Perspectives

A Journal of Research and Opinion About Educational Service Agencies

ESAs ADJUST TO FUTURE SHOCK

Perspectives Credits

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by
Lee Warne
Executive Director, AESA

One of the truly great things about educational services agencies is their breadth of high quality services. My visits to many states this past year has taught me that AESA needs to connect these many visionary programs to others across the country who do what we do. This issue of *Perspectives* helps to perform that service.

This volume of *Perspectives* has an in-depth study that was originally begun as a book about how ESAs around the country are breaking service delivery paradigms. The authors have used quite a number of our member agencies to demonstrate this. Yet we know these are just samplings of what is happening in our country. We need to thank the authors for their hard work and dedication to ESAs and the services we deliver.

Also included is an article about lobbying on behalf of ESAs from someone who did it for 30 years. This reflection is packed with good information and ideas that surely can help us all. Our thanks to the author and all who work to represent ESAs and the important work we do.

The unique nature of this issue parallels the process that ESAs use to adapt to the ever-changing needs of education. We adapt, modify, expand and re-invent what needs to be done in order to help students achieve. Let us always keep that inventive entrepreneurial approach to the programs we deliver as we seek to improve the work of ESAs in today's educational environment.

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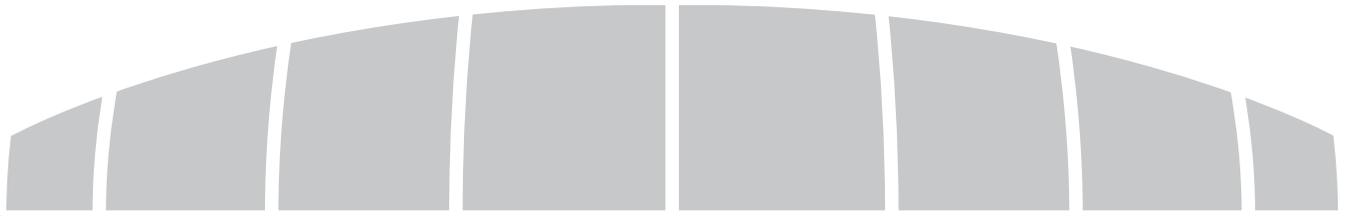
Introduction

This issue of *Perspectives* is somewhat different from previous ones. Ordinarily we have published manuscripts from authors from around the country, aggregating several of them around a single theme if possible. We had originally planned to follow the same practice this year, but circumstances altered that plan.

A group of writers with rich experience in the work of ESAs contemplated writing a book about how selected agencies were effectively adapting to the rapidly changing circumstances largely brought about by a revolution in technology that was transforming the manner in which services could be delivered to staff, students, support workers, and school board members in local districts. These agencies were also expanding services to respond to needs of students and adults brought on by difficult economic circumstances and their effects on family life of children and adults in many American communities. They were building creative partnerships within the education community and with a whole range of entities within the larger community, both for-profit and non-profit.

This was a laudable goal, but the lack of funding proved an impediment requiring that the dimension of the project be significantly reduced. As editor of *Perspectives,* I decided that the project could be accomplished in a meaningful way by being published in our journal. Since the project had been under development for over a year, no prospective authors needed to be disappointed by being denied a publication opportunity for this year's version of the journal since we so advised potential authors of our plans. We have also included one article in this issue, not part of the project, that treats a subject never discussed in this publication in 17 years of its existence, lobbying on behalf of ESAs and thereby on behalf of local districts.

Since the dimensions had to be reduced from a book-length project, the subjects that could be covered also had to be reduced. Therefore, only two subjects are featured in the study: teacher and other staff training that could be delivered partially or completely through the use of technology resources, and new delivery systems for service agencies that are built on partial or complete coordination among service agencies either in a region or throughout the state.

One of the intractable problems the authors faced in designing a book-length study was identifying where the precedent-breaking ESAs might be found. The original plan to find such agencies by seeking nominations from around the country did not work. Therefore, what is featured in this study is a representative sample of submissions submitted in our original plan to write a book as well as the work of agencies known to the authors. They freely admit that this is an imperfect way to create a valid sample, but it was the only way available to gather worthwhile examples that would be useful to the readers of the journal. Though it is

certain that there are many other precedent-breaking projects going on around the country, the authors are confident that the examples cited in this study are deserving of the attention of readers.

The editorial board, the editor and the authors your solicit responses, positive or negative, to this project.
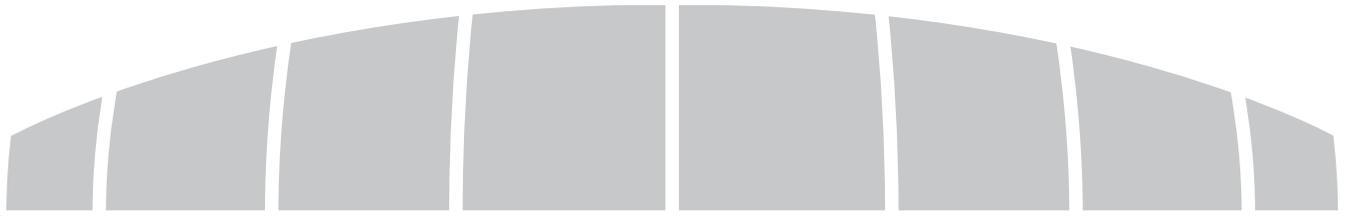
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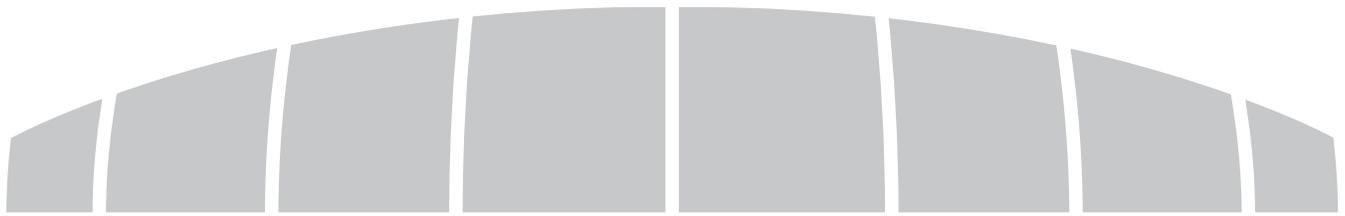
Creating the Future of ESAs:
Breaking Service Delivery Paradigms

By
Hobart Harmon
William G. Keane
Susan Leddick
E. Robert Stephens
Brian Talbott

Study Objectives

Educational service agency-type organizations (ESAs) have existed in many states for decades. Many have been an integral part of a state's infrastructure for elementary-secondary education. Most have been deeply engaged in school improvement efforts, broadly defined, as the evolving construct "school improvement" has generally been defined over recent periods. The expectation that an ESA will provide assistance to local entities in the latter's efforts to improve student performance is common in most state authorizing legislation. So too is the common expectation that an ESA will provide its services and programs in an efficient way.

"It is problematic, however, that the historical rationale for the continued use of the concept of an ESA will be sufficient to sustain enthusiastic support for them from state legislatures and local school districts."

Some of the factors that have given rise to the growth of ESAs, in both number and responsibilities, over the decades have remained constant such as the relatively large number of rural, small school districts; the need for school districts to create a critical mass of students to provide, for example, an adequate menu of services and programs for students with special needs; or the need to take advantage of economies of scale in the provision of costly programs or staff specialists. In recent decades there has also been an increase in the participation of larger enrollment urban and suburban districts for many of these same reasons. These examples of contributing factors that help explain the growth of ESAs will likely continue. It is problematic, however, that the historical rationale for the continued use of the concept of an ESA will be sufficient to sustain enthusiastic support for them from state legislatures and local school districts.

The overriding objective of this study is to contribute to a strengthening of ESAs organizations that are to be found in a majority of states as they function in rapidly changing socioeconomic, political, and educational environments. This will be done by identifying and examining a small number of leading-edge exemplary/innovative programs and practices currently being offered by ESAs that are creating exceptional value for local clients and customers, and in many cases, state and the federal government as well.

Members of the national ESA community will then be in a position to benchmark their own ESA programs and practices. In this way the study will contribute to raising expectations, encourage organizational learning, and promote networking within the ESA community. Moreover, state and national policymakers will benefit by having access to best practices that can contribute to their school improvement agendas. The agendas of the research community will also gain by having a rich pool of case studies to tap as it strives to add to the knowledge base of how to affect needed change in education, especially the need to strengthen the capacity of the infrastructures of state systems of elementary-secondary education.

This version is written in lieu of what the five authors had initially planned would be a book-length presentation of a number of case studies of exemplary/innovative programs and services offered by ESAs that hold membership in the Association of Educational Service Agencies. Unfortunately the response to several attempts to secure nominations from the field that satisfied our criteria of what would be considered for inclusion in the book did not generate sufficient examples to warrant a book-length treatment of the subject. This thin response occurred despite the authors' knowledge of a long list of truly outstanding work being done in agencies all across the nation. We do note that some of the programs/services described herein were obtained via the original nomination process

Nonetheless, we believe the scaled down descriptions of programs and practices cited need to be shared with the larger ESA community. All satisfy the original criteria used to establish whether or not an individual ESA-sponsored activity warrants consideration by others.

"Huge socioeconomic, political and educational tidal waves, not ripples, are underway that will affect governments at all levels - national, state, and local... ESAs will not be immune to these trends and must adapt if they are to continue to be relevant."

Why Identify Outstanding ESA Efforts?

Huge socioeconomic, political and educational tidal waves, not ripples, are underway that will affect governments at all levels - national, state, and local. The next section deals with some of these changes in some depth. ESAs will not be immune to these trends and must adapt if they are to continue to be relevant. Some of the clear movements that will likely have special significance for an ESA can be thought of as emitting from two sources: trends that will affect all public sector agencies, and those that are unique to public elementary-secondary education. Trends that will impact all public sector agencies include:

- A growing support for providing choice in how public services are offered

- A growing insistence on the use of performance management tools

- An increase in the demand for greater accountability and public transparency.

Trends of special note that are more directly related to public elementary-secondary education include the following:

- An apparent decline in public support for public education

- Huge changes in the impact of technology on the delivery of education

- An increase in the expectations held for the level of accomplishment to be required of all children

- Significant demographic changes in school-age children and youth.

Some observers of the contemporary scene prefer to label the current transformational period as The Age of Competition and Choice.

There can be little argument that the injection of competition and choice into the delivery system of public services, especially education, is one of the centerpieces of much policy debate at all levels - local,

state, and national. However, it is our view that there is also growing advocacy for additional concepts, so much so that it can be argued that the current transformational period can also be called The Age of Network Government and Cross-Sector Alliances.

The trend for greater use of these two concepts holds great potential for ESAs. The strategic advantages that many individual agencies or state networks of agencies can contribute to their involvement in these newer concepts are the critical building blocks that they now possess and include in their state charters, their regional perspectives, their boundary-spanning traditions, their traditions as regional advocates, their traditions as regional coalition builders, and, most importantly, their practices of drawing on collective intellectual capital ordinarily concentrated in an individual agency and in state networks.

Together, the examples cited above have significant implications for ESAs if they are to remain relevant and future-oriented. Many ESAs have regularly demonstrated their ability to be responsive to changes in a context in which they work. Indeed, the agility of ESAs is certainly one of the trademarks of organizations

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of this type and has served them well over the years. But the convergence of new demands is perhaps unprecedented. The first objective of this work then is to document and showcase how some ESAs are, in fact, successfully responding to new demands present in the environment in which they work.

Pursuing the Overriding Objectives

We addressed the issue of how best to achieve the overriding objectives of this study by first posing three questions:

1. Why, at this time, should the ESA community share our interest in identifying exemplary innovative programs and practices?

2. What "conditions of success" seem to explain the ability of an agency to engage in an exemplary program or practice that might be replicated by other ESAs?

3. What criteria should be used in the identification of an exemplary innovative program or practice that would be useful to an individual ESA or a state network of ESAs, all of which are constantly required to make difficult choices as to where their organization is likely to have the greatest, sustained benefit?

Defining a Program or Practice as Exemplary, Innovative or Both

As previously noted, the overriding objective of the study is to uncover a small number of programs and practices of ESA-type organizations that demonstrate how these organizations can play a critical role in local, state, and national efforts to address the new, more demanding requirements of elementary-secondary education in a 21st Century global knowledge economy. We define exemplary and innovative programs or practices as follows:

An exemplary program is one that is worthy of imitation, a laudable example of an ESA's programming efforts to address the high priority requirements of elementary and secondary education in a 21st Century global economy.

An innovative program or practice is defined as one that results in the development, production, implementation, and evaluation of a new or improved product, process, program, or a new or improved evaluation with the objective of improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of a program that will assist all school districts or schools, communities, and the state in the goal of improving student achievement or reducing both instructional and non-instructional costs.

Classifying Exemplary Programs and Practices

The classification system used to categorize programs featured here made use of three groupings:

- Group 1: Programs or practices designed to enhance the organizational capacity of a district or school and its community by providing technical assistance and support services that strengthen the ability of the service recipients to improve their curriculum, instruction, and/or assessment practices that enhance student achievement.

- Group 2: Programs or practices designed to enhance the organizational capacity of a district or school and its community through a partnership arrangement whereby the ESA assumes the management or performance of agreed-on instructional and/or non-instructional functions, thus freeing up resources that then can be concentrated on its instructional program.

- Group 3: Programs or practices designed to provide direct or indirect services to students, in full-time attendance at a thematic or content specific subject matter school administered by a service agency.

