Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

July 16, 2025

Agenda Item: Area Education Agency (AEA) Accreditation Report – Keystone

State Board Goal: Goal 2

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code 273.10 and Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281 – 72 requires the Iowa Department of Education to conduct an AEA accreditation process for AEA and for the State Board to determine whether a program of an AEA shall receive initial accreditation or shall remain accredited.

Presenter(s): Stan Rheingans, Administrator
Keystone AEA

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Attachment(s): Two

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board of Education grant continued accreditation to Keystone AEA through the next review period with the required improvement actions completed.

Keystone AEA will include confirmation of the implementation of all required improvement actions and its work towards recommended improvement actions in its budget reviewed for approval by the State Board of Education in March 2026.

Background: On March 27, 2024, HF2612 was enacted, which modified the current accreditation standards to add and focus on learners with disabilities, add standards for special education compliance and learning environment, and add instructional practice requirements for media and technology. The Department of Education piloted an accreditation process this year using the updated and expanded set of statutory accreditation standards applicable for each AEA. The process resulted in a report identifying AEA required actions, recommended actions for continuous improvement and strengths upon which to build for each standard area.

Keystone AEA Accreditation Report Summary

Agency Mission and Goals

Keystone AEA is dedicated to providing impactful leadership and innovative services that ensure school districts have access to equitable, effective, and efficient resources which engage and empower schools and families to thrive in a rapidly changing world by improving learning and living for all students.

- Empower every student through the delivery of high-quality services that equip them with the knowledge, skills, behaviors and confidence to pursue their dreams.
- Expand the capacity and effectiveness of educators through targeted professional learning, encouragement of innovation and support for the implementation of impactful practices.
- Ensure a high-performing team through the recruitment, hiring, development and retention of talented, caring, service-oriented professionals.
- Maximize the use of resources to align with Agency goals and with individual district needs while maintaining fiscal stability.
- Foster engagement and partnerships with the diverse stakeholders of Northeast Iowa to build greater mutual understanding of Keystone AEA's services and their impact.

Service Area Data

- 21 public school districts
- 25 accredited nonpublic schools
- 31,506 PK-12 students
- 212 total AEA staff members
- Covers 5,000 square miles

- 2 IDEA-DA Level 3 districts
- 9 IDEA-DA Level 2 districts
- 1 ESSA CSI
- 26 ESSA TSI
- Center of Excellence: Early ACCESS

Required Improvement Actions

Professional Development
- Clarify SDI practice and system coaching requirements for staff and articulate the coaching activities staff are expected to complete in each SDI content strand, differentiating it from daily work in schools.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Identify and make available to staff evidence-based screening tools that could be used as part of the Child Find process for preschool-aged children.

Recommended Continuous Improvement Actions

School-Community Planning
- Continue to use and expand partnerships to support districts and students in the AEA.
- Partner with the Iowa Department of Education and AEAs to define and implement consistent school-community planning processes and procedures.

Professional Development
- Embed gradual release of responsibility to districts as part of future learning to build district capacity.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Collect and analyze CSA and FIT data and use it to plan agency SDI professional learning and support.

Special Education Services and Support
- Implement a gradual release model for 504 Plans, Lau Plans, and Gifted and Talented support for districts.

Technology Planning Services
- Expand AEA access to microlearning and just-in-time PD on AT and AEM as well as district learning
- Reinforce messaging about AT and AEM as a part of FAPE and strengthen systems for documentation

Learning Environment
- Continue to provide (or expand) current evidence-based social-emotional behavioral health practices.
- Develop a plan to review internal practices, analyze outcome and implementation data, and engage in feedback cycles with stakeholders.

Compliance
- Reinforce structures that ensure decisions are procedurally compliant and not overly reliant upon embedded supports for districts.

Program Evaluation
- Complete the action step identified in the AEA's strategic plan to track delivered AEA services.
- Ensure the agency professional development plan includes the evaluation of the impact of professional learning on teachers and on student achievement or desired student outcomes.

