

Quarterly Performance Review of the Arizona Education Learning and Accountability System: AELAS

Submitted to the Arizona Department of Education by
WestEd and CELT

Date: April 2, 2015



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OVERVIEW

This report documents a quarterly performance review of the Arizona Education Learning and Accountability System (AELAS) by an independent evaluator as required by *Arizona Revised Statutes* (A.R.S) 15-249 that was conducted March 16-18, 2015. WestEd (the prime contractor) and CELT (the subcontractor) were hired by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to serve as that independent evaluator. This quarterly monitoring report is a follow-up to the initial performance review conducted in 2013, with a report submitted on September 9, 2013

The ADE IT team continues to make progress in effectively addressing the recommendations in the September 9, 2013 report. In the December 2014 report the Arizona Education Data Standards (AzEDS) were a key area of concern and the ADE has made significant and impressive progress on this project. They continue to utilize a management and reporting plan to track the progress against the original WestEd/CELT recommendations and have prioritized the recommendations according to their urgency and impact upon the effective planning and deployment of AELAS. Significant progress is being made in the appropriate recommendation areas. The work is slowly transitioning to a forward-thinking focus on the end users within ADE and across local education agencies (LEAs). This transition is to be expected and shows evidence of the significant progress being made in the technological rollout.

Foundational functions of AELAS are nearing the implementation stage with a transition to data collections via the AzEDS project planned for July 2015. Critical technical and configuration work by the ADE, vendors, and districts must be successfully completed on a multitude of projects for the transition, particularly for Organizational Entity Management (OEM) and AzEDS.

The AELAS vision includes the delivery of timely data to teachers for the development and delivery of effective instruction. The business case highlights the benefits of deploying a coordinated, efficient data system to reduce the burden of state reporting placed upon districts and decrease their operating expenses to shift expenditures toward instructional activities. The business case documented the significant financial savings for districts through the adoption of opt-in systems, such as the Statewide Student Information System (SSIS). AELAS has begun to deploy the SSIS, saving districts money and increasing SIS functionality. Another key benefit outlined in the business case was the provisioning of timely student learning results to teachers for the modification of instructional strategies. The integration of formative assessments into AELAS is being piloted in pursuit of this capability.

The AELAS business case was developed collaboratively with a large set of Arizona stakeholders, including teachers, district leaders, elected officials, and the business community. Continuing communications with those stakeholders is critical to maintain development of AELAS as a system that provides value to Arizona citizens. In particular, ADE is using an iterative feedback model with educators across the state to ensure that their input is being integrated into the development of applications. The AELAS vision developed in the business case remains the right thing to pursue and the ADE is making progress toward fulfilling that vision.

The original findings outlined in the September 2013 report documented concerns about the non-technical AELAS work required of program areas. They need to be involved effectively to establish policy and operational strategies for AELAS. Areas of engagement were outlined through statements such as “implement the vision described in the original business case, utilize a business

architecture, data governance, and communications”. Efforts to address the concern about policies and decisions necessary to deploy AELAS systems capabilities into the leadership and support of districts, schools and teachers has improved since the last report. Maturation of the Education Transformation Committee and the assignment of Dr. Cecilia Johnson, the Associate Superintendent for Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders and Dr. Jennifer Johnson Deputy Superintendent of Programs and Policies as leaders of AELAS integration activities are positive actions in this area. They are actively pursuing implementation of program policies, practices, training, and structures necessary to make ADE programs more effective through the integration of AELAS capabilities. This includes working with the University of Arizona to develop materials to support AELAS use and data literacy, and a training environment for the teacher preparation program that includes the development of simulated datasets. It also includes the transition of AzDASH training out of the IT group and into the Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders group. With these changes the ADE can focus AzDASH training on data literacy skills among district staff and the application of dashboard information to instructional improvement and school support activities

Open issues on this topic from the previous report include:

