

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 16, 2022



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

State Board Priority: Eliminating Achievement and Opportunity Gaps
Improving Teacher and Leader Preparation

State Board Role/Authority: Iowa Code section 273.11 (1) directs the State Board to develop standards and rules for the accreditation of AEAs. The Department of Education is directed to develop and establish, in consultation with the AEAs, an accreditation process for AEAs. Iowa Code section 273.10 (1-3) states the State Board shall determine whether a program of an AEA shall receive initial accreditation or remain accredited...based upon the recommendation of the Director of the Department of Education after a study of the factual and evaluative evidence...in terms of the accreditation standards adopted by the State Board.

Presenter(s): Eric Heitz, Administrative Consultant
Bureau of School Improvement

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation to Keystone AEA through the next review period.

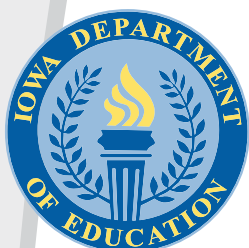
Background:

Iowa Code section 273.10 requires the State Board to approve AEA accreditation for a term up to five years. The process requires the use of an accreditation team appointed by the Director of the Department of Education to conduct an evaluation, including an on-site visit of each AEA.

The AEA accreditation team shall determine whether the accreditation standards for a program have been met and shall make a report to the Director and the State Board, together with a recommendation as to whether the programs of the AEA should receive initial accreditation or remain accredited.

The accreditation team shall report strengths and weaknesses, if any, for each accreditation standard and shall advise the AEA of available resources and technical assistance to further enhance the strengths and improve areas of weakness.

Keystone Area Education Agency 2022 Accreditation Report



October 12, 2022

State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

State Board of Education

Brooke Axiotis, Des Moines
Rod Bradley, Denison
Cindy Dietz, Cedar Rapids
Cassandra Halls, Carlisle
Brian J. Kane, Dubuque
Nathan Peterson, Iowa City
Mike May, Spirit Lake
John Robbins, Iowa Falls
Georgia Van Gundy, Waukee
Alaina Whittington, student member, Diagonal

Administration

Ann Lebo, Director and Executive Officer
of the State Board of Education

Division of Learning and Results

Kim Buryanek, Division Administrator

Bureau of School Improvement

Eric Heitz, Administrative Consultant
Buffy Campbell, Consultant

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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 desk audit review of documents and an on-site visit.

Keystone AEA Service Area Data:

- 21 public school districts
- 21 nonpublic schools
- 34,552 students, preschool through grade 12
- 3 comprehensive schools
- 27 targeted schools
- 235 total staff members
- Covers 4,872 square miles

On-Site Visit:

Iowa Code 273.10 and Iowa Administrative Rule 281.72 require the Iowa Department of Education (Department) to conduct an AEA accreditation desk audit and visit to determine if the AEA is meeting accreditation standards listed below.

- School-Community Planning: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(a), 281 IAC 72.4(1)
- Professional Development: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(b), 281 IAC 72.4(2)
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(c), 281 IAC 72.4(3)
- Diverse Learners: Iowa Code 273.2(4)
- Media, Technology, Leadership, Multicultural/Gender Fair: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(f)(g), Iowa Code 273.4(2)
- Management Services: Iowa Code 273.7A

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. 281 IAC-72.9, Iowa Code 273.11, Iowa Code 273.11(2)(a) 281 IAC 72.4(1)

A. Comprehensive Improvement Plan:

Strengths:

Keystone AEA's desk audit and interviews indicated evidence of a comprehensive improvement plan, or use of the AEA Self-Assessment of Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Implementation (AEA SAMI). This was borne out by the establishment of cross-divisional collaborative teams. Cross-divisional collaborative team membership consists of team leads who represent most of the AEA's disciplines and divisions. The cross-divisional collaborative teams consider agency-wide and school district data to determine how Keystone AEA can best meet schools' needs.

