

## MINUTES

### **Educational Services Agencies New England Regional Meeting**

Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative

October 19, 2009

In Attendance:

Robin Ahigian, James Baldwin, Sarah Barzee, Beverly Beno, Anna Bishop, Jacki Clark, Paula Colen, Catherine Cooper, Cathy Cummins, Bruce Douglas, Bob Gass, Susan Cuoco Hassan, John Fletcher, Maureen Gaughan, Paul Hilton, Bud MacDonnell, John Mara, Annie McKenzie, Richard Murphy, Karen Ostroff, Hank Perrin, Evan Pitkoff, Susan Rees, Joan Schuman, Tony Sebastiano, Virginia Seccombe, Joanne Haley Sullivan, Steve Theall, Danuta Thibodeau, Don Walsh, Dorsey Yearley, Peter Young

The meeting was called to order by Steve Theall at 9:45 AM

#### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Members in attendance briefly described their organizations.

#### **I. Peter Young, CFO, AESA:**

Peter Young reviewed the AESA agenda for upcoming annual meeting. He described a focus on five themes: (1) Collaboration and community partnerships (2) Sessions for Board members exclusively (3) ESAs' response to the current economic crisis (4) Efforts to reduce the number of ESAs (5) Promising practices in technology. He also offered possible opportunities for revenue enhancement through the Aligned Thinkers Journey Program and a Great American Life Insurance Program.

#### **II. AESA Legislative Agenda**

Joan Schuman and Jim Baldwin updated the members on the AESA Legislative Agenda. They reported the ESAs are now recognized as LEAs in all federal legislation. They reported that the belief currently is that the ESEA will not be renewed until after the 2010 elections, but that information gathering for the renewal has already begun. They noted that because the leadership of the Education Committee had changed after Senator Kennedy's death, the process will most likely take longer, but that Senator Kennedy's staff has agreed to work for the new Chair, Senator Harkin. They reviewed the Race to the Top grant status and noted that drafts of the application process are now available. They noted that there is an innovation fund of \$650 million. They highlighted several issues which bear watching, including common core standards, rural education program funding, private school vouchers, IDEA funding, e-Rate, nutrition bills, and a bill that had passed focusing on higher education loans and early childhood funding. Joan reminded members that legislators regularly hear from advocacy groups and parents, but seldom hear from school districts or ESAs. They urged members to check the website for updates and to contact Mary Kusler at AESA with questions.

### **III. Presentation: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Labs**

Leslie Herget and Richard Fornier reviewed the services available through the Regional Labs. Leslie Herget gave an overview of the organization, noting that the focus has changed from completing large-scale research projects to meeting the needs of the region. They described the mission of the REL as providing research available to districts and educational entities as a tool for decision making. Currently available are Issues and Answers Report and IEP Practice Guides on a variety of topics. The Regional Educational Lab for New England and the Islands is in its fourth of a five-year contract. It is governed by a Board made up of the Commissioner of Education from each state or region and two other key stakeholders. The current contracted providers for the REL NEI are EDC and WestEd. REL NEI has done several large scale studies in the first three years and now is focusing on outreach to interested parties. Richard Fornier described a reference desk service called AskAREL. through which any interested party can ask a question about an educational issue and the REL will reply within 2 to 3 weeks with summaries of high quality research on that issue. Questions from the group included whether the REL could do research about the effectiveness of programs for ESAs. Ms. Herget replied that they are not able to do that kind of research because of the restrictions of the REL contract.

### **IV. Regional Initiatives: Successes and Failures**

Steve Theall opened a discussion to all members concerning regional issues. Topics discussed included the impact of the current tough financial climate, regionalization, and whether Collaboratives include charter schools as members. Other topics included membership structure, the relationship between ESAs and the State Department of Education, and competition with private schools for special education tuition funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30.

Respectfully submitted by Dorsey Yearley