- **Communication.** As previously reported the ADE IT team continues to aggressively manage and improve their communication within the ADE and to districts and other stakeholders. But those with instructional and school administration backgrounds are best positioned to explain to teachers and leaders how AELAS will help them become more effective in their work. The transition of primary responsibility for communication is shifting to the ADE leadership team with a focus on how AELAS will provide teachers and leaders with resources and make more efficient instructional work. Superintendent Douglas and members of her team (Sally Stewart, Director of Communications and Ashley Berg, Director of Policy Development and Government Relations) expressed a strong desire to serve district leaders, teachers, students, and parents and a commitment to planning and communication.
- **Digital Resources.** The Content Management System (CMS) is being populated with some programmatic materials. However, to date, insufficient volumes of digital content are being loaded by ADE program teams to make the CMS a comprehensive resource for teachers and leaders. There does not appear to be an overarching strategy on how digital content will be incorporated into instruction and effectively curated. The role of local educators in this digital selection and curation also needs to be defined. The alignment of Arizona standards to digital resources and associated assessments (e.g., formative, benchmark, etc.) has not been completed but is a critical linkage to understand how and where the materials can be applied.

With ADE transitioning to direct receipt of district data through AzEDS, AELAS will reach a critical milestone in July 2015 with this operationalization of foundational changes in how districts submit information to the ADE. The projects to complete the work are being closely managed, but there are dependencies on districts and vendors that will influence the operationalization of AELAS. As will any large information system transition the implementation of AELAS can be expected to be a time period of high stress and emotional communication. **Work on the OEM and AzDASH projects are critical to a successful transition of AELAS data collection processes in July.**

These AELAS projects, OEM and AzEDS, must be completed and implemented for the new data collection process to begin. This work is the foundation for Classroom Site Fund (CSF) distribution

calculations. “Completion” of the work includes the technical as well as the set-up and configuration work that must be completed by the finance group and data stewards. In addition to populating the OEM, there is a pressing need to develop, pilot, and implement the necessary business rules, and to understand their potential impact on district operations as the July 2015 transition occurs. There needs to be a formal contingency plan to address the scenario when districts cannot get their data clean enough to pass the business rules or they do not have an Ed-Fi capable SIS. The go-live date is a mere three months away and these business rules are essential. The recommendation would be to delay the transition until the business rules are defined and in place and the OEM complete. The IT team is working on a migration plan.

The SSIS project appears to be going very well. The ADE has received commitments from districts that exceed the project goals. ADEConnect has been implemented in the majority of districts. The OEM is being populated with district data by the finance team. Remaining work includes instructional improvement system (IIS) components of AELAS that are not fully ready for district implementation (e.g., plans to deploy digital content and assessments).

As with most projects of this breath the AELAS team continues to manage technical and non-technical challenges. AzEDS has made significant progress since the last review. This project is complex and important. It has dependence on the SIS vendors to implement the Ed-Fi REST APIs and upon the data quality in district SISs. Some of the current non-technical issues include: educator leadership in the use of data to inform instruction, strategies and structures to integrate AELAS capabilities into program area work, and implementation plans for the development and management of digital resources (e.g., content and assessments). Though the ADE is proactively managing the technical challenges necessary to implement AELAS projects the capabilities necessary to assist teachers improve and adjust instruction are not yet ready. Those include: digital content aligned to Arizona State Standards that allow teachers to find and share high quality teaching materials, and high quality classroom assessments (formative, interim) within an assessment engine to measure student learning and the effectiveness of instruction. These delays prevent AELAS from reaching the vision outlined in the business case to improve Arizona student learning by providing all Arizona teachers (not just those is a subset of well funded schools) with tools and resources to improve their craft.

The ADE IT group has become a service organization to the districts with the deployment of the SSIS Opt-in project, the AzDASH project, and the upcoming CSF project. Sustainability of the service provider role by the ADE requires additional work by the State of Arizona to develop a comprehensive long-term plan (particularly regarding governance, funding, and staffing) to ensure AELAS is able to provide high quality services to teachers, leaders and students over time. An example is the funding established for AELAS in FY 15-16. If AELAS is funded below requested levels there will be a trade-off necessary among future AELAS projects that weights the comprehensiveness of the architecture against instructional resources to assist teachers, leaders and students. Long term sustainability of AELAS requires a predictable funding environment.

Strategic policy structures, within which program leadership and functional domain leaders own AELAS processes, are maturing but not at a pace fast enough to meet AELAS system deployments. Governance maturity and coordination efforts are improving. With AELAS increasing in capabilities the program and instructional leaders can improve how their work is planned, executed and measured. An example is program area strategies for gathering, curating, and using electronic resources to inform instruction and classroom practice.