Recommendations:

The site visit team encourages Keystone AEA to continue the process it has established.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

B. School-Community Planning:

Strengths:

Multiple stakeholder interview groups, both internal and external, noted Keystone AEA has worked to create connections and partnerships with outside agencies. These initiatives help ensure families have access to diverse resources to meet their needs. Among those mentioned were:

- Northeast Iowa Community College
- University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Center for gifted and talented services
- Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services (MDHS) region(s)
- Regional Planning Partnerships (RPP)

Recommendations:

The site visit team recommends that Keystone AEA consider how it can demonstrate the AEA's commitment to service and responsiveness. By strategically sharing data, Keystone AEA can continue to create marketing opportunities and share the AEA's strengths with stakeholder audiences across its service area.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

Professional Development

This section provides evidence that explains how professional development programs offered by the AEA respond to current needs. Iowa Code 273.11(2)(b), 281 IAC 72.4(2)

Strengths:

Multiple interviewees commented that Keystone AEA is grounded in service. The AEA is very responsive to the needs and requests of local education agencies. They also commented on their positive relationships and partnerships with Keystone AEA staff.

Many interview groups also shared the importance of having a continuum of options for professional learning. Several mentioned the availability of a variety of professional learning modalities, face-to-face, blended and micro-credentials. They cited micro-credentialing as an essential, welcomed option. Keystone AEA was a pioneer in the micro-credentialing process and has a large number of micro-credentials available, such as co-teaching and authentic learning.

Numerous interview groups also referenced the wide and diverse professional development offerings, and noted the navigation teams are instrumental in helping school and school district staff identify professional development needs and goals each year. Keystone AEA partners with each school district to analyze their data to plan for, and individualize, professional development to meet the school district's goals.

Multiple interviewees across groups shared that Keystone AEA has promoted and supported numerous statewide training initiatives. This includes ACHIEVE training, which has been very positive and well-received by school districts and school staff.

School district special education and early childhood staff interviewees shared they appreciate opportunities for paraeducators, general education and special education teachers to learn together. They specifically cited Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Several interview groups indicated Keystone AEA has fully implemented Family Guided Routines Based Interventions (FGRBI) with their Early ACCESS providers, and regularly monitors fidelity of practice. They also have two master coaches and one coach in training. One of their master coaches is now assisting Mississippi Bend AEA providers/coaches as well.

Recommendations:

The site visit team recommends that Keystone AEA continue building services, resources and programs to support students with social-emotional, mental health and behavior needs, as well as those with autism. To this end, the AEA should look for ways to build capacity with school district staff to support these students. Consider expanding learning opportunities for GOLD, and opportunities for preschool specially designed instruction (SDI) professional development for school district partners.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard it 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. Iowa Code 273.11(2)(c), 281 IAC 72.4(3)

Strengths:

A common theme among interview groups was how important the Navigator and Iowa Core teams are to supporting school district staff and teams. Interviewees with various school district groups shared the AEA met with multiple teams to help them analyze data and make decisions to impact student learning. Some examples include: building level teams, district level teams and student intervention teams.

Interviewees reported Keystone AEA staff assisted school districts with understanding the Conditions for Learning Survey, and with using this data to make decisions to improve student outcomes.

Various interview groups reported AEA staff assist school districts with aligning curriculum standards to research-based instruction and assessment practices across the MTSS framework. These efforts include promoting the Science of Reading program, developing proficiency scales and identifying priority standards.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

Diverse Learners

This section provides evidence of support for special education services, gifted and talented children programming, English learner (EL) programming and 504 supports and procedures. Iowa Code 273.2(4)

A. Students with Disabilities:

Strengths:

Interviewees from several school district staff groups commented that for students with unique needs, AEA's support and expertise is invaluable, examples include SDI, tiered supports, alternate assessment, ACHIEVE and advanced transition planning.

Recommendations:

The site visit team encourages Keystone AEA to consider the interviewees' expressed the desire for consultants to do more in-person assessment in behavioral situations prior to providing advice and guidance, when possible.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

B. English Learners:

Strengths:

Multiple interviewees appreciated the support offered by Keystone AEA for EL students. As an example, AEA staff maintain strong relationships with school district staff and are well-integrated with their district administrative teams. The AEA has worked with a recognized national expert to help the AEA and area schools to implement appropriate identification and services.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

C. Gifted and Talented:

Strengths:

Review of the AEA's Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and interviews, indicate that Keystone AEA has a strong partnership with the University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Center to provide gifted and talented services to school districts and schools.

