

# Educational Service Agency Impact: *A Local and National Review*

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Testimony to the House Educational Committee

Jill Graham, Executive Director Vermont Learning Collaborative  
Sherry Sousa, Superintendent, Mountain Views Supervisory Union

# Vermont Learning Collaborative Updates

- **May 23rd, 2025:** Articles of Agreement finalized with AOE staff and second reading completed by VTLC Board.
- **July 2025:** Articles of Agreement and ratification motion language sent to all eight current members.
- **December 3rd, 2025:** Final ratification agreement by eighth member school board received and submission of Southeast Vermont Regional BOCES documents to AOE.
- **January 7th, 2026:** Approval memo received by Secretary Saunders, launching VTLC as the first established BOCES in the state.

# Implications for Southeast Regional BOCES (or CESA) Approval:

01 — Broader responsive service abilities

03 — Cooperative purchasing

02 — Grant opportunities and grant administration

04 — Greater capacity to hire high quality staff.



# The Southeast Regional BOCES (CESA)

## Mission



*The mission of the BOCES is to jointly conduct educational services and programs for member supervisory unions in a cost effective manner in order to increase educational opportunities for children ages 3-22 and build the capacity of the staff serving them.*

# The Southeast Regional BOCES (CESA)

## Purpose



*The purpose of the BOCES is to improve educational access and outcomes for students by providing:*

- *High quality educational and therapeutic programs, evaluations and related services to children with disabilities who are referred by member and non member supervisory unions;*
- *High quality professional development to educators;*
- *Staffing services for supervisory union/district staffing needs including hard to find areas of expertise;*
- *Coordination of resources amongst member supervisory unions in order to provide cost effective goods and/or services.*
- *Any other lawful purpose authorized by Title 16 Vermont Statutes Annotated, chapter 10; or as determined by the Board of Directors.*

# Southeast Region Cost Savings and Capacity Building

## Staffing

*Supervisory Unions and Districts are able to access part time, full time or per diem positions to fill needs saving up to 50% or more per FTE position.*

## Evaluations & Services

*As a regional service provider, VTLC saved member supervisory unions and districts 20 - 50% on evaluation services, with an average savings of 38%.*

*VTLC was able to provide timely and efficient services ensuring special education compliance timelines.*

## Programs

*VTLC continues to partner regionally to explore creation and provision of localized programming in least restrictive environments. By offering local, high quality programming, supervisory unions and districts can save up to 85% of transportation fees.*

## Consultation

*VTLC has provided district consultation focused on strengthening supervisory union programs for high risk students. Thus building capacity to reduce out of district placements. Use of VTLC as a regional service provider has yielded savings up to 62% for supervisory unions and districts.*

## Professional Development

*Supervisory Unions and Districts yielded an average savings of 66% on professional development costs by using VTLC as a regional service provider compared to individually hosting these events. Local or virtual hosting saved staff time and transportation costs.*

# Case Study: Professional Development

## Conference Costs outside of BOCES for one day event:

- Conference Fee: **\$325.00**
- Mileage: **\$125 - \$196**
- Hotel: **\$200 - \$400**
- Substitute: **\$150 - \$300**

Total Costs: **\$800 - \$1221**

## BOCES Professional Development one day event:

- Conference Fee: **\$260.00**
- Mileage: **\$0 - \$40**
- Hotel: **\$0**
- Substitute: **\$150**