Overall the ADE IT team continues to effectively address the original recommendations, building an operational information system that serves Arizona districts and the ADE. Engagement by ADE leaders is increasing, which is positive and essential, but the policies, practices, and communications needed to make AELAS an effective tool for students, teachers, leaders, and other stakeholders are lagging behind the technical capabilities.

COMMENDATIONS

Commendations pertain to activities that ADE is doing especially well and are highlighted as examples of superlative performance. The WestEd/CELT team has noted the following commendations from observations during the March 2015 site visit:

1. Development of the AzEDS project has made significant progress in the plan to gather, validate, and store district data. This will continue to be a critical project until successful implementation is achieved as planned in July and sustained thereafter.
2. The Education Transformation Committee has become an ongoing leadership forum for ADE to direct, prioritize, and implement AELAS work.
3. The SSIS initiative has achieved commitments from districts for its adoption above the goal established by the ADE.
4. Dr. Cecilia Johnson, Associate Superintendent for Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders, has taken an active role in leading communications to districts regarding AELAS capabilities. These include the training of districts on the use of information available in AzDASH dashboards, the creation of a rubric about data literacy for teacher preparation programs, and the development of a teacher preparation curriculum for implementation with the University of Arizona.
5. The transition of decision making for non-technical issues has continued, with the ADE program leaders taking a more active role in decision making that impacts their programs. This will become more important as AELAS becomes operational.
6. The Project Management Office (PMO) continues to mature their processes. Improvements in the categorization of projects by project type and establishment of governance and artifact structures for each type is impressive. The inclusion of non-technology implementation tasks within the project plan aligns with and addresses previous recommendations.
7. The ADE has dramatically improved the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The work completed and the design behind the work are excellent. Initially planned to support the SSIS deployment, the CRM has the capabilities to manage a broad set of district interactions in both technical and non-technical (e.g. program management, grants management, etc.) areas.
8. ADE is taking seriously the concept of data literacy. For example, the teacher licensure office has developed a set of standards and measurement rubrics for teacher preparation programs, in collaboration and consultation with the schools of education across the state. Arizona is one of the leading states in actively recognizing the importance of data literacy,

officially making it a requirement for teacher preparation, and working with the institutions of higher education to consider how best to integrate data literacy into teacher preparation.

9. ADE has entered into a working collaboration with the University of Arizona’s College of Education to integrate data literacy into their teacher preparation program. Led by Dr. Cecilia Johnson, ADE is working to provide the program with simulated datasets that can be used to train teacher candidates in their data literacy skills. Additional tools have been developed to manage IT personal cost.
10. Improved support functions have been implemented to help districts make use of the tools.
11. Formative assessment dashboards are under development for use by teachers to improve instruction and personalize learning using data sourced from districts.

FINDINGS BY RECOMMENDATIONS

The 10 initial recommendations served as the baseline from which the WestEd/CELT team working during the site visit. Below is a synthesis of the team’s findings as they pertain to each recommendation.

1. Stay the course as envisioned in the AELAS business case.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The SSIS Opt-In project has garnered broad support from districts. The ADE exceeded their goal in the number of districts (and the students served) committing to the State SIS. □ AELAS data collections via AzEDS is planned to become operational in July 2015 with the detailed data submission via standards based APIs and an Operational Data Store (ODS) as outlined in the business case. □ The IT team is working on a migration plan. □ A key funding mechanism, the SAIS based CSF, is expected to transition to AELAS in July 2015. □ Educational leaders at the ADE are making key decisions on the AELAS vision, functions, project management, implementation and training. Dr. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The AELAS assessment strategy remains undefined. The review team suggests the ADE formulate their strategy for how formative and summative information will be used to assist teachers, leaders, students and parents measure learning and inform instruction. Particularly what roles the districts and ADE play and how data can be used to foster greater student learning. □ ADE must have a full set of business rules for the data collections that have been developed, defined, and tested by the time the transition occurs in July 2015 and AELAS goes live. □ ADE should consider exploring learning progressions and their potential integration into AELAS capabilities. These could intersect with policy and

<u>Progress Made</u>	<u>Suggestions/Concerns</u>
<p>Jennifer Johnson and Dr. Cecelia Johnson in particular. The Education Transformation Committee has become the governing group for AELAS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The finance team has begun population of the OEM for the July 1 transition to AzDASH based data submissions. 	<p>practice work on standards, assessment and digital content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The Learning Management System (LMS) and CMS work continues but have not been operationalized yet. These systems have the potential to provide valuable resources to teachers and leaders. □ SIS vendors must develop and install the AzEDS REST API for the new data submission scheme to function. If this has not occurred, the go-live date on July 2015 is then in jeopardy. These vendor implementations remain a risk for AELAS.

