

273.2 Area education agencies established — powers — services and programs.

1. There are established throughout the state nine area education agencies, each of which is under the general supervision of the director of the department of education, except as otherwise provided in [this chapter](#). Each area education agency shall have an area education agency board of directors that shall serve in an advisory capacity. The boundaries of an area education agency shall not divide a school district. The director of the department of education shall change boundaries of area education agencies to take into account mergers of local school districts and changes in boundaries of local school districts, when necessary to maintain the policy of [this chapter](#) that a local school district shall not be a part of more than one area education agency.

2. An area education agency established under [this chapter](#) is a body politic as a school corporation for the purpose of exercising powers granted under [this chapter](#), and may sue and be sued. An area education agency may hold property and execute purchase agreements within two years of a disaster as defined in [section 29C.2, subsection 4](#), and lease-purchase agreements pursuant to [section 273.3, subsection 7](#), and if the lease-purchase agreement exceeds ten years or the purchase price of the property to be acquired pursuant to a purchase or lease-purchase agreement exceeds the amount stated in [section 26.3, subsection 1](#), the area education agency shall conduct a public hearing on the proposed purchase or lease-purchase agreement and receive approval from the area education agency board of directors and the state board of education or its designee before entering into the agreement.

3. a. The area education agency shall furnish educational services and programs as provided in [section 273.1](#), [this section](#), [sections 273.3 through 273.8](#), and [chapter 256B](#) to pupils enrolled in public or nonpublic schools which are on the list of accredited schools pursuant to [section 256.11](#), which request to receive such services. The programs and services provided shall be at least commensurate with programs and services existing on July 1, 1974. The programs and services provided to pupils enrolled in nonpublic schools shall be comparable to programs and services provided to pupils enrolled in public schools within constitutional guidelines.

b. The area education agency may furnish evidence-based professional development services to public or nonpublic schools which are on the list of accredited schools pursuant to [section 256.11](#) if any of the following requirements are satisfied:

(1) The professional development service is included on the list developed by the director of the department of education pursuant to [section 256.9, subsection 36](#).

(2) The director of the department of education grants approval to the area education agency to furnish the evidence-based professional development services.

4. The area education agency shall provide for special education services and media services for school districts and shall encourage and assist school districts to establish programs for gifted and talented children. The area education agency shall assist in facilitating interlibrary loans of materials between school districts and other libraries.

5. a. The area education agency may furnish services under [subsection 3 or 4](#) to public or nonpublic schools located within its boundaries, or within the boundaries of a contiguous area education agency, which are on the list of accredited schools pursuant to [section 256.11](#).

b. Notwithstanding paragraph “a”, the area education agency may furnish services under [subsection 3 or 4](#) to a public school located within the boundaries of an area education agency that is not contiguous if the school district shares a superintendent with another school district, pursuant to [section 257.11, subsection 5](#), that receives services from the area education agency pursuant to paragraph “a”.

6. The area education agency board may provide for the following programs and services to local school districts, and at the request of local school districts to providers of child development services who have received grants under [chapter 256A](#) from the child development coordinating council, within the limits of funds available:

a. In-service training programs for employees of school districts and area education agencies, provided at the time programs and services are established they do not duplicate programs and services available in that area from the universities under the state board of regents and from other universities and four-year institutions of higher education in

Iowa. The in-service training programs shall include but are not limited to regular training concerning mental or emotional disorders which may afflict children and the impact children with such disorders have upon their families.

b. Educational data processing pursuant to [section 256.9, subsection 11](#).

c. Research, demonstration projects and models, and educational planning for children under five years of age through grade twelve and children requiring special education as defined in [section 256B.2](#) as approved by the state board of education.

d. Auxiliary services for nonpublic school pupils as provided in [section 256.12](#). However, if auxiliary services are provided their funding shall be based on the type of service provided.

e. Other educational programs and services for children under five years through grade twelve and children requiring special education as defined in [section 256B.2](#) and for employees of school districts and area education agencies as approved by the state board of education.

7. The board of directors of an area education agency shall not establish programs and services which duplicate programs and services which are or may be provided by the community colleges under the provisions of [chapter 260C](#). An area education agency shall contract, whenever practicable, with other school corporations for the use of personnel, buildings, facilities, supplies, equipment, programs, and services.