Management Services
- Implement a regular review of service delivery, gather input and assess internal capacity to meet needs.
- Strengthen communication about managed services and align services with district goals.

Media Services
- Continue to consistently evaluate internal systems, including stakeholder input and data to guide improvement.

Strengths

School-Community Planning
- Established partnerships in Keystone AEA supported families and students birth to age 21.
- The connection with autism education centers supported alignment to IEPs and connections between families and districts.

Professional Development
- The AEA met with every district and nonpublic school to plan professional development, using datasets to identify gaps and align evidence-based learning packages.
- Professional learning delivered to districts embedded the SDI Framework and universal design for learning.
- The agency committed to FGRBI, developed three pathways for learning, and provided support to reach fidelity.
- Special Education CADRE created a well-structured, high-impact onboarding and coaching model that supported staff growth, consistency and confidence.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Consultants provided support for curriculum development, instruction and assessment in multiple content area, connecting districts to HQIM.
- Early ACCESS and early childhood staff received training on ECOs which improved reliability of ratings.

Special Education Services and Support
- Early ACCESS and early childhood staff demonstrated a detailed understanding of the special education evaluation process.
- Keystone AEA established a process to support quality IEP development and compliant documentation, which includes reviewing two IEPs a year with every special education teacher.

Technology Planning Services
- Interview data indicated the AT team provided expert, responsive, collaborative support that is highly valued.
- Early ACCESS and early childhood microlearning including AT, which built skills and understanding.

Learning Environment
- Early ACCESS staff understood that learning and routines can happen anytime and anywhere.
- Preschool providers demonstrated an understanding of least restrictive environment.
- Districts appreciated AEA staff challenging them to think "outside the box," using data to determine student needs and having conversations about the continuum of services.
- Staff provided a variety of learning opportunities for AEA and school district staff in the area of behavior.

Compliance
- The AEA shared special education policy information on a dedicated webpage, in a monthly newsletter, through updates to all staff and in new staff training.
- The AEA committed to FGRBI and Early ACCESS staff met statewide implementation and sustainability goals.

Program Evaluation
- Concerted efforts were made to align the agency's comprehensive improvement plan and three-year strategic plan to the State Board of Education goals and team plans to agency goals.

Management Services
- The AEA provided services for hard to fill positions and frequently communicated about managed services.

Media Services
- An extensive collection of media materials was maintained on site and the AEA runs a bi-weekly van route to meet district requests in an efficient and timely manner.

Department Accreditation Recommendation

It is recommended that the State Board of Education grant continued accreditation to Keystone AEA through the next review period with the required improvement actions completed.

Keystone AEA will include confirmation of the implementation of all required improvement actions and its work towards recommended improvement actions in its budget reviewed for approval by the State Board of Education in March 2026.

IOWA

Department of Education

Keystone Area Education Agency
2025 Accreditation Report

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Purpose

Iowa Code 273.10 defines the purpose of this report as determining if standards have been met and making a recommendation to the Iowa State Board of Education (State Board) as to whether the programs of the area education agency (AEA) should receive initial accreditation or remain accredited.

This recommendation is based on a program audit review of documents, a clarification call with the AEA team, an on-site visit and a final verification process.

Keystone AEA Service Area Data

Keystone AEA encompasses

- 21 public school districts
- 25 accredited nonpublic schools
- 31,506 students, preschool through grade 12
- 212 total AEA staff members
- Covers nearly 5,000 square miles in 8 counties
- 2 IDEA-DA Level 3 districts
- 9 IDEA-DA Level 2 districts
- 1 ESSA CSI
- 26 ESSA TSI
- Center of Excellence: Iowa AEA Early ACCESS

AEA Accreditation Process

Iowa Code 273.10 and Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281-72 require the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to conduct an AEA accreditation process to determine if the AEA is meeting accreditation standards. Accreditation standards for the AEA were revised during the 2024 legislative session, with the new standards taking effect July 1, 2025. Therefore, the Department developed and piloted a new AEA accreditation process during the 2024-25 academic year that encompassed the existing standards that were expanded to include learners with disabilities and the new standards that were added to the expectations. The accreditation process used during the 2024-25 year included a program audit which is a review of Department collected and AEA provided data. It also included a clarification call with the AEA team, an on-site visit, and a final verification process.