Total Costs: **\$450**

**Savings: 44% - 63%**

# Case Study: Evaluation Services

## Evaluation Services by a private clinic:

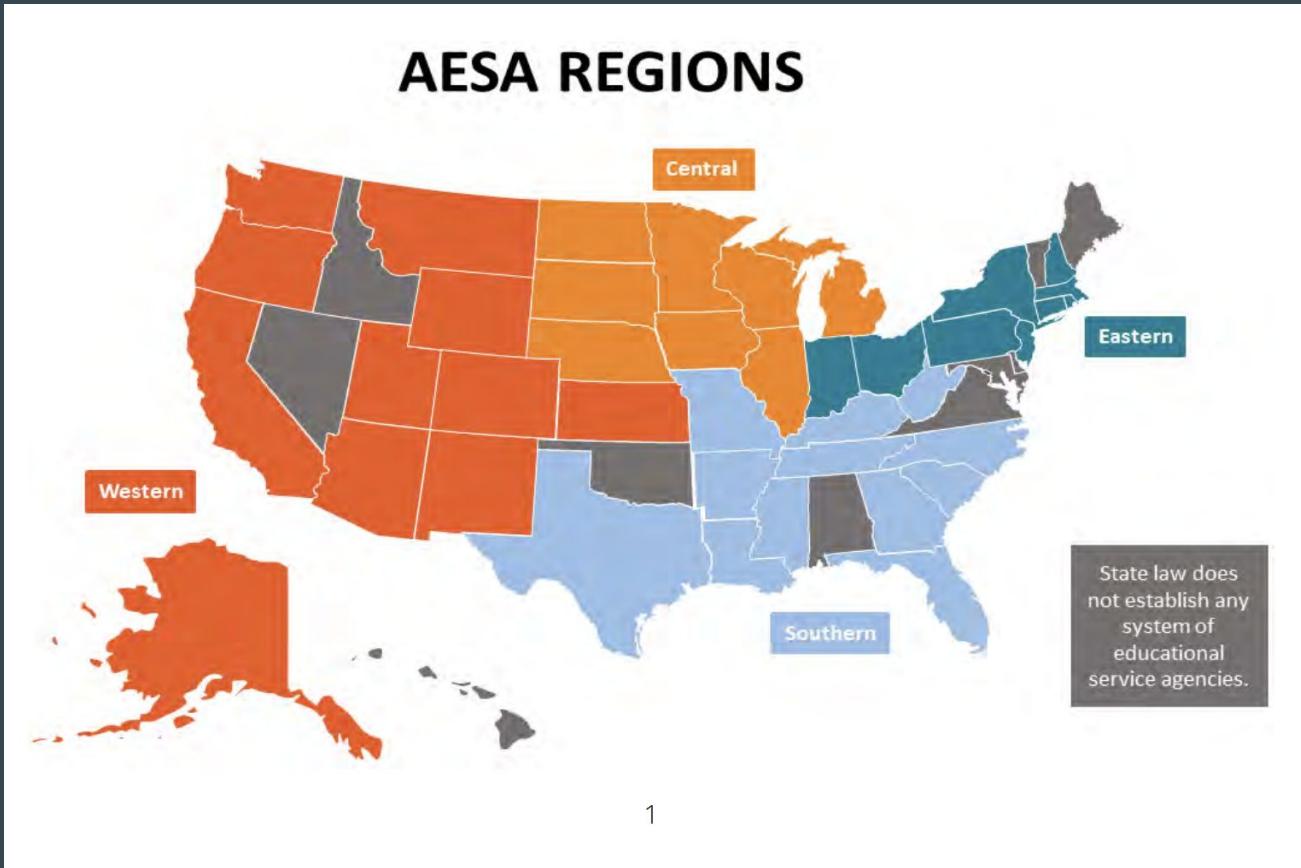
- Academic Evaluation: *(\$200/hr)* **\$2,000 - \$2,500**
- Autism Evaluation: **\$5,600 - \$7,600**
- Psychoeducational: *(\$200/hr)* **\$2,500 - \$3,000**
- SLP Evaluation: *(\$165/hr)* **\$1782**
- Transportation/Mileage: **\$150/hr plus mileage**

## BOCES Evaluation Services:

- Academic Evaluation: *(\$85/\$135)* **\$850 - \$1,350**
- Autism Evaluation: **\$3,400**
- Psychoeducational: *(\$135/\$175)* **\$1,600 - \$2,000**
- SLP Evaluation: *(\$125/hr)* **\$1350.00**
- Transportation/Mileage: **mileage only**

**Savings: 42%  
average**

# Educational Service Agencies Across the Nation



# What we CAN do.

Kentucky Educational Cooperatives and Service Agencies provide a wide range of support and services to school districts, educators, and students. Here's a list of what we **can do**:



## Professional Development & Training

- Offer workshops, training, continuing education, instructional coaching, mentoring and certification programs for teachers, administrators, and support staff.
- Conduct leadership training for school administrators.
- Assist with curriculum development and alignment to Kentucky Academic Standards.
- Offer resources for personalized and competency-based learning.
- Support career and technical education (CTE) programs.