2. Utilize business architecture concepts, aligning department strategic plans to and across program area plans and associated execution activities and methodologies.

<u>Progress Made</u>	<u>Suggestions/Concerns</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Emerging from a meeting with Superintendent Douglas and members of her leadership team was an interest in exploring how strategies and policy changes would impact the development and implementation of AELAS. □ Work continues to establish AELAS capabilities and data literacy within the University of Arizona teacher preparation program. Dr. Cecilia Johnson is leading this work. She also has taken an active role in communicating to districts about the potential benefits of AELAS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ With the new administration in place and the Education Transformation Committee taking an active role in AELAS, now is a good time to review ADE programs and grants to maximize their effectiveness with information into and from AELAS. □ As AELAS becomes operational in July the ADE can evaluate and determine how it can best be used to support administrative initiatives supporting districts, teacher, students and parents. □ The work load and focus for AELAS is transitioning from largely technical work to a more balanced work load between educators and technologist to be an impactful system for increasing student outcomes. This may require new skills and methodologies in how work is planned and executed. An example is the loading of digital content

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
	<p>into the CMS. The selection of and meta-tagging of materials into the CMS requires each program area to agree to a common methodology and taxonomy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="873 380 1403 659">□ Implementation of a Strategic Management Office (SMO) remains a recommendation in this review period. The SMO can play a pivotal role in coordinating leadership initiatives into plans that can be implemented across the ADE programs and districts. <li data-bbox="873 674 1403 869">□ PMO continues to refine and mature its methodologies. These refinements improve the alignment of work across projects, documentation of work, and consistent user experiences. <li data-bbox="873 884 1403 1205">□ The PMO has included implementation tasks and deliverables into project management methodologies. This will improve the alignment of cross dependent projects, particularly those that must be operational before other projects and be implemented (i.e., OEMS). <li data-bbox="873 1220 1403 1415">□ The PMO has initiated formalized methods for the management of grant applications, aligning AELAS architecture and data collections into the grant process.

3. ADE directly address the budgetary issues that pertain to AELAS, SAIS, and the SLDS that include detailed work plans, deliverables, and timelines.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="250 1688 786 1877">□ The ADE has a robust system of governing bodies and tools to track and report AELAS projects. With the Education Transformation Committee and IT Portfolio groups organizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="873 1688 1403 1877">□ The AELAS architecture and elimination of legacy applications and their associated data collections and data stores may not be completed as envisioned in the original business case

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<p>ADE leaders and coordinating AELAS projects into an organizational governance system. The ADE IT team, including the PMO, has built a comprehensive set of practices and tools to plan, build and implement AELAS work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="250 527 781 768">□ Enhanced PMO tools align project management plans to project type, including project timeline templates, approval schedules and RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) diagrams. <li data-bbox="250 779 781 936">□ The ADE implemented a tracking system for personnel requisitions that calculates the cost and time to fill each open position. 	<p>due to fiscal constraints in the FY 2015-2016 budget. This may result in on-going duplicative data collections and data silos.</p>

4. Improve and continue to develop a communication plan to diverse stakeholders.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="250 1199 797 1440">□ The new administration is taking an active role in reviewing AELAS capabilities and determining the potential benefits to their focus areas. This includes the involvement of communications specialists. <li data-bbox="250 1451 797 1776">□ Dr. Deborah Stirling, Education Intelligence Strategist, has ongoing meetings with stakeholders to gather requirements for new dashboards. This is an iterative process in which feedback from the stakeholders is accumulated and integrated back into the design of the technological applications. <li data-bbox="250 1787 797 1850">□ Communication efforts are proactive and robust. The efforts by ADE IT in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="867 1199 1409 1314">□ Communications on AELAS should be modified to match focus areas of the new administration. <li data-bbox="867 1325 1409 1482">□ While communication is making progress, it remains an ongoing critical area of focus to facilitate AELAS adoption by instructional leaders.