Criteria for Selection of Exemplary/Innovative Programs and Practices

Four major criteria have guided our deliberations leading to the final selection of exemplary/innovative programs and practices included in this study. These are:

- The agency's programming reflects a future orientation — addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century context.

- The agency achieves and can document intended programmatic results.

- The agency uses effective—perhaps even innovative—contemporary organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program.

- The agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities, and/or systems through the program.

In subsequent chapters, one dealing with the impact of technology on staff training and the second regarding collaboration among ESAs, whether through sharing services or by reorganizing into a state system, we will examine the programs identified as exemplary/innovative by reference not only to these criteria but also by offering evidence that supports the identification of the agency or team of agencies having met each of these criteria.

The authors trust that readers will share our view that these are truly exemplary/innovative programs.
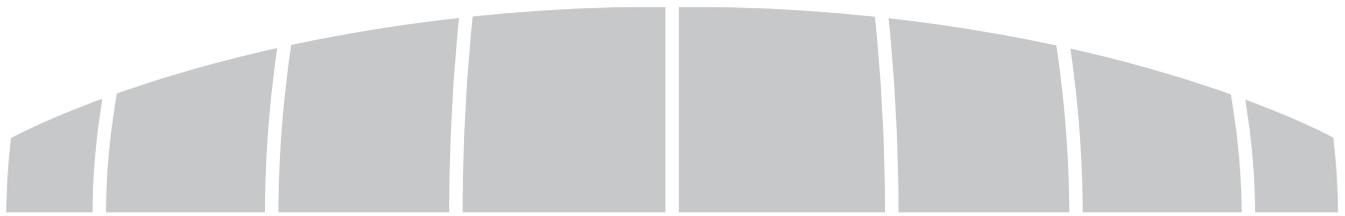
Four Dominant Trends Facing ESAs

Four trends — technology, networking, design, and shared services — are exerting considerable pressure on ESAs today. Exemplary programs, products, services, and operating processes are already responding to them, and it is reasonable to believe that these trends will continue to influence ESA systems, structures, and practices for some time.

Technology

This reference is specifically to digital technology. No surprise. This one is at top of everyone's trend list. Digital technology has brought change to learning in school districts and to the content and delivery of ESA services. Space limitations in this piece preclude a thorough review of the ways in which digital technology changes the operational models for schools and ESAs (if even such a thing were possible in such a rapidly changing context), but a focus on two examples will make important points.

First, self-publishing by means of the Internet has increasingly made content available without cost. This shift alters traditional delivery systems and makes prominent power structures such as the textbook industry less relevant.

Second, online service delivery disrupts traditional boundaries of time and location, challenging face-to-face professional development and professional service models along with geographical service delivery territories. The sections following that deal with technology-assisted professional development as well as networking and shared services deal with these changes in further depth.

> **"The consequences to ESAs of the expanding digital world are numerous and deeply disruptive."**

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Free Content

The explosion of available and immediate information – free to the user (although not to the producer) – on the Internet has dramatically impacted many traditional industries. Publishers and news companies are struggling to stay in business, searching for alternatives to print, trying to understand what the 10 o'clock

news should be when viewers already know the details of every story gleaned from Twitter or Google feeds piped to their smartphones during the day.

In the education world, the "flipped classroom" is one important manifestation of the move to self-publishing. (The flipped classroom refers to a situation where students learn new content at home on the computer and use the time in the classroom with the teacher to practice their new learning — doing what formerly was called "homework.") Writing recently in *The Washington Post*, reporter Valerie Strauss explained the idea behind the flipped classroom: "The philosophy behind the flip is that teachers can spend time working with students who need their help in the classroom — and students can work together to solve problems - rather than sitting home alone with work they might not understand and with nobody to ask for help" (Strauss, 2012).

When teachers become self-publishers on the Internet, they essentially make their knowledge free to anyone with access. TED-Ed by Google intends to capitalize on this capacity. "While YouTube shares revenue with content creators, selling ads to run on popular videos, TED-Ed does not plan to offer such revenue sharing yet as an incentive. The emphasis is offering a platform," said a company spokesman. Often, great things happen to people who get their voice out there. "If a teacher becomes a hit, TED-Ed might want to create a channel for them and pay them for doing so. The same model is true for animators. TED-Ed would pay them a modest honorarium but no revenue sharing"(Wired Academic, 2012).

The Khan Academy may be the best known example of free content expanded beyond a single classroom. Offering free online instruction in math, science, finance and economics, and the humanities, Khan's team explains its mission this way: "We're a small team trying our best to improve the way the world learns. Too many people around the globe don't have access to good education materials, or they are forced to learn through a system that doesn't properly respond to their individual needs. We think the technology exists today to fundamentally change this, and we're trying to build the tools and resources every student deserves" (Kahn Academy, 2012).

Without such a lofty mission, YouTube offers the example of Andrew Furmanczyk, a 24-year-old piano teacher in British Columbia. His video lessons have become some of the most popular ones on YouTube, with 18.9 million total views (Wired Academic, 2011). Learn to play the piano by watching YouTube? Who knew?

Traditional universities are getting into the act too with a variety of Open Education Resources. Apple's iTunesU, which aggregates and distributes the free offerings of hundreds of traditional colleges and universities, had 700 million downloads by April, 2012. Stanford University has had 50 million downloads of free course lectures and concerts in seven years as of April 4, 2012. The usage rate is accelerating, with 10.8 million downloads in the past six months (Wired Academic, 2012). Most dramatic, perhaps, is the announcement of EdX--a partnership between MIT and Harvard with the goal of providing their combined educational offerings re-fitted to online formats available to one billion people in the world. They put it this way: "EdX will be available to anyone in the world with an Internet connection, and in general, there will not be an admissions process. For a modest fee — and as determined by the EdX board, MIT and Harvard — credentials will be granted only to students who earn them by demonstrating mastery of the material of a subject" (MIT News Office, 2012).

These examples suggest that traditional models of developing and delivering professional development — the bread and butter business of ESAs — will not long endure. When online content is so readily accessible, where should ESAs invest their precious knowledge resources? Should they continue to try to develop content experts among their staff? Should they continue to offer their services in a face-to-

face, group-in-a-room format? Or should they "flip" PD by posting or aggregating content online offered essentially free to educators seeking to improve their knowledge and skills and concentrate the efforts of professional staff on the difficult challenges of implementation, changes to practice, and culture in the school districts they serve? At least one Wisconsin ESA has taken just this path in a recent agency redesign. Will ESAs increasingly partner with what this writer calls "Big Ed" — the gigantic corporations serving the education market that have the resources to develop content but often lack the relationships and proximity to support implementation? To some extent AESA has led the way in this direction in many of the business relationships it has created. Will ESA personnel need to become expert in these resources, not in the skills of facilitation and coaching? How will ESAs charge for implementation services — and how will they choose the content partners? What will be the new business models that will be essential to maintain revenues at levels sufficient for delivering the agencies' potential value? Will ESAs provide PD for teachers publishing their knowledge online? Will ESAs, like the IUs in Pennsylvania that collectively own and manage their own high-speed educational network (PAIUnet), become a channel for local educators' content in addition to their own? These are but some of the questions that a trend toward free online learning content raise for forward-thinking ESA leaders.

Online Service Delivery

The technologies that allow learning to happen anytime, anywhere are part of a larger trend for online delivery of many services. Distance learning and online service delivery disrupt traditional boundaries of time and location, challenging face-to-face professional development and professional service models along with geographical service delivery territories. Hardly a week passes that one of the authors does not receive multiple email offerings for remote delivery of what have traditionally been face-to-face, real-time ESA services such as speech and language. Virginia's Medicaid program has just announced that it will reimburse school-based speech-language pathology services delivered by telepractice (ASHA, 2012). Their action opens the way for providers located anywhere. The trend toward telemedicine, in general, creates opportunities for remote service delivery of school nursing, psychological consultations and evaluations, and other programs that are often part of the ESA menu of services. With online tutoring on the rise, why not online instructional coaching for teachers? Two-way video connections and 360-degree camera views may make "windshield time" (time spent traveling to and from training programs) second to "screen time" for instructional coaches in ESAs in rural areas where distance is a time-eater and travel costs are prohibitive. PD online? Sure. Business services? Easy enough to transfer electronic files for one-stop-shop bill payment. Tech support? Already going electronic. It is no stretch to conclude that nearly every ESA service that is currently delivered person-to-person in real time will face competition from online providers promoting greater ease of use, better access, and lower unit costs.

What, then, happens to the traditional geographic service areas that define most ESAs? Already these dividing lines are blurring. Some state legislative policies are challenging the sanctity of geographically defined service boundaries. Oregon's legislature passed SB 250 in 2011, allowing districts in the Northwest ESD region to withdraw beginning with the 2012-13 school year (Talbott, 2012). School districts in Ohio must formally select their preferred ESC, ignoring historical territorial boundaries. Rules of the road that have fostered positive relationships among a state's service agencies are changing to cover increasingly complicated cross-boundary agreements between and among agencies. Strong programs from one agency can be subcontracted to another to allow access to a much broader range of services than a single agency can provide to its primary school district clients. How are fees to be divided in such arrangements? Whose name goes on the program? How can "best in class" resources be put at the forefront of service to the state's school districts, not just the districts within a former boundary of a single ESA? All these and more are at issue. Some current examples of changes in the ESA usual business model are described in the next sections of this study.

Networks

The challenges facing American education today are increasingly complex. They are called "wicked" problems, and they've been known to students of organization and planning since at least 1973. Wickedness is not a matter of difficulty, but a matter of the inadequacy of traditional solutions. Writing in the Harvard Business Review, John Camillus observed, "A wicked problem has innumerable causes, is tough to describe, and doesn't have a right answer... . Environmental degradation, terrorism, and poverty — these are classic examples of wicked problems. They're the opposite of hard but ordinary problems, which people can solve in a finite time period by applying standard techniques. Not only do conventional processes fail to tackle wicked problems; they may exacerbate situations by generating undesirable consequences (Camillus, 2008). We can add contemporary education problems to the list Camillus published.

Wicked problems are no fun! They come in bunches. They do not appear in a handy list, ready to be solved and checked off one-by-one. Instead, they are a tangle of interactions… a set of interconnected forces that operate on each other in a variety of ways and in varying strengths. They may not have been seen before. They do not have known solutions. To make things worse, they are often the source of disagreement among different groups of people, and that social aspect makes them even harder to address. The wicked problems facing American education are not unique to any state or locale. In fact, they are the very ones facing educators and communities all over the nation. To name a few, they include what many believe to be an unsustainable financial model, growing frustration and alienation both inside and outside the traditional education system, an exploding array of choices, a widening gap between societal expectations of the education system and the system's ability to meet those expectations, and the socio-cultural factors that affect both student achievement and the strength of individual school systems. Looking back to World War II, Kania and Kramer (2011) observed, "The heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and nonprofits, together with billions of dollars in charitable contributions, may have led to important improvements in individual schools and classrooms, yet system-wide progress has seemed virtually unobtainable."

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Synergy

Effective networks can level differences and raise overall capacity. The programmatic strength of individual agencies inevitably varies across a state's ESAs. Sometimes related to size and fiscal health, stronger agencies are often viewed as a potential threat to weaker ones. Greater competitiveness and more entrepreneurial marketing forces from more school district choice have fueled the fires of concerns for survival and in some cases raised tensions among agencies. Networks can help reduce this tension by providing compensatory support to the members.

ESA networks are an unmistakable trend with clout, but their multiple forms and operating practices required for future success are not yet well defined.

Design Thinking

Design thinking helps leaders balance the need to make the most of current knowledge while simultaneously creating new knowledge. Analytical thinking isn't enough today; it is as futile as continuing to try to tweak an ESA offering that has become obsolete. As a trend, design focuses on invention and creation-synthesis and development of something new (Martin, 2009). One can design (or redesign) an organization such as an ESA, a network of ESAs, a social innovation, a product or service, or a process. Current design practice is user-centered, co-created, attuned to sequence, tangible, and holistic (Stickdorn, Schneider, et al., 2011). A known and reliable design approach holds promise to reduce cost and improve outcomes for ESAs by arming a development team with a set of proven tools and a thinking sequence that causes planners to challenge past assumptions, take unique contexts into account, zero in on understanding the real needs and wants of the stakeholders involved, and produce novel solutions to the complex or even wicked problems that face American education. In fact, some believe that design is the only way to deal effectively with wicked problems (Gharajedaghi, 2011). The rapidly changing context in which ESAs operate today will demand the flexibility to formulate or make sense of integrated, complex problems and to design integrated, effective solutions. ESA organization structures and processes will require alignment to new functions as ESAs take on new roles. Failure to challenge the assumptions and patterns that produced the problems of the past and present will lead to reproducing the same problems in the future. This is the rationale for design thinking.

Although design thinking and design methods are just beginning to be adopted into ESA practice, several promising projects have been carried out and others are being staged. AESA designed its foundation in 2000, using the interactive design methods developed by Gharajedaghi and others. Grant Wood AEA (IA), Ham-

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"Current design practice is user-centered, co-created, attuned to sequence, tangible, and holistic (Stickdorn, Schneider, et al., 2011)."

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ilton County ESC (OH) and CESA 6 (WI) are three ESAs that have formally redesigned themselves over the past few years. CESA 6 and CESA 1 (WI) sponsored regional designs of education that involved the school districts in their service areas. LEARN (CT) supported the community-wide redesign of the education system in the City of Norwich (CT). ESAs in several states are combining efforts to learn and apply the tools and methods of service design in the fall of 2012. As ESAs respond to the demands and opportunities of digital technologies and new service delivery models, surely design will become an essential competency. (It's a sure thing that competitors in the private sector, including Big Ed, are making use of formal design methods to produce innovative alternatives for educators, schools, and school districts.)