For the purposes of the AEA accreditation pilot, similar standards were grouped together and reviewed collectively as a whole. The standards will become a part of Iowa Code after they become effective and the Iowa Administrative Code is updated.

Standards were grouped together as follows:
- School – Community Planning
  - Standard a – Support for school-community planning, including a means of assessing needs, developing collaborative relationships among community agencies, establishing shared direction, and implementing program plans and reporting progress toward goals for all students, including students with disabilities.
- Professional Development
  - Standard b - Evidence-based professional development programs that respond to current needs.
  - Standard q - Support for staff development and adult learners utilizing evidence-based professional development in a manner that meets the professional needs of staff and adult learners consistent with standards adopted by the state board of education.

- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
    - o Standard c - Support for curriculum development, instruction, and assessment services that address the areas of reading, language arts, math, and science, using research-based methodologies, for all students, including students with disabilities.
    - o Standard p - Support for students using educational programs and services in a manner that is consistent with the educational standards established pursuant to section 256.11.
- Special Education Services and Support
    - o Standard d - Special education support.
    - o Standard j - Support for early childhood service coordination for families and children, age birth through three years, to meet health, safety, and learning needs, including service coordination.
    - o Standard m - Support for addressing the diverse learning needs of all children and youths, including children and youths who are eligible for special education through services that include direct services to students with disabilities.
- Technology Planning and Services
    - o Standard g - Support for school technology planning and staff development for implementing instructional technologies.
    - o Standard o - Support necessary to implement effective instruction for all students, including students with disabilities, through school technology services.
- Learning Environment
    - o Standard l - Support for schools and school districts in analyzing student achievement data related to the learning environment, comparing data to the external knowledge base, and using that information to guide schools and school districts in setting goals and implementing actions to improve student learning for all students, including students with disabilities.
- Compliance
    - o Standard k - Timely submission of required reports and documents to the state board of education, the department of education, and the division of special education of the department of education.
    - o Standard n - Support for schools and school districts to ensure compliance with rules adopted by the state board of education related to special education.
    - o Standard r - Compliance with all relevant federal and state laws in the provision of services and supports to students with disabilities.
- Program Evaluation
    - o Standard h - A program and services evaluation and reporting system that includes information related to special education.
- Management Services
    - o Standard e – Management services, including financial reporting and purchasing as requested and funded by local districts.
- Media Services
    - o Standard f – support for instructional media services that supplement and support local district media centers and services.
    - o Standard l – Support for school district libraries in accordance with section 273.2, subsection 4.

AEA Accreditation Standards and Results

The on-site visit at Keystone AEA included interviews with a variety of stakeholders; as well as presentations by Keystone AEA Cabinet members, Educational Services staff, and Early ACCESS staff. The following are the results for each standard area reviewed during the accreditation process.

School-Community Planning

This section includes how the AEA provides support for school-community planning, including a means of assessing needs, establishing shared direction and implementing program plans and reporting progress toward goals for all students, including students with disabilities.

Strengths

School-community partnerships and planning were identified as a strength at Keystone AEA based upon the document review and interviews. The AEA leveraged partnerships to support young children. Interviews referenced community partnerships with health care clinics to support families in understanding early intervention and Early ACCESS services. Interview participants from Early ACCESS, early childhood special education, and IDEA-differentiated accountability (DA) preschool coach groups described collaboration with community partners as part of the referral process, as supplying information for Part C and Part B evaluations, and as an ongoing resource to support children and families.

Interview groups also discussed newly formed connections with various autism education centers that provide services such as applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy for students. Keystone AEA has been working with the autism education centers to ensure there is alignment with students' IEPs. The agency has also been working to maintain academic connections between families and school districts as many of the families receiving ABA therapy elect to homeschool due to the intensity of services.

