would differ from traditional leadership development programs in three ways. It would:

- Provide support for developing leaders within their own organizations.
- Establish a structure and strategy for effecting organizational change.
- Build on collaboration with other education organizations to strengthen fledgling reform efforts.

ORGANIZATION FOR CHANGE

The CEOs organized a structure for supporting reform as shown in Figure 1. In lieu of a director, the project was designed by a five-member Facilitation Team consisting of staff, board, and union representatives from a cross-section of the consortium.

Other structural characteristics include:

- A Consortium Board representing union, superintendent, and board of education from all nine agencies. Their role consists of setting direction for the project.
- Academy participants, i.e., "leaders," work with their local improvement teams and serve as liaisons to the facilitation team and consortium board.

Figure 1. Southeastern Michigan Galileo Consortium Model for Leadership Development and Organizational Reform (Dolan, 1996).

- A stakeholders group composed of approximately six representatives of top administration, board, and union from each organization. The group meets regularly to continue the exploration of systemic change and mutual collaboration.
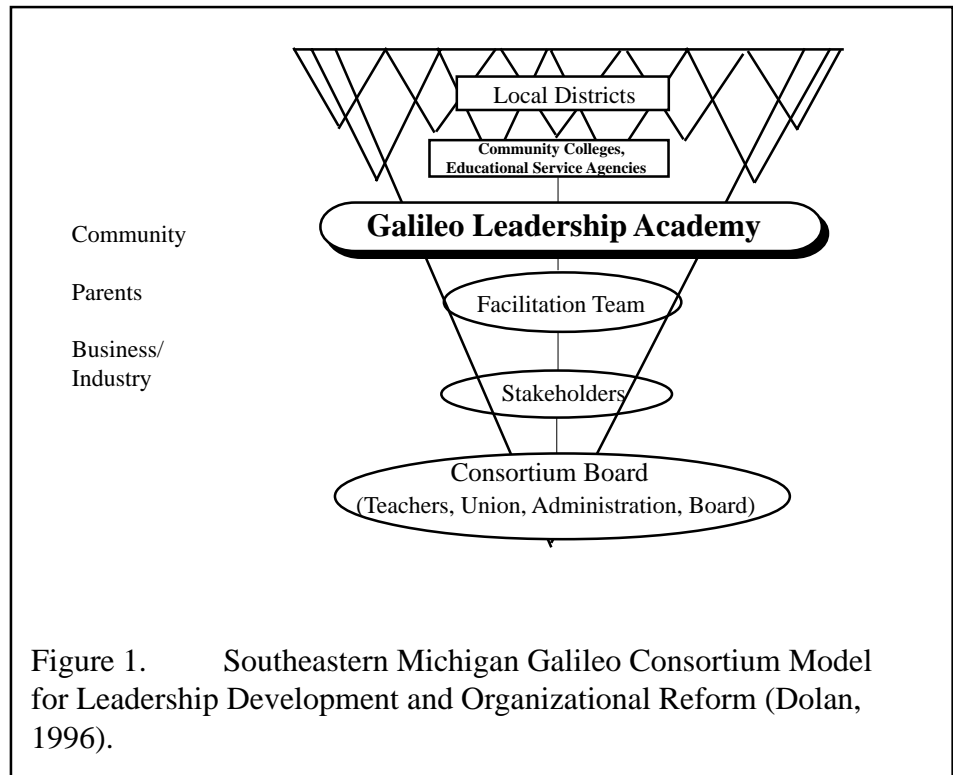
The entire evaluation process, including monitoring and feedback, supports the philosophy of continuous learning and adjustment through the employment of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The Wayne County Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) staff provide the operational leadership and coordination for the project. As the initial euphoria subsided and the grinding work began, the ESA role gained

importance as personnel in local districts and community colleges found it necessary to address other priorities. It is this sustaining function provided by the ESA that appears to make the difference in the project's ongoing success.

ACADEMY CURRICULUM

The Galileo Leadership Academy provides a forum for advanced level dialogue with the following components:

- Mentors and protégés connect leaders to their own organization.
- Curriculum mastery includes knowledge of the profession, inter- and intrapersonal skills, and systems thinking.
- Participants are part of an area-wide network,
- Change strategies are applied both within and across consortium agencies.