Design and Networking

ESA networks are tailor-made environments for design. Members need ways to quickly and effectively produce entirely new approaches collectively—agreements, joint projects, new products and services. The advantage of pooling ideas and resources is the very essence of what makes networks attractive, but without a method to guide the work, a large group with many interests, ideas, and assets may be a formula for trouble. Too many choices can be as paralyzing as too few. Design can help, as the collaborative production of many contemporary books, products and services illustrates. For instance, according to a note on its cover, the popular new book *This Is Service Design Thinking* was co-created by 23 authors "from the global service design community." Assimilating that much disparate information, managing that many egos, separating out the valuable ideas…how could it be done effectively without a method?

There are several implications of the emergence of design as a planning method for ESAs, including these:

- There are new skills to acquire in order to maximize the use of design approaches within individual agencies, networks, and in service communities.

- Design is not a nail looking for a hammer. It has specific applications and is not a panacea.

- Design has promise as a new ESA service offering as well as utility as an internal planning tool.

- Communities of practice among ESAs that are beginning to use design methods can accelerate learning and increase impact.

Shared Services

Arising as a business practice in the 1980s, "shared services" means that one organization or department assumes the responsibility for providing infrastructure support to others that originally provided the support for themselves. The arguments for shared services are primarily about efficiency — reduction of unnecessary duplication and the associated costs — but necessarily also about quality. Savings evaporate quickly when poor quality leads to delays, errors, and user dissatisfaction. Shared services have become the darling of politicians looking for ways to reduce the cost of government. The concept of shared services is widely applicable in both private industry and the public sector. Major universities such as University of Texas, Yale University and the University of California are actively involved in sharing services. To cite just one example, the University of California Path Initiative will consolidate Payroll and Human Resources system-wide for all campuses and medical centers in 2013 (University of California, 2012).

ESAs in states such as Minnesota, Ohio and Michigan have been charged by their legislatures and governors to promote shared services in several ways: Increasing the degree to which school districts pool resources, becoming either a provider or a user of shared services by participating in shared services consortia in their regions that match the needs of local and regional government subdivisions with existing resources to increase the degree of reliance on fewer providers for common services. ESAs have always capitalized on economies of scale. The political push for broadening the traditional education-only mission of ESAs to that of government productivity agent is a trend well worth watching.

Core ESA Competency

A core competency is a capability or strength that is critical to the success of an organization. We could say that a long-standing core competency of ESAs has been the ability to create economies of scale by pooling the needs of individual organizations within the ESA service region. Many ESAs offer cooperative purchasing opportunities, pooling small orders for equipment and supplies to an order size that commands volume discount pricing. Others broker fractional staff contracts: For example, a literacy specialist on the ESA's payroll is contracted one day a week to District A and another day to District B. ESAs typically organize large, multi-district events with national presenters—increasing access to school districts and educators that could not afford to bear the full cost. Such activities are typical, and ESAs know how to do them.

What happens, then, when policymakers expand the scope of ESAs beyond education to other public agencies? That's what happened in Minnesota in the 1990s, leading to the formation of large health insurance consortia comprised of both school districts and city and county governments. A similar re-direction

is underway in Ohio, where the ESCs are being urged to develop shared services arrangements with both school districts and political subdivisions in their regions. Authors of a recent report published by the Ohio Office of Budget and Management (2012) recommended a priority for forming regional shared services centers comprised of ESAs and other regional service entities such as education data centers. Here's the rationale: "Together, [these centers] have the experience and capacity to efficiently deliver extensive shared services offerings. These centers are the logical starting place for the regional provision of shared services for schools and local governments in core areas of technology, administration and educational support" (Beyond Boundaries, 2012). The State Auditor of Ohio maintains a website highlighting shared services initiatives. Michigan's service agencies have also been leaders in expanding shared services outside education to other government entities. Many other states either have active shared services initiatives underway or have expressed interest. Wise ESA leaders will watch for this movement in their states.

ESAs as Service Sharers

The automatic reaction of ESAs when presented with the trend toward increased pressure for the economic advantages of shared services in schools and governments is to question, "What new service offerings should we provide?" That response overlooks the implication that ESAs, themselves, have opportunities to share services rather than provide them. To set up a straw man, how might a network of 10 ESAs share a single business office or a single email system? How might they share key staff just as they encourage school districts to do? How might they develop a single payroll or benefits administration system that could be shared among them? The possibilities are many, and leading ESAs will recognize their opportunity to reap the productivity benefits of shared services as a participant, not just as a provider.

ESAs of the Future

The world is changing rapidly, and trends are shifting abruptly. Any trend analysis is time-specific, by definition. In the second decade of the 21st Century, ESAs are feeling the disruptive forces of digital technologies, pressure to join networks that multiply their influence, the need to use emerging design methods to produce innovation and value, and the expansion of mission beyond education improvement to greater productivity of public agencies through shared services. The rate at which ESAs can respond to these four current trends and identify the next significant set of challenges may well define the success of the nation's ESAs as a critical partner in the transformation of American education and even the eventual design of the next generation of public services.

The next two sections look more closely at some organizational designs and innovative approaches to more effectively serving the education community in light of the future trends described above.

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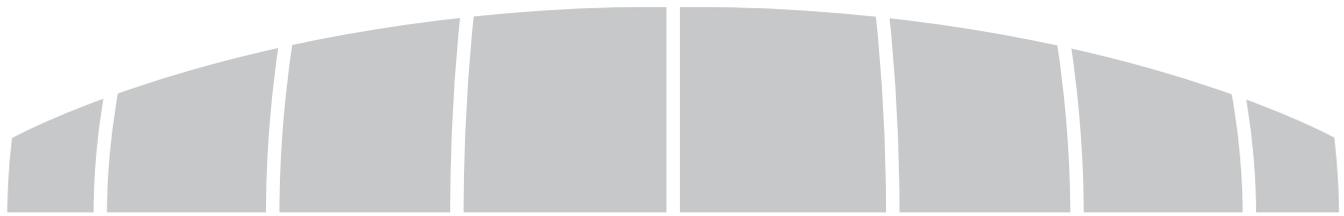
Focusing on the Future:
Improving Teacher Quality Through Online Professional Development

Introduction

Improving teacher quality, now interpreted to mean teacher effectiveness with students, is the driving focus of many school improvement initiatives today. For example, linking teacher evaluation with teacher professional learning is gaining attention as 33 states have passed teacher evaluation legislation aimed at improving teaching effectiveness (Goe, Biggers, & Croft, 2012). Around the world, emphasis is increasingly on building a high quality teaching profession (OECD, 2011). In the U.S., new curriculum standards adopted by 45 states are to guide teachers in making students "college and career ready" for demands of the 21st Century (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.). And numerous reports place a premium on improving teacher quality and or their professional development (see Center for Teaching Quality, 2011; Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2011; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, n.d.; Schmidt & Jupp, 2010; Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Shein, 2012; The Finance Project and Public Education Network, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

Teacher development is under intense scrutiny. Increasingly, providers of teacher professional development must show evidence of how professional learning programs completed by teachers are leading to changes in classroom practices. For example, new standards of teacher professional learning present a more comprehensive and sustainable approach for changing teaching practices (Learning Forward, 2011). The standards make explicit that the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. In essence, educators must adapt to a new era of professional learning (Hirsh &Killi, 2007), including the national standards for quality online teaching (International Association for K-12 Online Learning, 2011).

If teachers in this new era are to meet the needs of digital natives (i.e., 21st Century students), customized professional learning opportunities must be available anytime and anywhere. As more tech savvy teachers enter the profession, and school districts look for more efficient and effective ways to meet professional learning needs of teachers, blended and or online leaning approaches are quickly gaining favor as replacements for more traditional face-to-face opportunities (Coughlin, Metiri Group, & Kajder, 2009; Dede, 2006; Davis & Rose, nd; Dawley, Rice, & Hinck, 2010; Rebora, 2009).

Online PD in ESAs

This section of the study describes how ESAs in eight states are providing online professional development that addresses the need to improve teacher quality in one or more school districts. The ESA service may be designed for internal training, or extend to all school districts in the state or several states. Obviously, there are many ESAs with noteworthy examples of how online learning opportunities for teachers are a future-oriented service of the ESA. Examples in this section were selected based on the response to a national study of online professional development among ESAs by Harmon (2011) and the nomination process described previously in this issue of *Perspectives*.

ESA executive directors or other key staff at the ESA were contacted via telephone to ascertain information about a service of the ESA that used online only and/or blended learning opportunities to address improving teacher quality. As a follow-up to the phone conversation, the ESA contact person was e-mailed a Word file table to complete. The ESA contact was to examine the online or blended program or service through a lens of four criteria being used to describe a future-oriented ESA program/service:

1. Program or service reflects a future orientation - addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.

2. ESA can document intended program or service results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.

3. ESA uses effective contemporary - perhaps even innovative - organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.

4. ESA builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program or service.

Examples of ESA Online or Blended Learning Services

Each ESA example includes the name of the online or blended learning program or service, describes how the ESA program/service is future-focused and responds to the trend of using online technology to offer professional development, how the program is managed, and how the program or service is funded. A table shows how the program addresses each of the four criteria used to profile a future-oriented program/service. Persons desiring more information about the examples of online or blended learning services profiled here are encouraged to contact the ESA.

1. Southwest Arkansas Education Cooperative (SWAEC), Hope, Arkansas

SWAEC operates the Technology Infused Education (TIE) service for teachers in 10 school districts in the counties of Hempstead, Lafayette, Miller, and Nevada; teachers who are preparing to implement content of the common core curriculum. TIE helps teachers become more comfortable in integrating evolving technology into instruction rather than overwhelming them with new common core content and use of technology at the same time. This strategy addresses the state license renewal requirement that each teacher engage in at least 60 clock hours of professional development annually, of which six clock hours must be in technology.

Teachers learn from other teachers who effectively integrate emerging digital technologies (e.g., Moodle) into their instruction. SWAEC developed a set of online modules to give teachers easy access to technology resource materials as a support for ongoing, job-embedded professional development throughout the school year and summer. The online technology enables teachers to continuously access resources and revisit SWAEC trainings offered for implementing common core content effectively. SWAEC leverages the expertise of a ten year-old cooperative technology training team comprised of school district teachers. Originated through the Professional Development Department, with support of other SWAEC departments, a five-member team of SWAEC staff and school district personnel developed a plan to develop the technology integration modules for teacher use. During the school year the team led development of the modules by a cadre of teachers with curriculum and technology integration expertise. SWAEC provided a template for teachers to follow. In the modules the teachers showcase how they are "going digital" in their own classroom practices. SWAEC established an editing process to achieve clarity and consistency in the modules.

SWAEC offers a three-day face-to-face training on the modules for a cadre of teachers in the member school districts. Each of the14 other Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives can select two teachers for participation in the cadre. During the training the teachers access the modules online to perform selected workshop activities. After returning to their schools, the teachers in the workshop use Moodle to access the modules to review content, update skills, and or access related workshop resources. The modules are also available as online courses (see http://lms.swsc.k12.ar.us). Modules range from three to 12 clock hours, with six clock hours being most common.

SWAEC started the TIE initiative with federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) funds from the NCLB Act. When Congress discontinued funding for the EETT program, SWAEC used Arkansas Department of Education funds along with funding from all partner ESCs to support travel related costs for outside consultants and meeting locations for the face-to-face summer workshop. Teachers do not receive a stipend for participation. School districts support their teachers' participation in the summer workshop. Table 1 profiles how the Technology Infused Education service meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 1. Profile of SWAEC Technology Infused Education Service

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	Effectively teaching the common core curriculum standards required teachers to deliver content with application of emerging technology. Moreover, participating teachers desired to become more comfortable with the technology in ways that accommodated learning from other teachers who were successfully integrating technology in their classrooms. Key features of the Technology Infused Education effort include: • SWAEC and school districts collaborate and contribute staff expertise to develop modules. • Modules include successful practices of technology infusion by teachers in the schools of SWAEC school districts. • Face-to-face training was offered in summer as initial training activity in cadre approach. • Moodle and other technologies support teachers gaining 24/7 access to modules, job-embedded training, and resource materials. • Technology infusion into instruction was linked to the vision of teachers successfully learning and teaching new common core curriculum standards. • Modules enable teachers to meet the six clock hours of professional development required by the state.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	SWAEC uses a formal survey to collect data and information about workshops. Respondents rate items such as • quality of presenter • preparation of presenter • usefulness of information and skills • overall workshop • likelihood of attending another workshop by same presenter. On the survey teachers can indicate whether they gained the knowledge needed to implement what was learned, if learning was relevant to current needs, if they need additional information, or if too much information was presented for the time allotted. Also, the teacher can indicate if the professional development was aligned with the individual's professional growth plan.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	SWAEC staff leveraged a team planning process and expertise of a cadre of teachers to produce the modules. Teachers used a module template, with a formal editing process put in place to enhance clarity and quality of the final product. Modules were organized by category into online courses. Example topics addressed by the online modular courses include: • Using Microsoft Publisher for lesson activities, projects, and/or assessments related to Common Core State Standards • Integrating technology into the elementary literacy classroom • Creating real world math learning projects using technology integration • Preparing middle school mathematics teachers to effectively research problems with Internet sources and propose solutions to questions in the form of brochures or pamphlets • Creating podcasts using mobile devices • Incorporating digital images into classroom instruction that supports state and district frameworks.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	More than 100 teachers have been trained as cadre members. Because of the increasing growth in skills, some of these teachers have taken instructional technology positions in their schools and districts. Consequently, the teachers are expanding their impact beyond their own classrooms. SWAEC also provided a three-day training to prepare personnel in the other 14 cooperatives in the state to train teachers on the modules in their respective school districts. These ESAs now have teachers in their districts who have the capacity to train others during the summer. This was particularly valuable for ESCs with only one technology person.

2. Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC), Chipley, Florida

PAEC operates the FloridaLearns Academy and offers the electronic Professional Development Connections (ePDC) as a service to 14 member school districts. The ePDC service, however, is available to teachers anywhere in the nation and world though the Florida Education Channel (see http://www.fec.tv/). PAEC operates the electronic Professional Development Connections (ePDC) as a service of the Florida Learns Academy, embracing evolving trends in technology that provide educators greater convenience, customization, and cost effectiveness in accessing professional development opportunities regardless of their physical location. Superintendents in the small and rural school districts of PAEC needed a way to give teachers high quality professional development, yet reduce time teachers were absent from their classrooms; the result was the FloridaLearns Academy. Using the Florida Education Channel (FEC TV), the FloridaLearns Academy can deliver content to teachers worldwide on any available format and mobile learning device.

A PAEC program coordinator handles technology and a PAEC curriculum specialist handles curriculum development. The curriculum specialist uses classroom teachers to write components of a staff development plan, consequently used as the syllabus for the professional development activity. Teachers develop specific components on a selected topic. The teacher follows a two-step procedure to enroll in ePDC offerings and register for the professional development activity (see http://www.floridatechnet.org/vff/pdf/enroll.pdf).

Teachers can preview all courses and workshops and select the time and training activity that best meets their needs. The ePDC enables a teacher to establish and view a personal online professional development transcript. Teachers can check their status of registration for a course or workshop, courses completed and credit awarded. For courses registered, the teacher can access course exercises. On the ePDC web site (see https://www.paec.org/fldata/howto.asp), the teacher is provided step-by-step videos on how to use the ePDC service. After the teacher completes the online training, PAEC certifies that a teacher has obtained the knowledge in the component and applied it in the classroom setting. The activity is based on a school district's mastery in-service plan, which becomes a part of the State of Florida master in-service plan.

The ePDC offerings are free to teachers in PAEC member school districts for which PAEC districts pay a fee of $3.95/hour based on the number of clock hours of course content. For example, a district would pay $39.95 for a 10 hour course. PAEC charges out-of-state districts and out-of-state teachers $5.95/clock hour of course content for the ePDC professional development. Table 2 profiles how the electronic Professional Development Connections (ePDC) service of the FloridaLearns Academy meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 2. Profile of PAEC electronic Professional Development Connections (ePDC) Service

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The electronic Professional Development Connections (ePDC) and FEC.TV enables teachers to continue building skills while acquiring in-service training points to meet the state requirements. Educators participate in high-quality professional development that meets or exceeds Florida's Professional Development System Protocol Standards. Among the key features of the eDPC service are: • Using web-based broadcast technology to give teachers 24/7 access to high quality professional development • Linking professional development of teachers with state content standards and district needs • Enabling teachers to document and track status of their own professional development in a personal online, professional development transcript • Using teachers to assist in development of course content • Offering free cost strategy for FL teachers.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	Any person can access the web page for ePDC and examine professional development statistics for member districts, the state, and the nation. For example, data for member districts from 2001 to May 24, 2012 include the following: • 254, 047 participants in professional development activities • 166,314 completers • 1,861,217 hours. PAEC staff can analyze data to determine names of teachers, professional development programs taken, scores achieved on end of session tests, and whether or not students of the teachers of professional development participants are doing better than those teachers not taking the professional development activity. Data on courses and school test results are kept in a teacher data base called FOCUS. Data software packages in the ePDC enable linkage of student performance data and state data base elements for teachers. PAEC staff can make inquiries and generate reports. PAEC annually uses an external evaluator to determine strengths and weakness of the eDPC service.
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	Key organizational processes or practices used to launch and operate the service include: • PAEC Board focuses on results, thus expressing confidence in program coordinators and staff to try new innovations. • EPDC is required to track in-service activities of a school district, thus ongoing updates in ePDC data base enable teachers to acquire necessary in-service. • Professional Development Council comprised of school district personnel drives PAEC offerings. Staff development supervisor and school principal are able to examine teacher performance. • Content standards of teachers are driven by FL DOE certification needs, but teachers determine how needs are met as defined by the standards. • Technology use has progressed from VHS tapes to hard drive computers with cameras that transmit directly to computer for editing (i.e., use AVID) like that used in major TV programs.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	ePDC service expands capacity in others as follows: • Teachers receive free, customized professional development 24/7 with the ability to manage and track their own professional learning activities that meet state requirements. • Relationship with AESA has been a major capacity builder, because of a national format/ structure. • Association of Education Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) shares resources with member states and thus grows relationships and expands services economically.

3. Educational Service and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK), Hutchinson, Kansas

ESSDACK operates the online Self-Directed Staff Development (SDSD) program that embraces the trend of learning opportunities being available anywhere, anytime, and frequently free, for teachers. ESSDACK serves approximately 50 member school districts, plus special education cooperatives and colleges. Teachers in any school district in Kansas or beyond can access the SDSD program offerings.

ESSDACK recognizes that many teachers are self-directed learners who take the initiative to complete quality professional development experiences. However, too often teachers have no way to validate professional learning as worthy of credit for relicensure, even if they implemented the practices in the classroom and can validate a positive learning impact on students. Consequently, ESSDACK created the self-directed staff development program.

A team of ESSDACK staff conceived the SDSD online innovation and developed content for independent teacher learning experiences. Technology staff designed a template so ESA consultants (i.e., content specialists) could post the learning experiences on the ESSDACK website along with an easy step-by-step process for teachers to follow in accessing and completing the professional learning experience. The teacher works through the course at his or her own pace. If the teacher desires college credit or plans to submit the activity to the local Professional Development Council (PDC) for relicensure purposes, the teacher completes and submits an evaluation form. After submitting the evaluation form, the teacher clicks on a link to purchase the professional development and college credits. ESSDACK will also validate non-SDSD courses completed by a teacher. An ESSDACK employee works with the teacher to identify appropriate evidence of learning that merits credit recognition.

ESSDACK's general operating budget covers development cost of the SDSD program. Once learning content is developed and made available on the ESSDACK web site, the organization has no additional expenses unless a teacher desires credit that requires staff time to process the request and validate the learning. Cost of a course is commonly $60 for six clock hours of learning for teachers in member districts. Some districts pay for the teacher's staff development; some districts require the teacher to cover the cost. If the teacher chooses to receive college credit, the teachers pays the college (MidAmerica Nazarene University) directly. Six clock hours usually equal 0.5 college semester credit hours. ESSDACK has a formal arrangement with MidAmerica Nazarene University for the SDSD validated credit. ESSDACK receives a small fee from the University for the SDSD partnership credit. Table 3 profiles how the Self-Directed Staff Development program meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 3. Profile of ESSDACK Self-Directed Staff Development (SDSD) Program

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The program makes it possible for all teachers, whether employed in an ESSDACK member district or not, to earn professional development and college credit for ESSDACK training completed and evaluated online. Key features of SDSD include: • Customized learning opportunities • Anytime, anywhere access • Free of charge training if no validation needed • Online validation of learning • Mechanism to earn credit for learning completed in addition to what ESSDACK makes available.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	ESSDACK validates completion of the learning experience. Teachers submit the ESSDACK verification to their district's professional development committee (PDC). The committee awards credit at the knowledge level. The teacher has an opportunity to earn additional PDC points by "applying" the knowledge in the classroom. Additional PDC points can be earned if the teacher documents "impact"' as a result of the change in practices, etc. ESSDACK issues evidence of learning, but local council issues points and MidAmerica Nazarene University awards college credit for SDSD validated learning.
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	ESSDACK created an innovative process to launch and operate the program or service: • ESSDACK obtains prior approval for college credit of SDSD offerings by leveraging existing partnership with MidAmerica Nazarene University. • ESSDACK template allows consultants to easily upload learning opportunities for teachers. • Process enables teacher to follow a seamless sequence of steps whereby teacher stops after completing the work or submits evaluation form for credit validation.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	SDSD program: • Allows teachers to have access to learning at no cost if that is all they need or allows to get validation for what teacher previously learned on his/her own. • Provides learning opportunity without teacher leaving classroom. • Facilitates teacher taking ownership in individual professional development to customize learning opportunities with needs that merit validation of credit.

4. St. Claire County Regional Education Service Agency (SCCRESA), Marysville, Michigan

SCCRESA operates the Tools for Teaching Digital Natives program. SCCRESA serves a student population of about 26,000 in seven local school districts and several charter schools in St. Clair County, Michigan. A cohort of 27 teachers committed to engaging in a year-long blended professional learning experience was selected by principals of the county's 11 high schools.

The project was initiated to support the SCCRESA vision of all students connected through technology-rich environments to learning that prepares them to be confident, creative problem solvers, and global citizens who care about their culture. The project acknowledged the changes foreseen by SCCRESA Superintendent, Dan DeGrow, former majority leader of the Michigan Senate: "If there is one thing history has taught us, it is that technology advances will be utilized. Public education can either embrace new technology, including online learning, or watch itself become less and less relevant over time" (Hopper & Harrington, 2009).

The initiative evolved from a technology think tank of SCCRESA colleagues from five departments in a July 2007 retreat. Interdepartmental teams of content consultants who worked closely with teachers in the field planned a three-day face-to-face summer institute on digital learning tools. Key SCCRESA staff presented topical breakout sessions at the institute. As follow-up during the school year, five online webinars were held, followed by four face-to-face sessions held after school. In the webinars, teachers shared ideas and practices using Adobe Connect software provided to each teacher by SCCRESA. A key element of the follow-up face-to-face sessions was teachers presenting how they were using digital tools in their instruction. This year-round blended learning opportunity helped teachers become comfortable with the transition to using digital tools in their instruction. In lieu of stipends, teachers received a laptop computer, an iPod, a flip camera and appropriate software for using the digital tools in their classrooms.

SCCRESA staff worked closely with local districts to leverage funding to support the Tools for Digital Natives initiative. Title IID funds paid for professional development consultants. SCCRESA's general operating budget covered cost of ESA staff. The SCCRESA superintendent and Board also invested $20,000 initially to support the initiative by hosting a 21st Century Learning Symposium. Participants were invited to attend the event free of charge, where they had an opportunity to meet in a closed session with Marc Prensky, author and visionary. Attendance at the symposium increased from 200 in 2008 to 600 in 2011. Flexible Learning was the theme for the August 2012 symposium. Table 4 profiles how the Tools for Teaching Digital Natives program meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 4. Profile of SCCRESA Tools for Teaching Digital Natives Program

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	Tools for Digital Natives helps teachers become comfortable in using digital tools in instructional practices when appropriate with students who are born into a world with digital tools as a ubiquitous part of their lives. Key features of the program include: • Preparing students for the world they are walking into, rather than the world adults lived in yesterday. • Using a professional development approach for teachers as an effective delivery model to demonstrate how blended learning is more appropriate than online-only learning for building teacher comfort with new technology. • Providing teachers access to instructional resources 24/7, thus modeling for teachers what they should be doing for students. • Nurturing a professional learning network (PLN) that connects teachers across the state, nation, and world to help them grow, rather than solely relying on teachers "down the hall."
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	SCCRESA staff collected feedback initially at the training launch and again several months later from teachers using a survey that focused on their growth as teachers. A follow-up focus group session was held with selected teachers to gain additional detail on challenges and barriers to implementing digital tools in classroom instruction. Teachers also could bring a student to share examples of classroom experiences with the digital learning environment. On the survey teachers rated, on a five-point scale, comfort level with blended classrooms, problem-based learning, personal learning networks (PLNs), and technology tools such as Tweeter or Tweetdeck, Delicious, Flipcams, Moodle, iPod Touch, iTunes, and iPod Apps. Teachers also indicated what they wanted or needed to lean more about, such as Moodle, RSS feeds, Camtasia, Google docs, Internet safety, Internet search strategies, blogging, podcasting, blended classrooms, and personal learning networks (PLNs). In the focus group session, teachers responded to questions about kinds of technology being integrated into their classrooms, tools or technologies they are most excited about using, how students were becoming better prepared in the classroom for the demands of the 21st century, and the barriers or challenges faced in integrating technology and 21st century learning.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	SCCRESA used an interdepartmental think tank approach and teams of content consultants to conceive and deliver the blended professional development opportunities. Staff also developed a rubric, called Flexible Learning Continuum, that profiled face-to-face instruction, blended learning and flexible learning for key instructional elements such as teacher role, student role, content delivery, instruction, assessment, collaboration, tools, and student assigned tasks. The tool is being used to help clarify the vision for 21st century learning.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The effort expanded capacities as follows: • SCCRESA staff learned from what teachers needed how to better structure professional development that embedded digital instructional resources. • The model served as a framework for designing additional SCCRESA learning experiences for teachers. • Some teachers in the cohort school districts more aggressively applied for innovation grants, interacted with PTAs, leveraged Title I funds to buy enough iPads for individual student use, for example, in grades 5-12. • Teachers emerged as teacher leaders within their schools, helping other teachers grow. Some have presented at countywide professional development sessions, including the 21st Century Learning Symposium. • A blended/flexible learning continuum is driving local and countywide professional development, as well as and interdisciplinary technology integration and support for the implementation of Common Core State Standards.