Secondary transition interview participants shared opportunities for collaboration with outside partners for secondary transition. The team has started to create a system for school-community planning with outside partners around work study and work experiences aligned to career paths. The agency also partnered with Transition Alliance Programs (TAP) when possible.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

Current partnerships are supporting families and students birth to age 21. It is also recommended that Keystone AEA continue to use the current partnerships and seek to expand upon them to support local districts and students in the AEA.

There are inconsistent school-community processes and procedures being used across the AEAs to support school-community planning. In addition, what is available is not uniformly being offered or provided to all districts and nonpublic schools in the AEA. It is recommended that the AEA partner with the Department and the other AEAs in the state to define the expectations for school-community planning and identify common statewide processes and procedures that may be uniformly offered to districts and accredited nonpublic schools.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standard is met.

Professional Development

This section provides evidence that explains how evidence-based professional development programs offered by the AEA respond to current needs and are consistent with the standards adopted by the State Board.

Strengths

During interviews with school leadership and Keystone AEA employees, it was stated Keystone AEA meets with every school district and nonpublic schools throughout the spring to analyze and plan professional development (PD) needs. A protocol is utilized to formalize conversations. Datasets for each school are created to identify gaps and align evidence-based professional learning packages the agency can provide to respond to current needs.

Document review and interviews with multiple staff show evidence that professional learning delivered to schools and districts embeds the SDI framework and universal design for learning (UDL) elements to strengthen universal, targeted, and intensive learning needs. This supports teachers in understanding how to meet multiple learning needs within the general and special education setting.

The Early ACCESS FGRBI (Family Guided Routines Based Intervention) interview group described ongoing training opportunities in addition to dedicated, structured monthly team meetings. All team meetings were structured the same so participants can discuss and apply professional learning regardless of which team they are a member. Emphasis was placed on carrying over learning from professional development and putting it into practice. Professional learning was based on the needs of team members. The agency looked for trends as an implementation team and then targeted those areas for PD in addition to targeting state initiatives as they come up. Ongoing coaching opportunities were presented in three pathways - staff new to Early ACCESS, veteran staff near fidelity, and veteran staff at fidelity. Over 40 staff have been trained in FGRBI at Keystone AEA. In the 2023-24 school year, 76% of Early ACCESS providers were at fidelity; and in the 2024-25 school year, 100% of providers were at fidelity.

Early ACCESS and Early Childhood interviewees shared information about the professional development delivery process to ensure that providers stay current with practices and strategies to support children and families. A goal was set for how many hours of PD were needed around Early ACCESS and PD was mapped out by month with a variety of engagement and participation strategies used including Community of Practice (COP) webinars, books to read, small group work as a team, and a large group learning session.

Interviewees reported that the Special Education CADRE system has created a well-structured, high-impact internal coaching and onboarding model that supports staff growth, consistency, and confidence. The Special Education CADRE used Agile/SCRUM planning cycles, bi-weekly check-ins, as well as individualized mentoring. Feedback from both internal staff and district partners consistently affirmed the quality and confidence of staff as well as first- and second-year employees.

Required Actions

Interviewees were unable to clearly describe or differentiate between SDI system coaching, SDI practice coaching and the special education support staff provide to the buildings they serve in general. Although ultimately the goal is to embed coaching in daily work, intentional SDI practice coaching is required for Level 2 and Level 3 IDEA-DA designated districts and is needed to purposefully develop teacher skills to diagnose, design, and deliver instruction to engage learners. Therefore, the agency is required to clarify the specially designed instruction (SDI) practice and system coaching and requirements for staff. In addition, the agency needs to clearly articulate the coaching activities expected in each content strand to build teacher capacity.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

The relationships that consultants have established with the districts they serve is well documented. As Keystone AEA considers how their support and service delivery model will evolve, there will most likely be impacts to the breadth and depth of the services and support they provide. In designing future supports and offerings that reflect district need, the gradual release of responsibility to districts to

assume autonomy in function needs to be a consideration as part of the learning modules and service delivery to assure sustainability.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standards are met.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

This section provides evidence of how the AEA supports curriculum development, instruction and assessment for reading, language arts, mathematics, and science using research-based methodologies for all students, including students with disabilities.