Recommendations:

School district interviewees suggested gifted and talented training for preschool teachers. This work would include supporting and meeting students where they are, and differentiating content to meet each student's individual needs. The site visit team encourages Keystone AEA to follow up on these suggestions.

D. 504:

Strengths:

- Micro-credentialing for 504 plans
- Professional school counseling networking events held via Zoom

- Relevant, up-to-date information on the AEA website
- Individualized building-level 504 evaluation, placement and plan development

Keystone AEA utilizes documents and guidance for Section 504 provided by the Department as the basis of support for the school districts the AEA serves. There are links to a variety of resources on the AEA website, and a consultant is available to provide support as needed.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

Media, Technology, Leadership, Multicultural/Gender Fair

This section provides evidence of: support for instructional media services that supplement and support local district media centers and services; support for school technology planning and staff development for implementing instructional technologies and assistance provided to school districts for the general improvement of their educational programs and operations. Iowa Code 273.11(2)(f)(g), Iowa Code 273.4(2), Iowa Code 273.11(2)(f)(g), Iowa Code 273.4(2)

A. Media:

Strengths:

Through the interview process, multiple interview groups mentioned the vast resources and supports available in real time on the Keystone AEA website. For example:

- Sets of classroom books
- Material kits for classrooms
- Robots with iPads
- Turf maintenance tools
- Assistive technology devices
- Adaptive equipment

Multiple interview groups noted that Keystone AEA provides opportunities for collaboration between teacher-librarians, networking and professional development.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

B. Technology:

Strengths:

Several school district interview groups mentioned they appreciate that assistive technology devices and adaptive equipment are available through Keystone AEA to check out and try for children with unique needs before purchase. They also spoke of the one-click ClassLink system, and how much they appreciated the quick, easy access to media resources.

Recommendations:

Based on input from school district interviews, the site visit team suggests Keystone AEA consider options to grow additional support for cybersecurity in districts.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

C. Leadership:

Strengths:

Multiple interview groups noted that Keystone AEA leadership encourages their staff to be present in the schools they serve, which has resulted in strong relationships between the AEA and school districts. Keystone AEA staff reported their leaders lead by example, by being present and available to staff. This was also emphasized by the Keystone AEA Board of Directors.

Several interview groups said Keystone AEA provides support to superintendents, principals, special education directors and curriculum directors through regular meetings through regular focused meetings based on job or role. Additional professional development opportunities are available through the micro-credential offerings, webinars, and in-person delivery options. AEA consultants are available to work in-district to provide direct support to staff and administrative teams as needed.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

D. Multicultural/Gender Fair:

Strengths:

An interview with Keystone AEA staff revealed the AEA utilizes a curriculum adoption process that includes a matrix for screening multiple elements, including equity. This system has resulted in media collection materials representing diverse groups.

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

Management Services

This section provides evidence of any services to school districts, not limited to: superintendent services, personnel services, business management services, special maintenance services and transportation services. Iowa Code 273.7A

Strengths:

Various interview groups reported Keystone AEA provides multiple leadership services including:

- Fiscal agent for the Iowa AEA
- Fiscal agent for other state-level grants
- Twice-weekly van delivery

- Hosting Iowa School Finance Information Services (IFSIS) budget workshop
- Eastern Iowa Science Collaborative (EISC) support
- Computer science statewide collaboration

Recommendations:

There are no recommendations in this area at this time.

Standard Met/Not Met:

The standard is met.

Conclusion

Based on the desk audit and site visit the team determine the following standards have been met:

- School-Community Planning: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(a), 281 IAC 72.4(1)
- Professional Development: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(b), 281 IAC 72.4(2)
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(c), 281 IAC 72.4(3)
- Diverse Learners: Iowa Code 273.2(4)
- Media, Technology, Leadership, Multicultural/Gender Fair: Iowa Code 273.11(2)(f)(g), Iowa Code 273.4(2)
- Management Services, Iowa Code 273.7A

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the State Board grant continued accreditation to AEA through the next review period.