The overall goal for academy leaders focuses on their working effectively to make changes within their organizations by:

- taking leadership roles in work teams,
- serving as master, or lead, instructors,
- serving as staff resource persons,
- championing new initiatives,
- serving as liaisons between the school and the community,
- engaging in action research, and
- adopting the role of a true leader through stewardship and community building.

Academy leaders examine issues such as leadership knowledge and skills, systemic organizational change, learning organizations, brain research, strengthening society and education through diversity, and technology.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Beginning in summer 1997, 70 educators from the nine consortium organizations began the two-year academy program. Evidence that these activities are producing results comes from the participants who report a number of personal and organizational impacts. They indicate changes in the way they think, what they do, how they feel about themselves, and in their interactions with others. A total of 104 statements about personal changes were made by 94% of academy participants. Institutional effects noted by 65% included reforms in communications systems, the process of decision making, and the laying of groundwork for future changes.

Reform in one K-12 district is described by C. Robert Maxfield, superintendent of the Farmington Public Schools in Farmington, Michigan. He credits the project with serving as a catalyst for change through the definition of teacher leadership in conjunction with a reexamination of communication and decision making across the organization. Maxfield cites as examples, "the role of the nine Galileo leaders in facilitating a district-wide dialogue on elementary restructuring; an ongoing series of meetings among board of education members, union leaders, and central administration; and a serious commitment to pursue a collaborative approach to collective bargaining."

Consortium board members have discovered how difficult it is to cooperate and collaborate with each other, and this may be the biggest lesson learned so far. Although all nine organizations focus on the broad goal of learning, their cultures and goals differ significantly. Cooperative projects between the K-12 districts and community colleges thus far have included early college enrollment for high school students and sharing staff resources. However, the potential of ESAs to serve as conduits may spark further organizational links between community colleges and local districts as inter-organizational collaboration is developed and formalized.

The collaboration and cooperation components will be explored more fully in the future as the second cohort of leaders enrolls in summer 1999.

As academy leaders develop and consortium organizations adapt to change, they are forming a kind of interpersonal dynamic analogous to Peter Senge's (1992) definition of an effective team: nine organizations together able to do more than any one alone.

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ENDNOTES:

1. The group includes Marlene Davis, Southfield Public Schools; Michael Flanagan, Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency; James Geisler, Walled Lake Community Schools; George Keith, Oakland Community College; Emmett Lippe, Novi Community Schools; C. Robert Maxfield, Farmington Public Schools; Richard McDowell, Schoolcraft College; James Redmond, Oakland Intermediate School District; Leonard Rezmierski, Northville Public Schools; John Burkhardt, W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

2. We think of Galileo as a scientist and a heretic, but one who recanted. Was he a leader?   Actually, Galileo continued to lead, but without formal power. He continued his earlier, noncontroversial studies of mechanics and the laws of motion, publishing a book that laid the foundations of modern physics and engineering. This conceptual framework and laws of motion could be used later to provide more effective proof of the earth's rotation around the sun than any he had been able to formulate earlier (Finocchiaro, 1989).

ESA CONSORTIA FOR NETWORKING
USING THE INTERNET

by
Thomas F. Kelly, Ph. D.
Regional Manager (retired), Metro Effective Schools Consortium Network
Western Suffolk BOCES
Dix Hills, New York

As school improvement efforts continue across our country, we are learning a great deal about successful programming for students. Also, the ability to communicate effective innovations quickly and efficiently is becoming increasingly important. The New York State Effective Schools Consortia Network (ESCN), initiated in1979, has become a highly efficient and cost beneficial method of identifying successful programs and sharing information about them throughout the state.

The benefits of this consortia network are substantial to the 41 ESAs that make up the network and their 740 constituent school districts. By bringing schools together for staff development or any other common need, the cost per school drops substantially. By systematically sharing (networking) information, the best programs, trainers, planning materials, and other resources are easily made available to New York State's 4,100 schools. Effort, time, and money aren't wasted recreating wheels.

The structure of the ESCN was established in New York by the State Education Department acting through educational service agencies, the 41 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). The state is organized into five consortia regions. Each region has a regional manager and about eight BOCES as well as one large city school district and a non-public school representative. The superintendent of each BOCES, a city school district representative and a non-public school representative act as a regional Executive Committee that governs the consortium in each area. The Executive Committees meet four to six times per year.