Strengths

Keystone AEA content consultants provided support for curriculum development, instruction, and assessment that addressed the areas of reading, language arts, math, and science using evidence-based practices as referenced in the document review and interviews. Consultants utilized a curriculum adoption protocol with specific timelines and considerations for districts working through the adoption process. Consultants helped connect districts to current High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). After HQIM adoption, it was stated in multiple interview groups that consultants helped teachers understand the connection to Iowa Academic Standards and how to leverage materials to align to the standards as well as practices to meet multiple student learning needs.

Early childhood and Early ACCESS interview group participants reported receiving extensive training and learning opportunities to support understanding and implementation of Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO). Teams noted that the child development and ECO training, as well as the handouts, have improved the reliability of ratings. The ECO process is now more embedded within their work with families.

Keystone AEA science consultants showcased their work by demonstrating support in instructional materials, lesson planning, and cross-curricular integration. Noted examples include the use of 3D printing for students with adaptive needs, data analysis tools for comparing multiple data sets and hands-on instructional delivery across all grade levels.

Required Actions

Participants in the early childhood interview group described the Child Find process that is utilized by their teams. They did not mention any evidence-based screening tools used as part of the process; rather a staff developed questionnaire for preschool (ages 3 to 5-year-old) children. The AEA is required to identify and make available to staff evidence-based screening tools that could be used as part of the Child Find process for preschool-aged children.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

Interviewees in the IDEA-DA preschool professional learning leads (PLLs) and coach groups did not have knowledge of district SDI teams. They shared that they do not use information from the Coaching Self-Assessment (CSA) or Fidelity Implementation Tool (FIT) in their work as they are in the classrooms so much and already know what supports the teachers need. It is recommended that the AEA establish a plan for collecting and analyzing CSA and FIT data and incorporate it into their SDI work.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standards are met.

Special Education Services and Support

This section provides evidence of support for special education services, early childhood services for families and children and support for addressing the diverse learning needs of all children and youth.

Strengths

The early childhood and Early ACCESS interview groups detailed the evaluation process that is used after a disability is suspected. They detailed a thorough process that includes interviews with teachers, parents and caregivers; reviewing records (GOLD, outside provider, medical records); testing if needed (AEPS); and they also work with other direct service providers and teacher-implemented interventions. Early ACCESS providers also detailed their process with families leading up to the child's 3rd birthday to ensure a smooth transition and how they involve early childhood consultants in determining whether a child is potentially eligible.

The social-emotional-behavioral health (SEBH) team described a well-defined referral process for students with SEBH needs. Additionally, the SEBH team is comprised of team members from both the special education division as well as the instructional supports division to ensure a comprehensive approach to supporting learners with diverse learning needs. AEA staff have developed classroom trainings that have aligned implementation and coaching cycles. AEA staff can provide observational checklists and support of classroom strategies.

Keystone AEA has established a process for supporting quality IEP development and documentation. Through the use of a checklist for quality IEPs developed by Keystone AEA, AEA core team members spend time with every special education teacher in their assigned building(s) going through two IEPs a year to provide support in developing an IEP that best addresses the identified needs of the two learners. AEA core team members have been coached on how to have difficult conversations with teachers and/or administrators if needed to address identified concerns.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

Throughout interviews, districts expressed lack of support in the areas of 504 Plans, Lau Plans, and Gifted and Talented support. Without the same amount of support, they have received in the past, LEAs will need support in building internal capacity. It is therefore recommended that Keystone AEA develop and implement a gradual release model for 504 Plans, Lau Plans, and Gifted and Talented support. Districts have expressed the need for support while also acknowledging their need to build capacity in these areas. Keystone AEA is encouraged to develop a timeline and support structure to guide this transition.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standards are met.