## Special Education Services

- Provide consultation and resources for students with disabilities.
- Offer professional development for special education teachers and staff.
- Assist in compliance with state and federal special education regulations.
- Facilitate Individualized Education Program (IEP) support.



## Technology & Digital Learning Support

- Provide access to technology tools and resources for digital learning.
- Offer training on integrating technology in the classroom.
- Support districts with cybersecurity and IT infrastructure.
- Facilitate virtual learning opportunities.



## Assessment & Data Analysis

- Assist districts with student assessments and data interpretation.
- Provide guidance on data-driven decision-making.
- Support the use of assessment tools for student progress monitoring.



## Cooperative Purchasing & Financial Services

- Facilitate cooperative purchasing for school supplies, technology, and services.
- Offer financial and grant management support.
- Assist with budget planning and fiscal responsibility.



## Fiscal & Legal Accountability

- District Laws
- Board of Superintendents
- Open Records

*Proudly  
Serving*



Kentucky School Districts



Kentucky Schools



Kentucky Students



Kentucky Teachers



States



[www.kedc.org](http://www.kedc.org)

# OHIO'S EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTERS 2024



Ohio's  
51 ESC's  
serve



1.7 million  
students



240,000+  
educators

All data from Ohio Department of Education & Workforce, 2024

ESCs have provided  
**\$2.38 billion**  
in services to Ohio  
schools.

ESCs have saved  
Ohio schools almost  
**\$100 million**  
this year (as compared  
to the cost of purchasing  
or developing services  
themselves).

**All 51 ESCs**  
received the High  
Performing ESC  
designation from the  
Ohio Department of  
Education & Workforce.

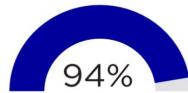
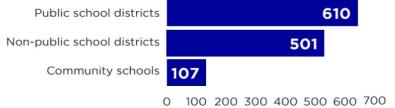
For every \$1 in  
state subsidy

ESCs secured **\$6.97** in  
federal, state and local  
grants for schools.

For every \$1  
in State &  
local funds

ESCs provided **\$9-\$14** in  
cost savings and funding  
to school districts.

ESCs serve



94%  
of ESC expenditures were  
direct services to Ohio  
schools.



Teachers &  
Teaching Aides



Occupational  
Therapists &  
Assistants



Curriculum  
Specialists



Nurses



Physical  
Therapists &  
Assistants



School  
Psychologists &  
Social Workers



Speech  
Language  
Pathologists



Family &  
Community  
Liasons

EFFICIENT. EFFECTIVE. ESCS.

**ESC**  
ASSOCIATION

# ESC Impact: ROI



Each year Ohio's ESCs are required to compare the cost of their services to those of third-party providers and/or client districts providing the services themselves. Initially, to retain the \$26 per pupil state operating subsidy, ESCs were required to demonstrate a minimum of 5% cost savings across 5 service areas. This is only 5 out of the more than 85 identified service areas ESCs provide. Today, the high-performing ESC designation provides information about the efficacy of the ESC system and is one of 3 conditions required for ESC services to be exempt from competitive selection under state/federal procurement laws.

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	9-year Average	Total Savings
# of High Performing ESCs	52	52	52	52	51*	51	51	51	51		
Avg. % Cost Savings	32.57%	35.14%	33.74%	36.96%	33.74%	37.79%	37.20%	40.49%	39.32%	35.95%	
Total Cost Savings (5 areas only)	\$54,146,789	\$64,907,480	\$63,901,047	\$81,913,080	\$78,940,115	\$75,345,360	\$77,678,411	\$90,763,269	\$100,039,905	\$76,403,940	\$687,635,457