<p>this area are among the best experienced by the review team.</p>	
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5. Creation of a data governance process.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Formal adoption of a data governance structure has been made by ADE senior leadership. Work has begun on identifying data stewards and implementing a data dictionary. <input type="checkbox"/> The Data Analyst Working Group (DAWG) continues to meet. There is discussion of continuing those meetings after the data stewards begin their meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Data stewards have been proposed, waiting for leadership approval. <input type="checkbox"/> Data Governance Commission continues its work <input type="checkbox"/> A tool to host the data dictionary has been identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> With formal approval of the data governance plan the team must be put into place quickly. This is particularly important for the population of the data dictionary and to participate in the development, piloting, and implementation of business rules used to validate data submitted via AzEDS. <input type="checkbox"/> With the upcoming transition to AzEDS data collections the State Data Governance Commission may become a key resource for cross agency communications. Information on the State Data Governance Commission website has not been updated since the June 2014 meeting.

6. Reduce the redundancy among data collections.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The ODS has been completed. When populated via AzEDS the ODS will serve as a central repository of information for the multiple systems, reducing the need to ask districts for duplicative data. <input type="checkbox"/> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The AELAS architecture and elimination of legacy applications and their associated data collections and data store may not be completed as envisioned in the original business case due to fiscal constraints in the FY 2015-2016 budget. This may result in on-going duplicative data collections and data silos. <input type="checkbox"/> The project timeline, lack of defined business rules for data movement from

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
	<p>district to state and vendor dependencies of AzEDS are all a major concern of this report that is recognized by the ADE IT team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Communications to education program leaders and project managers to gather their data from the ODS rather than the previous stand alone data collections is important. <input type="checkbox"/> New grant governance structure has been implemented within which data stewards and ADE leadership reviews potential grant application for impact on data collections at the district.

7. Creation of a non-profit organizing structure.

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ADE is aware of this need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No work in this area is expected until after the administration change.

8. Improvement of human capacity around the use of data (e.g., data literacy).

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The University of Arizona has agreed to train future teachers and leaders within an AELAS environment, including the use of simulated datasets to improve instructional outcomes. ADE will be supplying simulated data sets to the College of Education. This work will be tied directly to the rubric for data literacy prepared by the teacher licensure group within ADE. It is a major step toward helping future teachers become data literate upon leaving their preparation programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It is clear that senior leadership have become champions about data literacy within ADE. There has been some work within ADE to begin to institutionalize the concept of data literacy. This must be an ongoing effort throughout the agency. <input type="checkbox"/> AzDASH has received over 200,000 hits in a month, an indicator of the districts' desire for information that AELAS provides. It is clear that teachers are finding the contents of

<u><i>Progress Made</i></u>	<u><i>Suggestions/Concerns</i></u>
<p>□ Data literacy is gaining traction within ADE. Led by senior leadership, the licensure group developed criteria for teacher preparation programs that include an evaluative category for data literacy. Schools of Education and their teacher candidates must demonstrate data literacy. This work must continue and be communicated as an important part of educators’ skill sets. Arizona is one of the first states to systemize the importance of data literacy within teacher preparation.</p>	<p>AzDASH useful as they look to that data to inform their instructional practices. A concern is how the high stakes assessment results in AELAS are being interpreted and applied (e.g., to instruction). This issue is a component of data literacy. This will become an emerging issue as policy changes to assessments occur from ADE.</p> <p>□ AELAS is actively producing dashboards for teachers and leaders, but the skills and knowledge of those consuming the information via the dashboards may not be of an adequate level to use the information effectively. Again, this is a data literacy issue in terms of helping educators to understand the appropriateness of data and its proper utility and functionalities. The more ADE can provide training on not just the dashboards, but the use of the data that reside on the tool, the more educators will be able to use the data effectively and responsibly.</p> <p>□ The IT team is currently training districts on how to access, find, and use AZDash reports. Data literacy concepts should be integrated into these trainings. This is an example of an effort that should reside with ADE instructional and program leaders. To be clear, though, data literacy is not just about how to use the systems, but more broadly, how to use the data that reside in the systems.</p>

9. **Attend closely to the needs of the most rural districts.**

<i>Progress Made</i>	<i>Suggestions/Concerns</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The SSIS Opt-In project has met its goals for districts planning to implement the SSIS. Many of these districts are small or rural districts. □ The SSIS is the first of many potential services the state can provide (on and Opt-In basis) to districts at lower costs or with more functionality, which is aligned to the business case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ While the ADE IT team is proactively putting plans in place to help districts plan their communication networks and use E-rate funds, there are questions on how districts will fund the equipment and software necessary to make AELAS effective in the classroom, such as computing devices and software. This is a policy and budget issue for the State. □ A state broadband network can be a foundational piece of a larger telecommunications plan that supports students and teachers utilizing AELAS capabilities. This work is outside the scope of ADE, though they can lead the vision for the classroom of the future for Arizona students and assist in creating policy to meet that vision.