Technology Planning and Services

This section provides evidence of support for school technology planning, staff development for implementing instructional technologies and support for implementing effective instruction through the use of technology, including for students with disabilities.

Strengths

Interview data indicated that the Keystone AEA Assistive Technology (AT) team provides expert, responsive, and collaborative support that LEAs highly value for helping students access the tools they need for learning. Examples included a strong team structure incorporating both general and special

education expertise, use of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) graphic to support tiered services, coaching supports, access to trials and devices, and effective integration of tools like uPAR, the SETT (Student, Environment, Tasks and Tools) Framework and Read&Write for universal supports. The team also leveraged consultative and direct service models to meet diverse student needs and was praised for building capacity within LEAs while emphasizing student-specific, data-driven decisions.

Early childhood and Early ACCESS interviewees shared information about a recent micro-learning symposium that had AT as an option. The content reminded providers how to access AT, where it is, what is available, how to determine if there is a need and documenting in the IEP and IFSP. Both groups shared multiple examples of how they use AT with birth to five-year-old students.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

It is recommended that Keystone AEA discuss how the agency might improve upon current AT and AEM services and supports. Interview feedback revealed the need for stronger documentation practices; clearer district understanding of AT decision-making as part of FAPE; and more accessible, just-in-time professional learning for both AEA and LEA staff. Examples of feedback included: inconsistencies in IEP documentation, limited real-time relevance of all-staff PD, and acknowledgment of the need to revisit district-level AEM training due to leadership turnover. Also noted was a desire to streamline the trial-to-purchase process and improve system-wide consistency in how AT and AEM are discussed, implemented, and sustained over time.

It is recommended that Keystone AEA continue to expand access to microlearning and just-in-time PD on AT and AEM, reinforce consistent messaging about AT as part of FAPE, and strengthen systems for IEP documentation and continuity across grade transitions. The AEA should also consider relaunching direct district-level outreach to refresh understanding of AT and AEM processes and supports, especially in light of administrative turnover. In addition, interviewees in the Early Childhood and Early ACCESS group shared that they could use additional learning addressing how and when to document AT within the IFSP and IEP in ACHIEVE. It is recommended the AEA consider providing this support for staff members.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standards are met.

Learning Environment

This section provides evidence of support for districts in analyzing data related to the learning environment and in guiding districts in continuous improvement efforts towards improving the learning environment and social-emotional-behavioral outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.

Strengths

Early childhood interview participants demonstrated understanding of preschool least restrictive environment (LRE) and the considerations that should be taken when making placement decisions for preschool learners. They shared examples of preschool learners with IEPs being served within Head Start programs.

Early ACCESS FGRBI interviewees describe service delivery in diverse environments based on the needs of the family. They referenced the "SSOOPPRR cookie" as a resource and talked through how

they support families with understanding that child learning and routines can happen anytime and anywhere.

LEA special education directors shared that AEA staff and LEA staff are using data to have conversations about the continuum of services. Districts appreciated how AEA core team members challenged the team to think "outside the box." Conversations focused on using data to determine what students need and how those needs can be met through services, supports, and accommodations or modifications within the district.

Keystone AEA offered a variety of learning opportunities for AEA and LEA staff in the area of behavior. The document review indicated a 2-year plan for core team and early childhood special education staff for professional learning around behavior that includes prevention, teaching, and response strategies used in BIPs, as well as the use of implementation fidelity checks. AEA staff developed classroom trainings for teachers to learn how to support students with social-emotional behavior concerns that have aligned implementation and coaching cycles. AEA staff also provided observational checklists and support of classroom strategies.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

To continue to sustain effective and responsive services that support positive learning environments, the agency should regularly review internal practices related to behavior and student well-being, analyze outcome and implementation data, and engage in structured feedback cycles with stakeholders. Cross-departmental collaboration and active partnerships with districts are essential to addressing emerging academic, behavioral and environmental needs and ensuring a consistent, data-informed approach across all service areas.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standard is met.