5. Educational Service Unit 19 (Omaha Public Schools), Omaha, Nebraska

ESU 19 operates Angel, a learning management system, to provide teachers online only and blended learning opportunities. The Omaha Public Schools ESU 19, serving this district only, reaches more than 50,000 students in an urban context. The school district includes 62 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 7 high schools, and 2 alternative education schools, as well as some Catholic schools.

ESU implemented Angel in 2007 to give teachers more personalized learning opportunities through 24/7 access to instructional materials and courses, regardless of the time of day. For example, Angel enables a teacher to easily access instructional materials or professional development courses during the planning period. Angel also allows the school system (ESU 19) to conveniently change or add a course as needed for teachers. A course can have no credit recognition, or a course can have district professional development credit awarded. A teacher must complete three quizzes that are graded as a teacher self-measurement activity to receive district credit. Teachers have access to a variety of self-paced professional development opportunities (see url: lms.ops.org and select "public resources" to view professional development offerings and teaching resources).

The Office of eLearning at ESU 19 assists with the integration and the implementation of technology that enriches learning experiences for all students. The office works in collaboration with other departments, such as those responsible for curriculum and learning, and professional development to support Omaha Public Schools' mission of providing educational opportunities that enable all students to achieve their highest potential. Coordinators in the Office of eLearning work with instructional facilitators in elementary and middle schools, and department-based curriculum specialists in high schools, to plan professional development for teachers.

ESU 19 also offers webinars on scheduled school district curriculum days. Teaching and learning materials are placed in the Angel management system. The Office of eLearning offers teachers face-to-face training, virtual training only, or both (blended learning). Classes are offered throughout the year on a schedule, or if a school wants only two teachers trained, office staff provides direct technical assistance to the school and teacher.

ESU 19 supports the Angel learning management system with general operating funds. No fees are charged schools or teachers. Table 5 profiles how the Angel learning management system that supports online and blended professional development opportunities for teachers meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 5. Profile of ESU 19 Angel supported Online Professional Development Program

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	ESU 19, through functions of the Office of eLearning, strives to help teachers understand how to harness emerging technologies to enrich curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A key concept is for teachers to consume digital content in an ethical and professional manner, to understand and interpret digital content, and to create or recreate content which results in a curriculum that rises above the textbook and becomes alive in the hands of students. Key features of the Angel management learning system include: • Giving teacher 24/7 access to up to date professional development • Accessing web based content from any device • Offering blended and/or virtual (online only) • Enabling a teacher when logging in to have own "home" screen for storing personal professional learning documents and teaching resources.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	ESU 19 collects feedback on Office of eLearning offerings in two ways: • Periodic end-of-course and follow-up surveys during the year • Teacher success rate (i.e., content understanding) through analysis of quizzes in different courses completed by the teacher.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	ESU 19 started implemented the Angel management learning system in 2007 through a statewide initiative called "My eLearning." ESU 19 then purchased a license for Angel so all schools could have access to the management system. ESU 19 recruited some very good "teacher creators" in the schools to work with curriculum supervisors. Usually a supervisor works with 2-3 teachers in the summer to write or evaluate online curriculum and related instructional support resources. Office of eLearning manages the online resources, including operation of a help desk and a programmer to make sure Angel works effectively at the teacher's location. Close collaboration with personnel in the curriculum department ensures a smooth transition; that is, the teaching materials will work via Angel on any device (e.g., teacher's iPad).
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	Teachers are embracing new technologies for supporting delivery of instruction. Train-the-trainer modules developed by the Office of eLearning are increasing the ability of teachers to give support to colleagues in schools. Teachers now have easy access to all school district curricula and related teaching resources. Angel is the one-stop-shop for teaching and learning resources. Blended learning is the preferred delivery model of eInstruction in the Omaha Public Schools.

6. Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit Nine (IU9), Smethport, PA

Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit Nine (IU9) operates the Seneca Highlands Online Webinar Series (SHOWS) as a year-round program of online webinars, to give teachers easy access to free professional development opportunities. The SHOWS program serves teachers in the 14 member school districts of four counties: Cameron, Elk, McKean, and Potter. IU9 serves almost 14,000 public school students in the 14 school districts and almost 1,200 non-public school students in 19 schools. IU9 covers an area of 3,300 square miles with a population of 105,102.

SHOWS addresses the need to customize professional development for teachers within the increasing budget constraints of districts to support travel and teacher time away from the classroom. A renovation project at IU9 is developing two learning studios with up-to-date technology to originate, edit, broadcast, and record sessions of SHOWS as accessible, customized learning opportunities for teachers. The learning studios will accommodate offering student coursework and professional development for teachers.

Staff members in the IU9 Curriculum and Technology Department meet each month to determine the series of webinar topics based on teacher feedback on the evaluation form completed at the end of a SHOWS session. IU9 staff members discuss current research reports and their experiences with teachers in the field. State test results for students in school districts served by IU9, as well as comments of school and central office administrators at IU9 monthly meetings, also influence topics selected. SHOWS webinars may also address "hot topics" of the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

IU 9 staff members who deliver SHOWS are funded primarily by the general operating budget of IU9. Additional funding sources include school district contributions, grants, and competitive state funds designated annually to address priorities of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. All SHOWS webinar

sessions are offered free to teachers. IU9 uses Elluminate, the technology tool support for SHOWS that is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and made available to all IUs. The server that houses Elluminate is located at one IU for use by all IUs in the state. Table 6 profiles how the SHOWS meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 6. Profile of Seneca Highlands IU9 SHOWS Program

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	SHOWS webinars enable teachers to have convenient access to high quality professional development that meets personal needs and qualifies for receiving Act 48 Professional Educator credits (state licensing requirement). Key features of SHOWS include: • Customized (e.g., teacher-driven topics drawn from SHOWS evaluation forms) • Flexible delivery time (e.g., first sessions were offered 6-8pm, then changed to accommodate teachers' preferences for after school from 3:30 to 5pm.) Each session is recorded and made available for teachers not able to attend the live session, but only live session participation counts toward Act 48 re-licensing credit. • Free to teachers • Accessible wherever Internet connection exists • IU9 instructors have content knowledge and background in technology (i.e., a person who only knows the curriculum content could not offer a SHOWS session successfully). • IU9 positions to accommodate forecast alignment of new state mandated teacher evaluation system and resulting professional development needs of teachers.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	IU9 staff use the Professional Development Survey for Educators and School Leaders provided by the PA Department of Education to collect information from teachers at the end of each session. Teachers use a five-point scale (Excellent, Average, Poor) to rate five participation items and seven items relating to impact on professional practice. Teachers also are asked to describe ways the session caused them to review their job or training activities, new ideas gained and how they plan to implement them, information of greatest value in the session, and suggestions to improve the webinar session.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	IU9 made several organizational changes to launch the SHOWS program, including: • Integrated efforts of curriculum and technology departments by abolishing the Director of Technology position and establishing Director of Curriculum and Technology position. • Adjusted IU9 work schedule for staff to start hour and half later than normal to serve teachers in after-school hours. • Trained staff to use Elluminate technology tool to support online pd offerings. • Offered continuous update training for IU9 staff to deliver SHOWS sessions
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	• SHOWs program increases capacity of member school districts to provide teachers with professional development opportunities without the cost for substitute teachers, travel costs, and teacher time away from classroom instructional duties. IU9 staff members also are able to use a different web 2.0 tool each month (e.g., blogster). SHOWS increases capacity of an individual teacher to access topics that align more closely with teacher needs. • Teachers gain access to valuable handouts and other resource materials when they log-in to the live webinar session. IU9 staff session instructor also provides teachers additional information via e-mail after the session. • Because of SHOWS webinars, IU9 staff members are increasingly asked to come to schools in member districts to provide follow-up technical assistance on a topic previously offered as a webinar. Most commonly this results in an IU9 staff person being available at the school for teachers to receive one-on-one assistance during their prep period.

7. Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC), Sturgis, South Dakota

Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE), a division of Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC), makes online professional development available to reduce the geographic isolation of educators in rural school districts in South Dakota. The Mass Customized Learning (MCL) program emphasizes use of transformational Internet-based technology to enable teachers to personalize and customize educational opportunities for students. TIE is located in Rapid City, SD and the TIE director serves as a program director for ESA 7. TIE has a membership that consists of most public schools in South Dakota, in addition to other organizations in the region, some out-of-state.

TIE uses Blackboard through a license purchased by the state. Wikis and Moodle are also used on a more limited basis, as teachers are most familiar with the Blackboard technology. However, district interest in using Google Sites is growing because of a statewide domain that allows schools to perform numerous

online functions quickly and free, anywhere, anytime from any web-enabled device using Google Apps for Education. A team of eight to 10 TIE employees from the 30 member staff build and deliver online courses. A small group of education specialists and the TIE director use an ad hoc approach to plan online course offerings. TIE facilitates data analysis sessions with schools to help them determine needs and a direction for professional development. Based on those needs, districts may choose to access the online courses, schedule face-to-face sessions or create a blended approach using both online and face-to-face resources.

School districts pay a fee for membership in TIE. These districts receive a variety of online courses offered without additional cost. School districts that want additional or more customized online opportunities pay a fee. TIE leverages grant funds it has won to make online professional development opportunities available for educators. For example, TIE received a grant from the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) called Learning Power to prepare teachers to offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses online for students in the sparsely populated, small rural school districts. TIE has no annual state or federal allocation of public revenues. Staff and operations are supported entirely through entrepreneurial efforts and the membership fee of school districts. Table 7 profiles how the Mass Customized Learning program meets each criterion of a future-focused ESA.

Table 7. Profile of Mass Customized Learning (MCL) Program Operated by TIE, A division of Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC)

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The Mass Customization Learning (MCL) model seeks to enable teachers to routinely customize instruction that meets the specific needs and/or desires of students without adding significantly to the cost. Key features of MCL include: • Preparing teachers to change their mindset about their role • Helping administrators know how to break down the traditional wall that inhibits progress • Educating teachers and administrators on transformational technologies that make customization possible • Countering the tendency to use online approaches based on traditional face to face workshops, simply providing a more convenient way to respond to questions — an automation of an old process • Planning technology applications using the SAMR chart (S=Substitution, A= Augmentation, M=Modification, R=Redefinition).

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	TIE uses a formal Survey Monkey form consisting of 14 questions to collect feedback from participants in online professional development opportunities. Participants rate items that address: • Effectiveness of the course structure • Effectiveness of the course facilitator(s) in managing the content of the course • Effectiveness of the course facilitator(s) in managing relationships for the course • Relevance and usefulness of course content to teaching or professional work • Level of preparation of the participant to use the content in teaching or professional work • Appropriateness of content to level of experience with the Internet • Extent that the inclusion of video or screencasting enhanced the course • Extent the learning management system format enhanced the effectiveness of the program • Likelihood of participant to participate in future online workshops The teacher can also provide comments identifying topics for future offerings, most effective part of the course, and ways to make the course more effective.
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	TIE staff used a professional learning community model where groups of people worked together to construct new ideas, relied on research, and leveraged existing grants that concentrated on using online technology. Chuck Schwahn, co-author of *Inevitable: Mass Customized Learning, Learning in the Age of Empowerment*, came to TIE and presented the opportunity for a partnership to start the initiative.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	Many schools with federal school improvement grants (SIG) are receiving technical assistance on Mass Customization Learning in conjunction with other BHSSC and TIE services. TIE staff members are producing a field book to complement the book *Inevitable*. As a result, the how-to resource guide is helping the organizations develop new capacity (e.g., becoming a publisher) by producing both an ebook and paper book with teacher PD built around it.

8. Cooperative Educational Service Agency #1 (CESA #1), Pewaukee, Wisconsin

CESA #1 operates an Online Learning Center (OLC) as The Institute at CESA #1. CESA #1, located in southeastern Wisconsin, is comprised of 45 school districts in six counties, more than 29,000 educators and more than 300,000 students.

The Online Learning Center provides a proficiency-based licensure (PBL) program and Personalized Proficiency-based Learning for Educators (PPLE). CESA #1 serves educators in southeast Wisconsin and beyond in rural, urban, suburban settings. The center delivers workshops, collaborations, and courses online for educators. The Center offers courses for new teachers, collaboration area for assessors and coaches, certification resources (e.g., modules) and a forum for exploring best practices for English Language Learners (ELLs), a PBL candidate resource library, among other "course categories."

Management of the Online Learning Center is through collaboration between agency technology and end users. CESA #1 technology oversees and trains field staff in different roles based upon need and direction. PBL and PPLE are staffed by CSA #1 personnel in roles as assessors, coaches, and administrators, as well as content or skill experts who deliver the teacher learning opportunities.

These positions are covered by the fees that are paid by the individual teachers. In some cases, districts sponsor their teachers and pay for the costs. Initial investment (i.e., hardware and installation) of the Online Learning Center was grant funded. Upgrades, maintenance, and training are funded through user fees based upon program needs and use, and through in-kind services contributing to the overall user groups (i.e., sharing of content creation, shared training).