Each superintendent designates one staff member to work with the regional manager for purposes of school improvement. Since many BOCES already offer services such as staff development, curriculum development, planning, and other programs, this network pools their expertise. Services not available directly through some of the smaller BOCES now become available to their component districts through the network.

The five regional managers meet monthly with the State Education Department Office of School Improvement. Thus, the entire state is effectively networked for school improvement program ideas, methods, and materials. New developments are shared easily and quickly.

Any state that has an educational service agency delivery system could replicate the effective schools consortia for school improvement and other school services. The consortia presently shares program information for staff development, curriculum, planning, employee assistance programs, and a wide variety of other school services. Once the network is in place, its potential uses for program sharing are unlimited. The ESCN has a web site that lists resources available to schools and can assist with all aspects of reform as well as traditional school concerns. A similar site could be easily replicated by an individual ESA or area consortia. The web site can be found at http://nt.lhric.org/escn.

Twenty years of operation indicates that the ESAs find the consortia mutually beneficial. The turf issues that frequently impede interagency cooperation have been successfully overcome. The consortia is a win - win operation. Each BOCES has exclusive right to provide services to its school constituents while having access to the resources of all BOCES. Each BOCES broadens its market for services by being able to offer them through any other BOCES that does not offer a particular service.

The New York State Education Department has been diminishing in size dramatically over the last decade. This process has been accelerating recently. The effect has been the devolution of ever increasing responsibilities to the ESAs. In turn, the ESAs have not generally been able to expand their staffs to any significant degree. Indeed, most have also been downsizing. The consortia has enabled the ESAs to expand many services to their constituent school districts.

Systematic interaction and sharing between ESAs and the districts they serve greatly benefit all involved. Savings from pooling resources and training programs greatly exceed the relatively small cost of the Consortia, which involves one professional and one clerical staff member in each of the five regions in New York State. These positions originally were funded through school improvement grants. The state education department subsequently found them to be so useful in school improvement efforts that they are now a permanent item in the department budget.

Since resources for staff development are increased through the network, staff development programs and budgets have increased in almost all of the BOCES. Although New York has a few small BOCES that don't have their own staff development programs, these smaller entities can now can provide access to quality programs to their constituent school districts via the network. This is done in two ways:

1. By sharing information on effective programs, the network provides far more information than individual ESAs and school districts could identify on their own. The consortia provides far greater awareness and use of existing resources.

2. By opening many training sessions to schools beyond its individual component school districts, each ESA generates more revenue to support programs. Sometimes this makes the difference between being able to afford a program and not having access to it.

Numerous programs have already been shared through the network. A few examples include the following:

1. The Comprehensive School Improvement Planning Process, validated by the New York State Education Department, has been delivered to hundreds of schools all across the state.

2. Needs assessment surveys for planning and assessment developed by the consortia have been used by more than 4,000 schools.

3. The network effectively trained more than 5,000 fourth grade teachers to holistically score a new fourth grade state writing test.

Programs can be shared in a variety of ways:

1. A successful staff development program in one part of the state can be replicated in another. For example, the program trainers travel to another BOCES, which handles all program logistics and invites interested constituent districts to attend the training session.

2. Turnkey trainers can be trained in each BOCES to deliver a particular program. These can be BOCES or constituent district staff. These individuals will then train in their own BOCES and/or local districts. For example, BOCES recruited district staff with expertise in writing can carry out the holistic scoring training mentioned above.

3. A BOCES with a unique program can open it up to attendance from school districts in other BOCES that do not wish to provide the program themselves. Thus, one BOCES might have school districts from up to 41 service agencies attend its programming although it is more common that proximate BOCES usually constitute most the audience.

4. All BOCES contribute programs, practices, and resources to the consortia web site. This causes greater participation in programs in each service agency and makes these programs known and available to any other BOCES that wants to use them.

Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, has observed that successful organizations of the future will be those that learn new ways to cooperate and make maximum use of limited resources, that is to "think win - win." Educational service agencies are the ideal organization to create such a win - win network.