Compliance

This section provides evidence of timely submission of required reports and documents, compliance with relevant federal and state laws in special education and support for schools to ensure compliance with rules related to special education.

Strengths

Keystone AEA has a dedicated page on their website titled, *Spotlight on Special Education,* that allowed for dissemination of important information related to procedural updates for the LEAs they serve. Additionally, Keystone AEA offered a monthly newsletter for AEA staff where they can share important information related to special education policy and procedures.

The document review as well as interviews described a scheduled process for sharing i3 updates as well as completing IEP reviews with special education teachers on a bi-annual basis to ensure quality and compliant IEPs. Interview groups also shared that during designated discipline days, groups learned about policy and rules/regulation/law directly related to their job responsibilities.

Due to Keystone AEA administrative support, FGRBI coaches and providers have reached maintenance and sustainability with FGRBI. They have a detailed process for onboarding new staff with FGRBI. Keystone AEA focused on referrals and natural environments in the 2022-23 school year. They saw improvements in both the following year. Keystone AEA has exceeded the statewide goal for implementation of FGRBI in 2022-23. They have 100% of their staff trained (with the exception of year one and year two staff who are in the learning process now). All staff (serving more than three families)

submitted a video for feedback and coaching this year. Over 50% of staff demonstrated collapsed fidelity at 80% and have the required key indicators at partial ratings. The FGRBI coaches reported that 100% of providers who turned in videos in the 2024-25 school year were at fidelity. They have a documented plan to support the use of FGRBI in their AEA.

In the presentation shared by the CADRE team, the agency showcased their SCRUM board where they document and prioritize all professional development offerings for all year one and year two staff. This learning included information pertaining to roles and responsibilities, as well as understanding relevant laws in the provision of services and supports to students with disabilities.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

There is strong evidence of positive and collaborative relationships between AEA staff and district partners, which meaningfully influence how day-to-day decisions are made. While these relationships are a clear strength and contribute to effective collaboration, it is recommended that senior leadership intentionally reinforce structures and procedures that ensure decisions are not only relationship-driven, but also procedurally compliant.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standards are met.

Program Evaluation

This section provides evidence of a program and services evaluation and reporting system that includes information related to special education.

Strengths

It is evident that Keystone AEA was making a concerted effort to align the agency's comprehensive improvement plan and three-year strategic plan to State Board goals. There was clear alignment with how the agency individually supports State Board goals and what data will be utilized to monitor progress towards the statewide AEA three-year strategic plan as described in the summary provided for document review.

The document review demonstrated that Keystone AEA works to ensure there is alignment with team plans, consultants, and service providers to agency goals. This ensures everyone throughout the agency understands the overall mission, vision, and goals, and how their work connects.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

In Keystone AEA's *Iowa's AEAs Strategic Plan 2024-29*, Keystone AEA identified the need for impact data as they consider the planning and delivery of professional development opportunities for the districts they serve. The plan states, "Action Steps and Impact Data: KAEA will track the number and type of services provided to each district as part of the quarterly reporting requirement. We will begin gathering time data with Harvest to help confirm the supports provided to districts - internal analysis only at this point as 24-25 is a baseline year and establishing consistency is necessary before data can be used for decision-making."

Keystone AEA clearly recognizes the need for data as they consider planning and delivery of professional development opportunities for the districts they serve and has included this as an action

step in their strategic plan. It will be important for Keystone AEA to complete this action step moving forward to effectively evaluate their program and services. In addition, it is recommended that Keystone AEA not only review the services delivered, but also ensure that the professional development evaluation plan include the evaluation of the impact of professional learning on teachers and on student achievement or desired student outcomes.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standard is met.

Management Services

This section provides evidence of support for management services, including financial reporting and purchasing as requested and funded by local districts.