Table 8. Profile of the Online Learning Center

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	Personalized Proficiency-based Learning for Educators (PPLE) supports school districts in southeast Wisconsin in transforming teachers as facilitators of learning rather than the owners of content. Thus, the old model of "sit and get" professional development is insufficient. Key features of the program or service that makes it futures-oriented include: • Enabling educators to focus on the specific skills they need to be successful in a personalized learning environment. PPLE enables educators to pick and choose single offerings that will enhance their professional learning and may aid in the professional development requirement for educator license renewal • Basing professional development on a clear set of standards for teacher performance, not on seat time or workshop objectives • Providing teachers a personalized environment as they work on key areas for growth using the learning styles and preferences that work best for them, including online traditional courses, Personal Network Learning and a blended online learning community • Using a baseline assessment to establish the learner profile and customized learning plan for the teacher, with the teacher submitting evidence of mastery in a variety of formats as the teacher gains proficiency in the skill sets until all standards have been mastered.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	CESA #1 collects quantitative and qualitative data on the program, as follows: • Determining performance of each teacher through an Assessment Center • Conducting surveys of participants for all professional development offerings • Using live and recorded video to document observations, with teachers using the video for self reflection and goal setting in order to identify their learning needs • Using teacher data along with student data to assess impact on student achievement. Early results show teachers in a personalized learning environment have students who are gaining above their peers in academic achievement.

| Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	CESA #1 implemented several practices to develop the program, as follows: • Configured an Online Learning Management system with teacher learning standards included • Created a Virtual Conference Center through the use of modules with various tools enabling one user entry to allow for capacity, fiscal savings and portability. Each tool can be replaced without reconfiguration of the entire scope and from the user end, no re-learning or re-direction.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The program is expanding capacity in others in following ways: • CESA #1 Board of Control authorized the agency to provide a certificate, called Personalized Learning Endorsement, based upon successful evidence of proficiency in the personalized learning skillsets. • Regional school districts have identified the Personalized Learning Endorsements as a preferred qualification criterion for existing and future hires, thus expanding the expertise in the region for qualified workforce of teachers in a transformed system. • Regional focus of teacher development is encouraging school districts and others to examine funding differently, as no additional money and use of existing funding sources push getting student learning right the first time every time, instead of directing funds towards intervention and remediation. The OLC is used to promote teachers' learning in the role of a student in order to better understand and implement with their own students.

Summary

This section has described how ESAs in eight states are providing online professional development that addresses the need to improve teacher quality in one or more school districts. In some instances the ESA service extends to all school districts in the state, several states, and internationally. Examples were selected by the authors based on the response to the national study of online pd in ESAs (Harmon, 2011) and the nomination process described previously in this issue of *Perspectives*.

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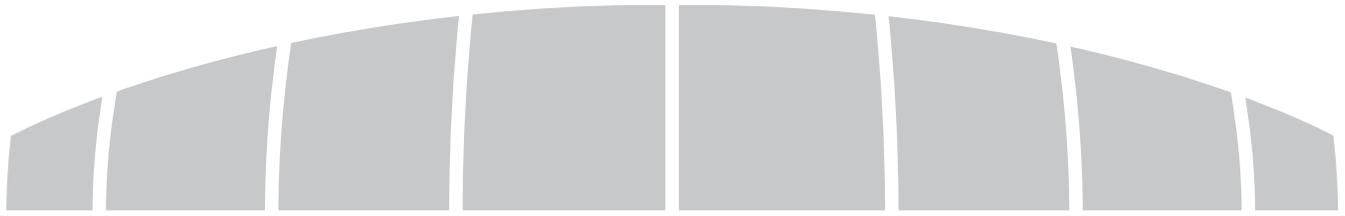
The Emergence of Statewide Networks and Shared Services

Gone are the days when a public agency could protect its boundaries and serve its clients independently. The thrust of this trend is summed up in a 2011 quotation from Stanford University's *Social Innovation Review:* "Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, not the isolated intervention of individual organizations" (Kania & Kramer, 2011). ESAs in several states including Washington, Wisconsin, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania (not an exhaustive list) have beefed up their state associations or transformed them entirely to support a statewide delivery network that capitalizes on synergies among the ESAs. A statewide delivery network raises the visibility and potential impact of the state's ESAs as a group, making it easier for funders such as the State Department of Education or a large foundation grantor to coordinate statewide programs, thereby increasing the consistency of delivery.

If ESAs are to make a significant contribution to the "wicked" problems of American education, they will not do so by operating independently. They will have to find ways to open their service and program boundaries to expand access and leverage resources across regions, states, and even in multi-state regions. More ESA partnerships with organizations across sectors are also likely—commerce departments, health and human service agencies, local government, and more. The skill to form and sustain effective partnerships will grow in importance for ESA leaders.

There are numerous examples of shared services across the country that include but are not limited to finance, human resource management, purchasing, legal services, data warehousing, instructional management, technology, school improvement, public relations, transportation, online learning, custodial and maintenance services, and security.

The ability to work together for the good of all of a state's ESAs, however, does not come easily. It requires effort to build trust. In some cases, 40 years of head-to-head competition have preceded the recognition that working together is an organizational necessity in today's world. This kind of history will not be set aside in a couple of planning sessions. New ground rules must be developed, committed to, tested, and refined even though it is impossible to predict at the outset all the situations that may arise to challenge best thinking. A spirit of ethically-based entrepreneurship must allow for progress while preserving relationships. It is common among newly formed state or regional ESA networks for one member to act in ways that seem out of bounds to the others. Where is the fine line between being entrepreneurial and taking undue advantage? How can individual agencies serve their local regions effectively at the same time they contribute to the greater aims of the ESAs in an entire state? And if they don't manage both roles well, are they at such risk that none of the agencies may be viable in the long run?

Below are summarized a few of the shared service partnerships and embryonic state ESA networks that are currently under way and deserving of attention.

1. Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) Network, nine ESDs in the state of Washington. Northeast Washington Educational Service District 101 (NEWESD) in Spokane, Washington is point of contact.

Since 2007 the Network has had many successes but the greatest success to date has been working with the legislature to create and fund collaborative programs across all nine ESDs. This network works closely with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to improve student achievement by implementing new state standards, supporting the student assessment system, and improving student learning opportunities, thereby providing a state-wide system of professional development for new initiatives such as Common Core Standards.

Table 1. AESD Network

Criterion	How Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	In 2012 the nine ESAs signed the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) operating principles which outline the intent of the Network: 1. Develop strength and autonomy at the local service level while creating a consistent delivery system at the state level. 2. Be the statewide system of choice for development and delivery of state, federal and private education initiatives. 3. Positively influence state education policy. Work toward mutual benefit with policymakers on policy development and initiative deployment. 4. Develop and stabilize well-defined processes and structures to support the Network and statewide service delivery system. The intent was further clarified by the statement: The ESD Network will be strengthened by its relationships with key influence groups: LEAs, public and private independent schools, the State Legislature, the Office of the Governor, and OSPI, to name a few. The effectiveness with which the nine ESDs are able to establish a unified and coherent presence in these relationships is critical to the recognition of the Network as a legitimate and valid member of the State's education system.

Criterion	How Program or Service Meets Criterion
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	After three years, a body of data has been collected that provides evidence of the significant outcomes from the work of the Regional Math and Science Coordinators. In addition, Regional Coordinators have supported other regional collaborations and leveraged funding from other projects to greatly expand the reach and impact of the network. The Network utilizes third party evaluations. Four of the nine ESDs employ evaluators to assist in continuous improvement based on data and proven practices.
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	Since 2007 the Network has had significant accomplishments. 1. The legislature provided a math and science coordinator for each region knowing that through the Network, a consistent delivery and training model could be demonstrated across the state. 2. The math and science coordinator statewide program added $5 million dollars to the ESD Core Funding Allocation. 3. The ESDs hired a statewide math and science coordinator to insure consistency and equalize educational opportunities. 4. The State Superintendent of Publication Instruction has asked the ESD Network to lead the Regional Implementation of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Project (TPEP). 5. The funding model for the statewide Network continues to be refined and changed to meet today's needs and maintain equity and fairness among ESDs.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The statewide Network is governed by the ESD superintendents and a board member representative from each ESD. Program and financial decisions are driven by the nine superintendents and nine board members. From a statewide perspective, the AESD Network is building capacity throughout the state by working collaboratively and leveraging limited resources. The research and anecdotal data show that students have made significant gains on the state math achievement tests and when utilizing the International Mathematics and Science Study (TMSS) math and student assessment as a pre-post measurement of academic growth. (Source: ESD Math Science Coordinators, *Success from the Washington State Educational Service Districts, Executive Summary,* December 2011.)

2. Cascade Education Alliance (CEA), Northwest Oregon. Columbia Gorge ESA in the Dalles, OR, is point of contact.

Formed in 2010 as a shared service cooperative, the Cascade Education Alliance (CEA in Northwestern Oregon is comprised of the Columbia Gorge Educational Service District (ESD), Multnomah ESD, Northwest Regional ESD and Willamette ESD. It serves 53 school districts representing approximately 50% of the K-12 students in Oregon

The mission of CEA is to develop and sustain a viable innovative approach to education service provision that responds to the economic environment and delivers on the fundamental promises of the education service district concept: to reduce redundancy and cost, to enhance education services and to support program equity across school districts.

Table 2. CEA Alliance

Criterion	How Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	After two years CEA continues to evolve by increasing flexibility, improving customer service and increasing service availability to 53 school districts benefitting approximately 50% of the K-12 students in Oregon. CEA makes all of their education services available to any district in their combined service areas. This enables school districts to access the local service plans of all four ESDs. All districts pay the same fee for services regardless of size and/ or location. Where appropriate, state resolution funds are also used to offset costs.

Criterion	How Program or Service Meets Criterion

2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	CEA identified the following shared service areas for implementation in 2011-12 and 2012-13:
	
	• *Regional Financial Services*
	    Members of CEA have collaboratively developed a three-year plan for the integration of financial services under the direction of a regional financial officer (CFO). CEA has hired a part-time CFO who will work with the development team made up of representatives from each member ESD to fully implement this plan.
	
	• *Regional Data Warehousing*
	    Utilizing existing infrastructure, CEA leveraged a northern point of presence in the Northwest Regional ESD and a southern point of presence in the Willamette ESD to provide data warehousing services to schools within and outside the alliance. Both data warehouses utilize the most advanced and user-friendly administrative and teacher dashboards to access critical data. By leveraging the resources of both entities the region now has backup (redundancy) systems in place. The two points of presence now serve nearly 350,000 students and their teachers throughout the state of Oregon.
	
	• *Regional Technology Services*
	    Operating as the Cascade Technology Alliance (CTA), the member agencies have formed a sustainable model for the provision of technology services with the expectation of reducing redundancy and costs, and reallocating resources into new services required to support 21st century education. These services include data center and network management; server and help desk support; financial, human resources and student information systems; data warehousing and reporting; as well as operational and instructional support.
	
	• *School Improvement*
	    CEA has collaboratively developed a plan for the integration of school improvement services across the region. The plan is based upon the School Improvement Plan adopted by the Oregon Association of Education Service District (OAESD) Superintendents in the spring of 2011. The guiding principles include:
	
	   • A structured, collaborative, data-driven decision-making process that is consistently used at the district, building, and classroom level to improve instruction and increase student achievement
	
	   • Use of formative, interim, summative, and performance assessments or tasks that are directly correlated to the district identified priority standards that, along with other adult data, are integral to the data-driven decision-making process
	
	   • A guaranteed and viable curriculum, which means that the essential content to be taught at each grade level is clearly identified and communicated to staff, and that there is adequate time available to teach the essential content
	
	   • Use of effective instructional strategies and interventions by teachers that are research-based and maximize student learning
	
	   • Creation of a safe and orderly atmosphere, critical to an effective learning environment
	
	   • Effective leadership and accountability at all levels.
	
	    By sharing content and training experience across the region, all schools will have access to the best professional development and mentoring available through the ESDs.

Criterion	How Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	One of the benefits of this unique ESD shared service approach is the enhancement and extension of the collective knowledge and expertise across the region. Through CEA the ESDs are able to leverage resources, provide greater choice of service offerings and establish new services while providing efficiencies and economies of scales. CEA is also in the process of expanding the breadth of services by adding human resources and nursing services to its regional offerings.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The partners in CEA do not view their commitment as a short term solution but rather see their efforts as a new way forward. By leveraging human and financial resources, CEA can have the greatest impact on the districts, schools and children they serve. This shared service cooperative will continue to be a collaborative interactive process that leverages resources and builds capacity across the four education service districts.

3. CSCOPE, Austin, Texas. Region XIII Educational Service Center serves as point of contact.

Full implementation of CSCOPE took place in 2006-07. CSCOPE is a comprehensive online curriculum management system developed and owned by the Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative (TESCCC), a consortium composed of 19 of the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) in the state. CSCOPE provides districts a common language, structure and process for curriculum delivery. As of 2012, CSCOPE membership included 820 of the 1224 school districts in Texas. This represents 65% of the school districts and charter schools in Texas and includes approximately 1.6 million students.

Table 3. Comprehensive Online Curriculum Management System

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative (TESCCC) is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation. TESCCC owns and manages the CSCOPE curriculum management system. The TESCCC Board of Directors is managed by the executive directors of the member Education Service Centers (ESCs). The collaborative goal is to provide a quality curriculum support system to Texas K-12 schools, charter schools, and private schools. CSCOPE is a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum support system. The curriculum is based on best practice models from top researchers and is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) requirements and the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™). CSCOPE allows ESCs and districts to save time and money while providing curricular and instructional consistency among all participants.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	To date there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the program, but there have been independent studies. For example. in a separate study published in 2009, the Legislative Budget Board reviewed district performance data. Of the 10 districts reviewed at least two were CSCOPE users. The study cited that across all TEKS tests and grades tested, most of the districts in the targeted review performed above the state average in school years 2002-03 and 2006-07. The districts generally show a trend of increasing student performance over the period. In addition the eight districts with either internally developed or externally developed curriculum management systems generally performed above the state average across all core subject areas and made improvements across student group performance. While improvements in student performance across the districts in the targeted reviews cannot be attributed directly to district curriculum management system activities, anecdotal evidence indicates that districts attributed some of the improvements in student achievement to the instructional tools used in the districts (Source: *Legislative Budget Board*, 2009). Another state study examined financial and shared curriculum services available to school districts in Texas. The study reported that CSCOPE is a low cost resource that is available to all districts. One school district estimated that using CSCOPE saves between $25,000 and $35,000 a year, (Source: *The Comptroller's Office. Allocation Study for Texas*, 2009).