10. Development of a comprehensive long-term plan and continued outreach to stakeholders in the form of periodic needs analyses as a process by which to monitor changing needs of the stakeholder groups.

<i>Progress Made</i>	<i>Suggestions/Concerns</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Superintendent Douglas, her leadership team, and the Education Transformation Committee are excellent groups to gather stakeholder input and create plans for AELAS. They can lead development of both operational plans and sustainability plans. □ Stakeholder meetings continue with groups like the Arizona Association of School Business Officials (AASBO), the Arizona School Computer Users Support (ASCUS), and the Leading Change conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ AELAS capabilities to gather real time data via AzEDS will become operational in early FY 2015-2016. This transition is a foundation for new ways to deliver information to teachers, leaders and district boards upon the effectiveness of their work, in time for the work to be improved by the end of the student learning cycle. Key decisions are needed about what information will be made available to instructional leaders, students, and parents. This includes information obtained from data sources such as

<i>Progress Made</i>	<i>Suggestions/Concerns</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Having Dr. Cecelia Johnson and Dr. Jennifer Johnson as AELAS leaders establishes education leadership for AELAS. This provides a foundation to communicate and gather stakeholder input. Their commitment to AELAS is critical and communicates to SEA and LEA staff the importance of educators using data to inform their practice. 	<p>formative and benchmark assessments as well as other non-assessment and non-student performance data that impacts student outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The vision for AELAS was the result of dozens of interviews with district staff and leadership. Ongoing interviews need to be conducted by ADE on a recurring basis, per the recommendations in the first report, to ensure that ADE remains directed by the voice of the customer. □ Transition to a new ADE administration provides an opportunity to review and gather stakeholder needs and opinions.

CHALLENGES

The WestEd/CELT team has noted some challenges that pertain to the ongoing work that are worthy of breaking out for special attention. These challenges are not to be construed as negatives, but to be taken as constructive issues that staff identified about which ADE should actively monitor and proactively manage when appropriate and feasible.

1. The AzEDS project remains critical to AELAS. Work required to complete AzEDS continues at a rapid pace, but the timeline is aggressive. Dependency upon the district SIS vendors is a concern, as is the quality of the data input into the districts' SISs. The ability to manually review data by district personnel will no longer be feasible in the new environment and districts will need new processes to ensure high quality data in the source system. As noted above, there is a major risk to completing the transition at the beginning of July if the business rules are not in place, the OEM completed, and a determination of the potential impact on the districts made. Because of the importance of this project the CIO is continuously monitoring its progress. Although the IT is working on a migration plan, a delay may be necessary if the component parts are not in place before the transition.
2. The July 1, 2015 transition to AzEDS data collections can be anticipated to be a challenge. Some will be technical, but many will not. Communications among the department programs, districts, elected officials, and parents will be critical during the transition. ADE's IT group is being as proactive and planful as possible in preparation for the transition and the potential issues that may occur.
3. Policy changes can have significant impact on AELAS functionality. With multiple participants and initiatives in play each legislative session, a formalized method to review the impacts to AELAS and the work it supports is recommended. In this legislative session state assessments, data use, and data security are key state concerns. Plans in these areas could have unintended impacts on AELAS without a formal evaluation.
4. The AELAS budget for FY 2015-2016 could require trade-offs among AELAS capabilities as outlined in the business case. ADE and State leadership will play key roles in determining the AELAS projects initiated in the next fiscal year. This may require a prioritization that delays some of the originally envisioned capabilities.
5. Commitment by districts for AELAS training is an ongoing challenge. Some districts are using AELAS capabilities without participating in training, particularly AzDASH. Their ability to properly use the AzDASH information is in question.
6. Resource constraints among the ADE teams (e.g., Finance) tasked with decision making and configuration work of AELAS components has the potential to slow AELAS implementation. While there is organizational buy-in and alignment across the finance and IT groups, there is competition for the limited human resources between ongoing operations and AELAS implementation activities.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The ADE IT team continues to deliver on their commitments and AELAS is on track for a July 2015 transition to real-time data collections. The IT team continues to improve the tools and methods it uses to manage their work, the current state of their management tools is impressive. They are leading the nation in how information is exchanged between the LEAs and the SEA. The ADE IT leaders and team are a group to which the rest of the nation looks for leadership in technical arenas. AzDASH is seen by instructors as a valuable resource to review student progress and improve instructional planning, and these positive sentiments are from the limited data set of one time annual assessments. The use of real-time student information will be possible in the next school year. Key questions remain about what information is necessary and/or desired by district leaders and teachers to improve student outcomes, and the role AELAS may play in delivering it. The AELAS project, if delivered per the business case, will become the exemplar educational data system for the nation, providing real-time data to educators that are actionable and understandable.