Strengths

The document review indicated that Keystone AEA accommodates management services for districts as needed. Management services are readily available to districts in situations such as late resignations or when districts have difficulties in filling positions due to a shortage of qualified individuals in rural parts of the state. The agency frequently informed district leadership about the management services the agency can provide during regularly scheduled meetings, such as the monthly superintendent meeting, so leaders know and understand how to access services.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

To maintain effective and responsive management services, it is recommended that the agency implement regular reviews of service delivery models, gather input from district leadership, and assess internal capacity to meet evolving needs. Strengthening communication channels and aligning services with district goals will ensure that support remains timely, efficient, and impactful.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standard is met.

Media Services

This section provides evidence of support for instructional media services that supplement and support local districts.

Strengths

Interview conversations and a tour of the media warehouse facilities indicated that an extensive collection of materials including books, kits, and instructional support equipment is housed and maintained on site. The AEA runs a bi-weekly van route to ensure that all districts' requests are met in an efficient and timely manner. The collection was routinely reviewed and weeded out to ensure that the collection remained current, relevant, and compliant with 273.2, subsection 4.

Required Actions

There are no required actions for this standard area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

To continue to maintain strong, effective media service delivery, it is recommended that Keystone AEA continue to consistently examine its internal systems, incorporate stakeholder input, and rely on data to

guide continuous improvement. Ongoing collaboration within and across AEA departments, as well as with district partners, will enhance the agency's ability to adapt to evolving needs and ensure reliable, high-quality media supports.

Standard Met/Not Met

The accreditation standard is met.

Conclusion

The team determined the following standards have been met based upon the program audit, clarification call, on-site visit and final verification process:

- School – Community Planning
    - Standard a – Support for school-community planning, including a means of assessing needs, developing collaborative relationships among community agencies, establishing shared direction, and implementing program plans and reporting progress toward goals for all students, including students with disabilities.
- Professional Development
    - Standard b - Evidence-based professional development programs that respond to current needs.
    - Standard q - Support for staff development and adult learners utilizing evidence-based professional development in a manner that meets the professional needs of staff and adult learners consistent with standards adopted by the state board of education.
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
    - Standard c - Support for curriculum development, instruction, and assessment services that address the areas of reading, language arts, math, and science, using research-based methodologies, for all students, including students with disabilities.
    - Standard p - Support for students using educational programs and services in a manner that is consistent with the educational standards established pursuant to section 256.11.
- Special Education Services and Support
    - Standard d - Special education support.
    - Standard j - Support for early childhood service coordination for families and children, age birth through three years, to meet health, safety, and learning needs, including service coordination.
    - Standard m - Support for addressing the diverse learning needs of all children and youths, including children and youths who are eligible for special education through services that include direct services to students with disabilities.
- Technology Planning and Services
    - Standard g - Support for school technology planning and staff development for implementing instructional technologies.
    - Standard o - Support necessary to implement effective instruction for all students, including students with disabilities, through school technology services.
- Learning Environment
    - Standard l - Support for schools and school districts in analyzing student achievement data related to the learning environment, comparing data to the external knowledge base, and using that information to guide schools and school districts in setting goals and implementing actions to improve student learning for all students, including students with disabilities.
- Compliance
    - Standard k - Timely submission of required reports and documents to the state board of education, the department of education, and the division of special education of the department of education.

- o Standard n - Support for schools and school districts to ensure compliance with rules adopted by the state board of education related to special education.
- o Standard r - Compliance with all relevant federal and state laws in the provision of services and supports to students with disabilities.
- Program Evaluation
  - o Standard h - A program and services evaluation and reporting system that includes information related to special education.
- Management Services
  - o Standard e – Management services, including financial reporting and purchasing as requested and funded by local districts.
- Media Services
  - o Standard f – support for instructional media services that supplement and support local district media centers and services.
  - o Standard l – Support for school district libraries in accordance with section 273.2, subsection 4.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the State Board of Education grant continued accreditation to Keystone AEA through the next review period with the required improvement actions completed.

Keystone AEA will include confirmation of the implementation of all required improvement actions and its work towards recommended improvement actions in its budget reviewed for approval by the State Board of Education in March 2026.