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	This is truly a shared service in that the TESCCC project currently has no employees. CSCOPE is managed and operated by the RSC's executive directors and their instructional staff. The registered office and fiscal agent of the corporation is located at the Region XIII Education Service Center in Austin, where the State CSCOPE team is housed and employed. Texas school districts purchase an annual license through one of the ESCs. Each ESC provides standard and/or custom plans for support of school districts. Each member ESC contributes a portion of the CSCOPE fees collected from the districts to cover development, technology, administrative delivery as well as oversight costs. ESCs then use the remaining funds for training, support and technical assistance.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	CSCOPE is an online curriculum management system that encourages the integration and use of district resources. CSCOPE provides a framework of what to teach. Teachers can use the lessons provided or adapt the lessons to their particular needs. The curriculum includes assessments and instructional components for English and Spanish instruction in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Since the system is delivered to participating school districts in a web-based format, districts can customize content to address unique district and community expectations and priorities.

4. Emerging CESA Statewide Network (CSN), Wisconsin. The CSN Commissioner in Luxenburg, WI, is the point of contact.

In early 2010 the 12 Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESA) in Wisconsin determined that doing business as usual would not meet their future needs. By 2010-11 the CSN Network was in place and the network was operational and leveraging resources across the state.

Table 4. CESA Statewide Network

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The CESA Network has completed the design phase, formed a governing structure, established bylaws, implemented a budget, designed functions, and seated Jesse Harness as the first CSN Commissioner. In addition, they jointly developed statewide initiatives in partnership with the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction (DPI). All of these designs and operational steps were necessary in order to build a strong foundation for CSN. Today, thorough the "Power of 12," the CESAs provide shared services to every school district in the state. By early 2011 the network set out to accomplish the following eight functions: 1. Serve the collective and individual interests of the 12 members and, by extension, the interests of all Wisconsin school districts 2. Enhance the image of the CESAs individually and collectively 3. Establish a single point of contact for statewide initiatives 4. Increase the capacity of the Network and its members to deliver high-quality services 5. Assist CESAs to develop and hone the core services provided in their individual agencies 6. Coordinate the efforts of CESA personnel with similar responsibilities 7. Have a formal channel of influence with the DPI by collaborating on statewide initiatives 8. Provide equal opportunity to promote innovation. Today the services provided on a statewide basis include: 1. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) statewide rollout 2. CESA purchasing 3. Communications and public relations 4. Food and nutrition analysis for school districts 5. Quality Online Teaching Project 6. Wisconsin Google Apps for Education 7. Wisconsin Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Centers 8. Educator Effectiveness Project 9. Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Training and Technical Assistance Center.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	Since CSN has only been in existence for two years, research is limited. However, in the Quality Online Teaching Project, initial research conducted by Online Teaching Associates (OTA) showed positive results. Pre- and post-surveys were voluntarily administered online. The mean gain between the pre- and post-surveys was 1.58 on a four-point scale; an approximately 32% gain on a four-point Likert scale. This finding is statistically significant at the 0.01% level. The findings suggest that CSN's participation in OTA produces an apparently positive effect on participants' belief in their own competence to serve as teachers or facilitators of learning in fully online and/or blended learning environments.
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	Through the statewide network the CESAs have worked together to develop a seamless process for the CESAs; consequently, all school districts receive the same services and level of support regardless of their size and/or location. CSN is governed by a Governing Council of CESA Administrators. Each CESA is governed by a Board of Control made up of 12 elected board of education members from each of CESA's member school districts.
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The CSN Network has only been in existence two years, yet the impact has been significant. While all CESAs provide their own services to their region, they leverage specific services across the state. According to CSN Commissioner Jesse Harness, "CSN is geared toward providing services that are critical to develop, but would be inefficient for all CESAs to duplicate in terms of time, human resources and financial impact. When one CESA has the expertise and development capacity, we tap into that service and make it equally available through all CESAs for all school districts."

5. Fiscal Services/Business Management Services for Small Rural Schools. North Central ESD 171 in Wenatchee, WA is point of contact.

The North Central Educational Service District (NCESD) Fiscal Service/Business model serves 12 school districts. The ESD provides the typical business services and a full menu of additional services including fiscal analysis, enrollment tracking and trend projections, bond and levy planning, and state reports.

Table 5. Fiscal and Business Services for Small Rural Districts

| Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
1. Program or service reflects a future orientation-addressing current and emerging community and education needs in the 21st Century.	The Fiscal Services/Business Management Services for Small Rural Schools began in 2004 when a small local district couldn't find a business manager and asked North Central ESD to assist them until they could find a replacement. Today, because of the success of this service the district is still receiving services from their ESD. The only difference is that now 12 of the 29 rural districts in the region are participating in this shared service. These districts moved to this model because the business manager position in local school districts has changed dramatically in the last decade. In the past, a district could find a bookkeeper from within the community. The reality is that today financial service is far more complex and integrated then it was a few short years ago. In many rural districts the community has outgrown its ability to provide the level of expertise necessary to meet the needs of the district.
2. The sponsoring agency achieves and can document intended program results in either instructional or non-instructional areas.	Success is reflected in the fact that the districts continue to participate and receive positive state audits and the number of participants has been growing. It is difficult to quantify the success of this shared service. One can ascertain that beginning in 2002 three districts participated in this shared service and that by 2011-2012 there were 11 districts participating. The following chart displays the growth of the shared service: District / Year They Joined / Number of Students Stehekin 2002 16 Palisades 2002 26 Brewster 2002 990 Cashmere 2004 1407 Nespelem 2007 130 Methow 2008 560 Wilson Creek 2010 126 Grand Coulee 2011 644 Cascade 2011 1190 Ephrata 2012 2234 Tonasket 2012 1000
3. The sponsoring agency uses effective contemporary-perhaps even innovative-organizational processes and practices in the development and delivery of the program or service.	Reductions in state funding over the past decade have forced local districts, especially those in areas with declining enrollment or declining assessed valuation, to make very difficult decisions regarding staffing levels. The initial reductions usually occur in the central office. In many cases, a district's ability to outsource some of its central office staffing needs such as fiscal services allows the district to avoid having to cut principals and teachers who are responsible for instructional programs.

Criterion	How ESA Program or Service Meets Criterion
4. The sponsoring agency builds capacities among individuals, organizations, communities and/or systems through the program.	The contracting districts get the full NCESD team. The districts recognize that as a member in the shared service they have access to the same level of expertise they would have if they were a large urban or suburban district.

Summary

This is a small, but we think significant, sample of more systemic approaches to collaborative service agency delivery around the country. This is a trend that is happening very quickly. Subsequent summaries will undoubtedly be much longer.

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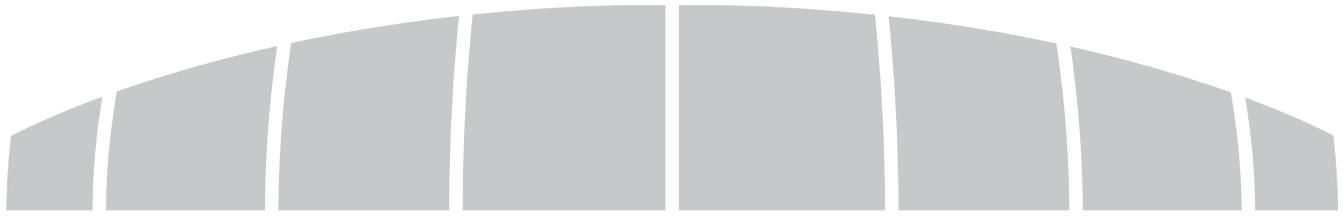
Leading in the Future

Perhaps many readers have encountered the ironic statement, "We plan and God laughs."

Making confident judgments about the future, whether as individuals or organizations, seems almost impossible. On the other hand, events of the last 20 or more years have demonstrated that the world seems to be changing at an increasingly accelerating rate. There are many causes of that rapid change, probably none more important than technology as the preceding sections have demonstrated. In fact, it would be difficult to identify a modern profession, occupation, or activity that has not been significantly altered by technology. This is particularly true of education.

The purposes of the educational service agency movement in its early years were relatively straightforward: expand access to programs and services to all districts that were currently available only to larger, better financed districts and encourage cooperation among districts to achieve economies of scale through collaborative bidding and purchasing. In the 1990s a third purpose became prominent; namely, to help underachieving local school districts improve student learning (Stephens and Keane, 2005).

The first goal was particularly helpful in expanding programs and services for special education students throughout the country. Vocational programs were also significantly expanded, whether by opening up local facilities to young people from other districts through coordination of the ESA or, under the leadership of the ESA, by building new facilities that were available to students in the region.

The second purpose was achieved though cooperative bidding of such essentials as food commodities for school cafeterias, paper products for classrooms, or materials and equipment for building maintenance. The third purpose was achieved through a variety of programs and services offered at the ESA and within local districts.

In most instances the normal service area for individual ESAs was set in law, rule or regulation to be a group of districts with some geographical proximity to the ESA. This made eminent good sense since staff training became one of the services that grew to be invaluable to local districts, and this service needed to be offered within a reasonable driving distance of the local districts that were served if teachers, administrators and other local district staff were expected to attend in a manner that was tolerable in both travel time and cost.

The above statements represent a relatively common description of the role and common functions of ESA of the 1960s through the 1990s. Though the defined purposes of the ESAs have not changed significantly in recent years, the processes for achieving these goals have changed, largely because of technology and the newer forms of communication it has engendered.

The many examples in this study illustrate that more changes will be required of ESAs as the 21st Century progresses. However, ESAs are creatures of each state and their roles and functions are subject to state decision-making. In some states ESAs are being asked to provide services to municipal governments as well as local school districts (e.g., Ohio). In other states individual ESAs are being asked to function more as one element of a coordinated statewide network of service agencies rather than as an independent agency (e.g., Wisconsin).

ESAs have historically been under scrutiny both by state legislatures and local districts to account for their value. A few local districts have felt that any state money the ESA receives ought to go to them. However, history shows most ESAs have been innovative in anticipating needs and have responded in a timely way, thus proving their essential value to the education delivery system. This radically new environment in which ESAs are now immersed will require even more creative responses. It will not be enough to measure agency effectiveness through opinion surveys of district users. It will be necessary to clearly demonstrate and prove effectiveness and value of the ESA's programs and services. Moreover, ESAs can not remain an invisible partner in the educational enterprise (Stephens & Keane, 2005). Individual ESAs and statewide networks of ESAs must aggressively market their services and document value in an increasingly competitive environment for public dollars.

It will be important for ESA leadership to anticipate the future and create solutions to problems that have not yet become major issues at the local level. Though ESAs have been partners with other agencies that require some response from education (e.g., colleges and universities, social service agencies, technology companies), partnerships with other levels of government, businesses, and health care institutions, now just beginning, can be expected to grow in importance. ESAs have generally grown and thrived because they have been creative, entrepreneurial, and collegial. The need for these characteristics will expand even further in the years ahead.

This study has attempted to offer examples of programs and services in some ESAs that are responding to a new age in education. There are many more examples in ESAs across the nation not mentioned here because the authors did not have the resources to conduct a more comprehensive and representative study of ESAs in the AESA membership. We encourage leaders of future-oriented ESAs to share their efforts in breaking the service agency delivery mold by contacting the editor of *Perspectives* and exploring possible publication in future issues of the journal.

We hope that the work described here will encourage other ESAs that are not yet doing so to respond effectively to the new age in education in a rapidly changing world. The authors are confident that the successful growth of ESAs nationally over the last four decades suggests that ESAs will continue to adapt to the new challenges as a valued partner in America's public education system.

> **"Moreover, ESAs can not remain an invisible partner in the educational enterprise (Stephens & Keane, 2005). Individual ESAs and statewide networks of ESAs must aggressively market their services and document value in an increasingly competitive environment for public dollars."**

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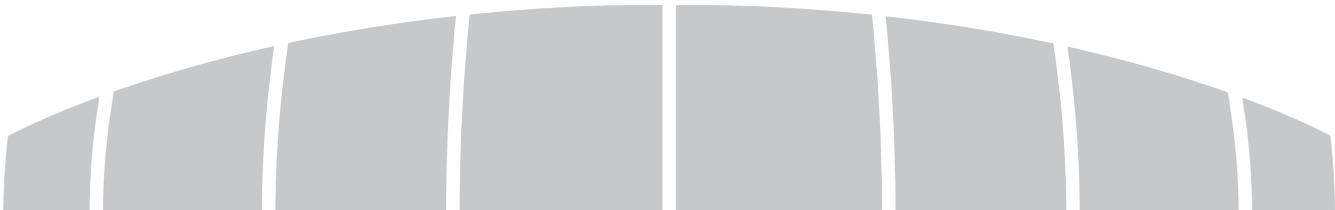
Thoughts, Insights and Reminiscences of a Retired ESA Lobbyist

by
Wayne Haddy

On June 30th, 2011 I retired as the first, and as of that date, the only lobbyist for the Area Education Agencies (AEA) system in Iowa. Shortly following my retirement Dr. Robert Stephens invited my wife and me to brunch, a gesture much appreciated, but one I soon found came with an ulterior motive. As it turns out, Bob wanted me to write about my experiences over the past 30 years as a lobbyist, which he thought would be of value and interest to other ESAs. I was reluctant and skeptical of just how much interest would be found in my experiences, but my respect for Bob and what he has meant to the system of intermediate agencies across the country won out. I promised him I would try to put something together.