8. The board of an area education agency or a consortium of two or more area education agencies shall contract with one or more licensed dietitians for the support of nutritional provisions in individual education plans developed in accordance with [chapter 256B](#) and to provide information to support school nutrition coordinators.

9. The area education agency board shall collaborate with the department of education to provide a statewide infrastructure for educational data to create cost efficiencies, provide storage and disaster mitigation, and improve interconnectivity between schools and school districts. In addition, the area education agency boards shall work with the department to provide systemwide coordination in the implementation of the statewide longitudinal data system consistent with the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The area education agencies shall provide support to school districts' information technology infrastructure that is consistent with the statewide infrastructure for the educational data collaborative.

10. The area education agency boards shall jointly develop a three-year statewide strategic plan that supports goals adopted by the state board of education pursuant to [section 256.7, subsection 4](#), and the accreditation standards established pursuant to [section 256.11](#); establish performance goals; and clearly identify the statewide efforts to improve student learning and create efficiencies in management operations for area education agencies and school districts. The statewide strategic plan shall be approved by the state board of education. The area education agency boards shall jointly provide the state board with annual updates on the performance measures.

11. The area education agency board is encouraged to employ a child welfare liaison to provide services and guidance to local school districts to facilitate the efficient and effective transfer and enrollment of a child adjudicated under [chapter 232](#) or receiving foster care services to another school district, including but not limited to guidance relating to the transfer of credit earned for coursework taken by the student, enrollment transition planning, facilitating information sharing between education and child welfare agencies, and developing systems designed to ameliorate the transition issues faced by a child adjudicated under [chapter 232](#) or receiving foster care services who is transferring to and enrolling in a school district.

12. Subject to an appropriation by the general assembly for such purpose, the area education agency board shall, by July 1, 2024, dedicate at least one full-time equivalent position to maintain a dyslexia specialist. The area education agency board may hire such a specialist or may provide appropriate training to qualify an existing employee as a specialist on dyslexia. The specialist shall provide technical guidance and assistance, including but not limited to professional development, strategies, and materials to school districts and accredited nonpublic schools relating to identification of and instruction for students with characteristics of dyslexia. The specialist shall be highly trained in dyslexia and have a

minimum of three years of field experience in screening, identifying, and treating dyslexia and related disorders. In the absence of an appropriation, each area education agency board is encouraged to employ a highly qualified dyslexia specialist.

13. The area education agency shall charge reasonable costs that are consistent with current market rates for the educational services, special education services, professional development services, and media services established by the area education agency.

14. The area education agency shall provide an annual report by January 1 of each year to the department of education, and to public schools and nonpublic schools located within the area education agency's boundaries which are on the list of accredited schools pursuant to [section 256.11](#), a detailed description of the educational services, special education programs and services, professional development services, and media services that the area education agency provides, and the cost associated with purchasing such programs and services from the area education agency.

[C66, 71, 73, §280A.25(3); C75, 77, 79, 81, §273.2, 280A.25(3); [82 Acts, ch 1006, §1, 2, ch 1136, §1](#)]

[84 Acts, ch 1103, §1; 85 Acts, ch 195, §30; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §1457; 87 Acts, ch 115, §39; 89 Acts, ch 135, §57; 95 Acts, ch 182, §20; 2001 Acts, ch 158, §23; 2008 Acts, ch 1187, §143; 2009 Acts, ch 65, §5; 2010 Acts, ch 1031, §270; 2011 Acts, ch 132, §63, 106; 2012 Acts, ch 1023, §38; 2012 Acts, ch 1138, §61; 2014 Acts, ch 1091, §1; 2020 Acts, ch 1048, §5; 2020 Acts, ch 1063, §124; 2021 Acts, ch 25, §1; 2024 Acts, ch 1002, §5, 6, 22](#)

Referred to in [§256.9, 256.32A, 256B.9, 256I.8, 273.3, 273.6, 273.11, 273.23, 280.29](#)

2024 amendment to subsections 3 and 4 applies to school years beginning on or after July 1, 2025; 2024 Acts, ch 1002, §22

Subsection 5 applies to school years beginning on or after July 1, 2025; 2024 Acts, ch 1002, §22

Subsections 1, 3, and 4 amended

NEW subsections 5, 13, and 14 and former subsections 5 – 11 renumbered as 6 – 12