



House Education Committee Testimony
April 15th, 2026

Educational Service Agencies as Educator Preparation Partners

Educational service agencies have an established history of serving as educator preparation partners within their respective states and regions. This testimony focuses on Wisconsin's Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) model, which includes well-developed educator preparation programs and educator induction support. It also presents Vermont Learning Collaborative's educator preparation program concept for the committee's consideration.

In Wisconsin, several Cooperative Educational Service Agencies currently operate state-approved educator preparation programs, including CESA 1, CESA 2, CESA 6, CESA 7, and CESA 9. All programs hold approval from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

CESA 1 offers a Proficiency Based Licensure (PBL) program. Candidates work as teachers of record under a waiver, earning a salary while completing the program. The goal is to ensure that candidates acquire the knowledge and skills that are deemed essential to success in their role as an educator. Unique university partnerships allow candidates to enroll in a Master's program *while* completing licensure requirements.

CESA 2 offers a flexible licensure academy program for school staff in the following areas: K-12 ESL, 4-12 Math, K-12 Special Ed Cross Categorical, K-12 Spanish, Early Childhood, 4-12 Science, and more. The licensure program offers an online format and also includes individual, live coaching sessions via Zoom with faculty. Teachers may work under a waiver while completing the program.

CESA 6 offers a Residency in Teacher Education (RITE) program designed for individuals who want to become teachers and already hold a bachelor's degree. This proficiency-based, flexible program provides the training and support needed to obtain an initial teaching license. The program supports those seeking an initial license and those who are looking to add a certification. Courses are online and blend synchronous and asynchronous learning. Teachers may work under a waiver while completing the program.

[CESA 7](#) has the Teacher Development Center (TDC) which offers a two-year accelerated, performance-based, intensive teacher preparation program for emergency licensed teachers and those wanting to add a license. They also offer a district sponsored pathway for licensure to support currently licensed teachers who are teaching outside of their licensure using a three-year license with stipulations.

[CESA 9](#) offers the Excellence in Teaching Program for bachelors level candidates seeking pathways to licensure in a variety of areas. The program features asynchronous coursework, monthly in person/virtual classes and an 18 week clinical experience.

Wisconsin's Cooperative Educational Service Agencies also administer a high-quality [teacher induction program](#) designed to support the retention of new special education teachers during their first three years in the profession. The program provides professional learning, instructional coaching, and a structured support network for new educators. It is funded by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through IDEA discretionary grant funds.

Vermont Learning Collaborative Educator Preparation Program Concept

The Vermont Learning Collaborative (VTLC) envisions an evidence-based educator preparation and retention model designed to improve outcomes for students by stabilizing and strengthening the special education workforce in high-need, rural communities in the southeast region. VTLC envisions providing a certification pathway, with optional degree attainment, for provisionally licensed special education teachers and paraeducators while they remain embedded in their local school communities.

Proposed Steps:

1. VTLC proposes to collaborate with regional stakeholders; including superintendents, principals, and special education directors to benchmark effective educator preparation models at the state and national levels.
2. Identify and engage strategic partnerships:
 - The Vermont Agency of Education for program requirements and alignment;
 - Institution of Higher Education to provide optional credits towards a Masters of Education degree.
3. Establish a program oversight team, including district leaders, special educators, a program coordinator and higher education partners to guide curriculum development and alignment. Success will be measured by completion of an aligned program framework, coursework, and job-embedded clinical experiences grounded in evidence-based practices.
4. Recruit and hire education preparation program personnel including course instructors and instructional coaches and mentors.

5. Enroll at least 15 provisionally licensed educators and eligible para-educators into the first cohort of the preparation program. Enrollment data will be used as an early indicator of accessibility, relevance, and regional demand for a locally grounded licensure pathway.
6. Track enrollment, semester-to-semester retention, and progression of special educator candidates. High levels of persistence and completion will indicate that the program is accessible, relevant, and responsive to the realities of rural educators. Follow-up surveys to participants and district administrators will assess educator preparedness and early retention.

Critical Partners:

- District and Supervisory Union Leaders, including superintendents, special education directors, and principals, who provide governance, regional coordination, and implementation feedback.
- Practicing Special Educators and Related Service Providers, who contribute to course design, instructional delivery, and job-embedded coaching to ensure relevance and instructional coherence.
- Higher Education and State Agency Partners, who support coursework alignment, credentialing, and quality assurance.

Educator Preparation Program Personnel Needed:

- Program Coordinator (0.5 FTE): to manage cohort logistics, participant onboarding, scheduling, data collection, and ongoing program evaluation cycles to drive continuous improvement; and to support implementation fidelity and educator retention measurement.
- Course Instructors (part-time, contract): experienced practitioners to deliver rigorous, licensure-aligned coursework grounded in high-leverage practices.
- Instructional Coaches/Mentors (part-time, contract): experienced special educators to provide job-embedded coaching aligned to coursework and classroom implementation.

In summary, Wisconsin's model demonstrates that educational service agencies are capable of administering both approved licensure pathway programs and structured induction support programs in formal partnership with a state education agency. This serves as a meaningful precedent as Vermont considers how to support educator preparation and retention across the state.

Respectfully submitted,

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