My objective is to provide insights into a role that I am told was unique to ESAs at the time and to share some thoughts on the job and the function of lobbying. So, if the reader finds this of any interest I will be pleased; if not, blame Bob.

In the Beginning

In the early years of the AEA's existence, 1975-81, we were represented at the capitol by lobbyists for the Iowa Association of School Boards. Eventually the then chief administrators of the individual AEAs determined that inherent in such an arrangement was a potential for a conflict of interest and divided loyalties on the part of the school boards representative. They determined that they needed a representative at the legislature who served the interests and spoke for the AEAs solely.

At that time I had been employed by the Grant Wood AEA in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, as a grant writer and public information specialist. However, because I had a background in politics, having worked in two gubernatorial campaigns, the then administrator sent me occasionally to the capitol to monitor legislative activities. When the decision was made to employ an AEA lobbyist I was asked to fill the roll. Thinking that this position was made for me, I accepted. However it did not take long to learn just how naive and unprepared I was to become a full time lobbyist.

I do not know with certainty if my position was unique to ESAs at the time; however, I have been led to believe that it is much more prevalent today to have an individual fill this role. Furthermore, I do not know if my experiences are common to other state systems or if they have been unique to Iowa. It is important to point out, as background for understanding my experiences, that along with federal funding, AEAs in Iowa are funded primarily with state tax revenues and property tax. Thus, we are much more on the radar of the General Assembly than if we were financed more predominantly by a sale–of–services model or were state funded to a lesser extent.

Early Lessons

As I began this role I quickly found out that among other issues:

- Most legislators had no idea what AEAs did.

- Even many of the "clients" we provided services to were lacking in a basic understanding of how AEAs were funded and all of the services that were available to them.

- When push came to shove, AEAs did not have a natural and unified constituency willing to provide the needed legislative support on a consistent basis.

- Some legislators, when choosing to denigrate AEAs, fell back on the old bromide of "my AEA is okay, but the rest are not."

- In tight budget years AEAs were and are an easy target for cuts.

- Some legislators and clients wanted the AEAs legislated out of existence.

- In the same vein some legislators and clients wanted the AEA funding to go directly to LEAs to allow them to purchase the services as they pleased.

- In some instances AEAs themselves were still acting as individual agents, thus weakening our position.

I would like to say that I was able to successfully deal with these issues to the point that they were no longer troublesome, but that would not be accurate. Unfortunately, once I got to the point of thinking I was doing a good job of educating current legislators on the ESA role in the education system, it was time for another election. This often resulted in a new set of legislators to deal with. If election results brought about significant change in majorities, leadership and chairmanships, the education process had to begin anew with the same old problems and mindsets concerning the AEAs. Obviously this is a scenario common to other states as well.

In some respects the same scenario happens at the schools we serve. Changes in administration and faculty with preconceived notions about the ESA system make it difficult to continually make them aware of the importance of what we do. Unfortunately, during times of budget constraints, the need for the different education groups to work together and be unified can easily fall by the wayside as each look out for their own interests.

It is also difficult to achieve some of the legislative platform wishes of the AEA system when time is spent periodically fighting off attempts to wipe agencies out of existence or make further budget reductions.

I guess one of my biggest frustrations with the job as I look back was that it seems like I was continually fighting some of the same battles from the first day of the job to the last. In this respect the job has not changed much over the past 30 years, but there have been some.

Changes Over the Years

What has changed, in the author's opinion, is the ideology of those who now serve in an elected capacity. I am not naive enough to expect the two major parties to agree on every issue, but the differences of bygone days were much narrower than they are today. A gulf between the two parties has emerged over the years that makes it almost impossible to find any type of reasonable middle ground.

Simply put, the attitude in the past was one of both sides trying to find a compromise position that would benefit the state. That however has changed to a position of determining what we can do that portrays our "enemies" in a negative light prior to the next election. It is difficult, if not impossible, to try to reason with legislators when this attitude is present, and it is even more difficult to reach a true compromise.

What has also changed, again in my opinion, is the attitude toward public education and public employees. In the past there was a sense that basically both parties, to various degrees, believed in the importance of public education and the role the state should play to make a quality experience available to every child. While they will seldom come right out and admit it, some of the recently elected members of one party do not truly believe in public education and the value of anyone working in public employment. This, to their way of thinking, makes it easy for them to make budget cuts in this area.

At the same time the other party wants to put every available dollar into public employee salaries. While not necessarily always a bad thing, this decision often comes at the expense of fewer dollars for needed program costs, research and development and infrastructure improvements.

For Your Consideration

So, faced with flat revenues and the impediments listed above, what can ESAs do to strengthen their positions as much as possible? I would offer the following suggestions:

- When necessary, ESAs must align themselves with other educational interest groups that may have some influence within the capitol; i.e., I utilized more than once the assistance of such seemingly disparate groups as the teachers' association and the representatives of the private and Christian schools who received services from the AEA.

- We must make more of a concerted effort to reach out to the users of our services, both educators and parents. As I look back I believe now that I was in error for not making enough of an effort to utilize the voices of special education parents as a lobbying force. Obviously special education is a key program service provided by most ESAs and such an interest group should be utilized when necessary and feasible.

- In addition to the above we must make every effort to educate our users on what they would lose or do without if ESAs were eliminated or had their funding reduced.

- We must make every effort to continually reinforce with legislators the role of the ESAs. Obviously this is not always an easy task as some of them refuse to even take the time to learn. In Iowa we had meetings every other year in each AEA region with legislators from that area. We had specific topics to talk with them about to try to pique their interest. Despite that we were lucky if we got a third of the legislators from the area to attend. However, we must keep trying. One new convert is one more than we had prior.

- We must be able to show the value of our services. In an effort to offset the "my AEA is okay, but the others are not" argument of some legislators, the AEAs initiated an online statewide satisfaction survey in conjunction with the Department of Education. We are now able to use the positive results of this survey to point out how erroneous these statements are.

- We must be able to legitimize our position. In Iowa we worked with the legislature, at our request, to establish an AEA accreditation system.

- We need to establish relationships with legislators. If AEAs can get to the point when legislators are calling to ask about certain pieces of legislation, then we have won part of the battle.

- At some point late in a session, chances are that most decisions will be made by a small group of individuals meeting behind closed doors. If the AEA can have one of those meeting participants involved in advocating for ESA positions while at the table, the agencies will be in a very enviable position.

- We must work with other educational entities and not allow the legislature to play us one against the other for the funds available. A united front makes their votes much more difficult than when they can separate us.

- That dirty word money! We may not like it, but there is no doubt that political contributions to the right legislators can make a difference, sometime slight, sometimes major.

- Perhaps most importantly, the state system of ESAs must act as a single unit when it comes to legislative issues and priorities. There are enough others trying to impact us in a negative way without us working against each other

There are no doubt other strategies that can be employed, but those listed above are some basic suggestions. Will they always work and solve all of our legislative issues? Obviously not, but a coherent and coordinated strategy is much better than doing nothing and just accepting what comes.

The one immutable lesson I have learned over all of these many years is simply this: Since the state legislature has the authority to exercise any control over ESAs, then ESAs must have a representative on the legislative scene. At the very least such positioning allows ESAs the opportunity to impact any legislation that might affect these agencies

Positive Outcomes

Much of what I have related to this point is somewhat on the negative side and emphasizes some of the difficulties I faced in dealing with the legislature. However, I would be remiss if I did not point out that there have been victories over the years and instances when our AEA lobbying efforts have paid major dividends. Some examples:

- We have increased the general knowledge of what we do among legislators.

- We do have some legislators fighting to assist and protect us in the process.

- We are recognized as a "go to" entity when new educational initiatives need to be started.

- We achieved the goal of having previously reduced funding restored. This is a very rare occurrence since funding cuts are usually considered lost forever.

- We were able to pass legislation that included our staff in what was referred to as "Teacher Quality Funding." These were funds used to increase teacher salaries and thus our staff salaries.

- We have been able to resist the push by some legislators, and unfortunately some LEAs, to give the AEA funding directly to the districts.

- Most importantly, we have been able to maintain the existence of AEAs, which in some years was not as easy as it may sound.

So while lobbying on behalf of ESAs can be difficult, stressful and frustrating, there are still ample reasons why we must continue this function to assure the successful survival behalf of service agencies throughout the country.

Earlier I pointed out that when I took the job that AEAs were still acting as individual entities. It is important to point out that as an added benefit the decision of the AEAs to employ a lobbyist was the first step in what became an organizational shift from individual AEAs to a statewide system of AEAs.

When I view the system now, I see an organization that looks for ways to work together. It is a system that shares ideas, determines the best course for the AEAs through a consensus approach, speaks as one entity and is mutually supportive. This has been a very productive shift that has helped our cause at the capitol. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for me, as the AEA representative, to achieve much at the legislature if the individual AEAs were still trying to cut deals on the side.

So You Want to be a Lobbyist

I have been asked at various times over the years what skill sets may be necessary to fill the lobbyist role. Objectively speaking and in no way intimating that I have all of these skills, I think an effective ESA lobbyist should possess most of the following skills:

- Expert regarding of the ESA system. This person must know all the facets of what the agency does and can do.

- Strategist. The lobbyist must be able to devise strategies to meet ever changing circumstances, both political and legislative.

- Organizer. Along with devising political strategies the individual must be able to determine how those he/she represents will implement and deliver the strategies to the appropriate legislators and/or individuals.

- Motivator. Not all ESA staff feel comfortable with politics. They must be motivated to reach out to their legislators and learn to work with them.

- Visionary. What may not be achieved this session may be possible in the future.

- Issue Manager. Very seldom will a lobbyist have only one issue to follow. All issues must be given adequate attention.

- Text translator. Legislative language is not always easy to comprehend. It is crucial to know what a bill is really saying and the likely impact of the legislation on the ESA.

- Interpreter. The ability to present arguments in a concise manner. We do not always have the luxury of being able to present our arguments in a relaxed, open-ended time period.

- **Self- Regulator.** During my first few years on the job I would find myself consistently worrying about the outcome of legislation that I was working on, and it actually did impact my time away from the capitol and my stress level and quite honestly this personal turmoil led to many sleepless nights. Most likely I would not have lasted on the job much longer had I not learned to leave most of the worries and the stress at the capitol and not bring them home with me. The lobbyist does the best he can on each issue and then must be able to forget and move on to the next issue.

- **Non- "chief " background.** I will probably get push-back on this one. Over the years I have observed other educational entities that have hired individuals as their lobbyist who in the past have been in a top educational administrative position. I have generally concluded that those who have had the authority to determine final decisions on issues find it hard to adjust to not being able to do the same in a lobbyist role and in many cases just cannot make that transition.

Reflecting Back

Now that it is over for me it is easier to look back and forget the long hours, the tension, the frustrations, and all of the other negatives that went with the job. I find myself now focusing on the positives, the differences I think I was able to make, and the very fact that AEAs are still in existence.

I will remember the friends I never would have made without this experience, and I will respectfully remember a few truly committed legislators who were and are trying to make a positive difference in the state and in public education.

I appreciate the approximately 50 AEA chief administrators I worked with and for over these many years. I appreciate both their dedication to the job and their trust in me to represent them.

Most of all I think I will miss the camaraderie shared with others lobbyists, especially the other education representatives. (We were referred to by others as the "Ed-heads.") The times we spent commiserating around a table in the capitol cafeteria, sharing stories, voicing opinions and just enjoying the opportunity to unwind and laugh with others experiencing the same ups and downs were precious. These are the times that got me through a lot of long days and nights.

I have the luxury now of remembering the humorous times as opposed to the many non-humorous and stressful occasions. Such times as:

- The last night of a session very early in my lobbying career when the Chair of the Senate Education Committee came out of the chambers and asked to see me. Thinking that my presence at the capitol was now appreciated and sought, I hurried to see what advice he so desperately needed. He pulled me to the side, handed me some money and said, "Go buy me a six-pack and bring it to my office."

- The late nights and early mornings during the final week of a session when we would watch "trunk monkey" commercials on You Tube and visit the "People of Wal-Mart" website just to break the tension and enjoy a few laughs.

- The early morning hours of a grueling last week of session when one of my exhausted peers, from another educational association, fell asleep in the gallery of the Senate and did not wake up until two hours after the session went "Sine Die" for the year and everyone had left the Capital. I suppose we could have awakened him, but what would have been the fun in that?

- One late night returning to the capitol from dinner when several of us were stuck on the elevator and trying to decide if that was a good thing or bad thing to have happen and whether we should be in a hurry to call for help.

- And so many more times and incidents that unfortunately cannot be revealed or written about.

Concluding Thought

When I announced prior to this last session that it would be my last I received the following message from one of the AEA Administrators:

"You have played a major role in the development of the system to where we are today. You will be able to take with you the knowledge that you have had an impact on the entire AEA system that very few can or likely will ever be able to match."

Mine is not to judge the accuracy of such a statement, but if true, then it has been a worthwhile occupation to have had and a satisfying legacy to leave behind!

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