RURAL, REMOTE, AND UNDERSERVED

by
Bruce D. Vilders
Professional Development Center
Northwest Educational Service District 189
Mount Vernon, Washington

It figures that the guy who is most frightened by heights and water would be given the new job of flying out to the islands over the ocean. The term "white knuckler, " an expression never heard before, now meant something very real, as the wind-tossed small aircraft bore down on a gravel and mud island airstrip. My hands had a death grip on the door handles. Where was that dry, safe desk job I thought I had just landed? The bush pilot looked somewhat nonchalant, which didn't add to my sense of life-threatening desperation. All this just to go visit a student teacher?!

Nine years later, my job has never lost its sense of adventure. It started out as an experimental project by the state of Washington. Its goal was to have five of the nine educational service districts (ESDs) help state universities place student teachers in rural, remote, and underserved school districts. This would allow local school districts who did not fall into traditional, university placement service areas to host student teachers. It would also allow interns to have an opportunity to try teaching in a rural or remote classroom or, in many cases, to be able to go home to live, saving money on rent. The local districts, for their part, would have an intern that often brought new ideas and always a rush of energy. It also gave the remote districts underserved by the universities, a long-term look at a potential new employee, one who at the end of the internship would have a real feel for living in a remote area, thereby offering better odds at new-teacher retention.

An area designated as "rural" or "remote" is not hard to find in the state of Washington. It is as large and geographically diverse a state as can be found anywhere. Its school districts are located among the snowcapped Cascade mountains, on the wind-whipped San Juan Islands in the Pacific Ocean, in rolling farm country, or on huge stretches of desert in the eastern part of the state.

Traditionally, the state's universities have taken good care of their interns, usually placing them in local school districts within a 75 -mile driving radius of the campus. The larger teacher education schools have satellite offices as well, often targeting the urban areas. But in the late 1980s a state senator had a constituent whose daughter wanted to come home to live and do her student teaching locally rather than 350 miles away, where the university was located. It couldn't be done. No university supervisor was available nor was the school positioned to place an intern that far away. To the senator it didn't make sense that the university was so localized in its placement. Thus, a program idea was born.

But even if the state legislature provided the money, who would be qualified and geographically positioned to help place, monitor, and evaluate the interns? Enter the educational service districts. The nine ESDs were already situated throughout the state, and they were already acting on many different levels as a liaison for local school districts, state government, and universities. It was a natural. Or so it seemed.

Many state universities immediately saw the potential benefits of the student teacher pilot project (STPP), as the program was called. They would be able to place interns in areas heretofore inaccessible to them. Their traditional school sites were sometimes overutilized with interns who were not always welcomed with enthusiasm. This new program would place interns where none had gone before, and the state would help pay for it! Other universities balked, not wanting to give up their traditional roles, citing concerns over jurisdiction loss, inability to oversee quality control, or even a potential loss of supervisor jobs. Thus, some universities willingly joined in and took advantage of the help while others held back, either joining later or never really becoming involved.

For Northwest ESD 189, located in the most northwesterly corner of the state, covering five counties (two being island counties and one very mountainous county) and serving 35 school districts (145,000 students), it meant that small planes, ferry boats, and long car rides through mountain passes were to become the norm, not the exception. It was a pleasant new role for the ESD since it brought interns into school settings that welcomed them with open arms and allowed future teachers to be introduced to the many resources an educational service agency can provide.

For the ESD it was also an important job and a veritable link to the future. The student teacher who wanted to experience a remote placement, or who came from a remote area and wanted to teach near home, now had the opportunity to do so. It turned out to be a win - win situation for everyone involved. To address the colleges' concerns over quality control and oversight, the ESD used university forms and procedures specific to the institution with which they worked. Starting in 1989, the ESD representative became a participant in a variety of university field services planning committees. In a very short time, the ESD representatives were an integral part of the universities' tactical plan to service their student teachers. Communications between the ESDs and universities developed trust and good working relationships. Visits to university campuses to interview potential student interns and meet with college faculty insured the blending of theory and practice. A strong collaborative partnership has developed over time. Northwest ESD 189, one of the five ESDs involved in the program, now has 12 to 15 interns per semester representing multiple state universities.

Nine years later, having placed, monitored, and helped start the careers of more than 200 young adults in the Northwest ESD 189 region alone, I can say that it has been a wild but very worthwhile ride. Interns - turned - teachers continue to stop by to say "Hello" and use ESD services, often voicing gratitude for the foresight of a senator and a state legislature for the "rural and remote" program. I guess maybe all those bumpy airplane landings, wave-tossed boat rides, and long drives just might have helped.