AELAS enters an important transition in July 2015 with the implementation of AzEDS. Leadership and communication during this time period is critical to making the transition as smooth as possible.

The ADE organization is engaging education leaders in directing and configuring AELAS to meet the needs of Arizona districts and ADE programs. Examples include; the OEM configuration being led by the finance team, the educator led Education Transformation and IT Portfolio teams are AELAS decision making bodies, and the educator and program leadership in the data governance system.

Findings, recommendations, and observations on the AELAS project fall into four themes.

- Prepare for the July transition to data via AzEDS. Consider delaying the July transition date until the business rules are defined and there is a clearer picture of the impact of these business rules on the districts. ADE needs to train on these rules and coach the districts in how to address data errors at the source SIS. The OEMs must also be operational for the AzEDS transition. The finance team has responsibility for finishing the OEMs set up and they are a critical path for the July transition.
- Develop strategies, initiatives, objectives, and professional development plans to integrate AELAS capabilities into the work of instructional and program leaders.
- Plan the resources necessary for teachers, leaders, students, and parents to work together in creating engaging learning experiences and effective learning support systems.
- Create policy supporting a sustainability plan for AELAS. As the system becomes an operationally imperative tool for districts the State of Arizona must have a plan to ensure districts are confident in its reliability and longevity.

Within these themes, the following focus areas for the next period of work are suggested:

1. Proactively plan for the AzEDS transition in July. Involve key leaders across the ADE, LEAs, and legislature on progress, hurdles, and solutions. Develop and implement the needed business rules, and provide a detailed plan for the rollout that included training on

the rules and methods for data cleanup. Plan for contingencies for a necessary delay if the components needed for the transition are not in place.

2. Develop program-specific AELAS communication materials that can be integrated into their on-going communications with districts. Transition communication work from the IT team onto instructional and leadership experts and from a technology focus to a program enhancement focus. It is imperative that the programs begin to take an increasingly active role in the ownership of the data that will inform practice.
3. Prioritize completion of the data governance efforts. Establish deliverable timelines that match the AzEDS data collection and validation work. Create concrete escalation plans for missed deliverables.
4. Closely monitor the progress of the AzEDS data collection, validation, and storage work. Continue the weekly CIO monitoring of this project. Include the data stewards in this work, as well as the data governance commission.
5. Develop an AELAS sustainability plan, including both proximal and distal perspectives.
6. Continue the AzDASH training lead by Dr. Cecilia Johnson along with the data literacy training (with a training environment) planned with the University of Arizona.
7. Continue to work with the districts in developing data strategies to support improved student outcomes. This can include assessments (e.g., formative, interim, benchmark, high stakes summative assessments) and other data (e.g., attendance, program participation) that districts determine as useful in their instructional practices. Clearly outline how each data element and associated reports can be used to inform instructional and leadership practices.
8. Develop enterprise level guiding principles for new policy and projects that integrate organizational change into AELAS. Proactively manage the potential introduction of new data silos and redundant work. Formalize these principals into governance structures and procurement methods.
9. Integrate the early childhood initiative (recent grant) with AELAS.
10. Develop an SLDS grant that continues to mature AELAS capabilities that focuses on data use based on programmatic needs, to assist districts, their teachers, and students.