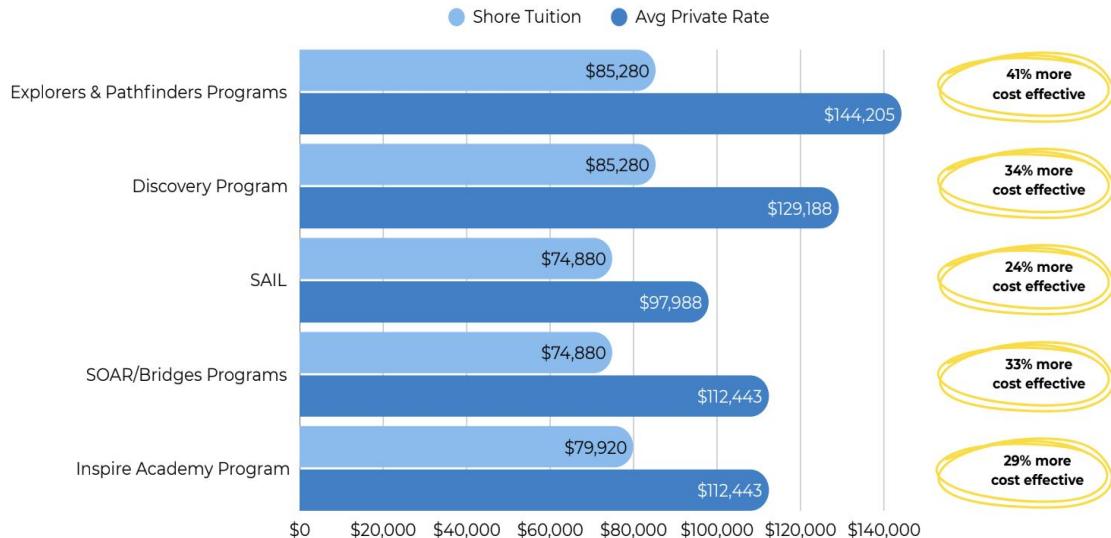
In 2024 ESCs reported \$100.039 Million in savings. Additionally, ESCs identified, pursued and procured \$317.34 Million in grants for their client districts. Total leverage dollars were \$417.388 Million. Meaning that ***for every \$1 in state operating subsidy, ESCs generated \$8.83 cents in cost savings and outside grants in return.***

# Massachusetts: Shore Collaborative

Annually, Massachusetts Collaboratives publicly report and submit to the Department of Education a summary of their progress towards their stated agency goals and their cost savings to their members.

This data is sourced from Shore Collaborative's 2024 - 2025 Annual Report. This graphic demonstrates the annual tuition for Shore's specialized programs compared to other similar private programs in the state.

## Cost Savings by Program



# Massachusetts: South Shore Collaborative

The South Shore Educational Collaborative sponsors advanced energy purchasing through an RFP bid process for natural gas and electricity.

Several south shore towns have participated in this joint purchasing program. The data collected provides significant savings.

The electricity and gas bids result in significant savings to the participants when comparing the open market price to the 24-month bid price of the contracts. The approximate savings for each participant are listed.

GAS	Savings	ELECTRIC	Savings
Plymouth Public Schools	\$122,672	Plymouth Public Schools	\$180,630
Town of Plymouth	\$67,679	Town of Plymouth	\$154,867
Cohasset PS	\$68,926	Cohasset PS	\$38,606
Cohasset Town	\$11,739	Cohasset Town	\$82,332
Scituate schools	\$90,388	Scituate Schools	\$49,793
Norwell schools	\$19,425	Norwell schools	\$38,019
Hull	\$24,985	Hull	\$0
<b>SSEC</b>	<b><u>\$798</u></b>	<b>SSEC</b>	<b><u>\$0</u></b>
<b>Total gas Savings</b>	<b>\$406,616</b>	<b>Total electric saving</b>	<b>\$544,247</b>

# **The Underappreciation of Educational Service Agencies**

Intermediate agencies, operating in 44 states, deliver support of unmet needs in component school districts

BY JOAN WADE

[Article Link](#)

*“ESAs can transform rural and marginalized communities, bridging educational access and equity gaps. By addressing regional challenges with tailored solutions, the agencies strengthen schools and empower entire communities.”*

~Joan Wade, Executive Director  
The Association for Educational Service Agencies



## **The Value of Education Service Agencies (ESAs)**

### *How ESAs Help School Districts Operate More Efficiently and Effectively*

Across the United States, Education Service Agencies (ESAs) are called different names such as ESCs, ESUs, AEAs, ESUs, Intermediate Units, and Cooperatives. What they do is similar in that they serve as the shared services infrastructure for public education. Their purpose is consistent nationwide: help districts stretch limited resources, strengthen instruction, and successfully implement state priorities.

#### **Driving Efficiency: Doing More with Fewer Dollars**

- Provide shared services for Business Managers, HR, technology, purchasing, compliance, and legal support.
- Offer cooperative purchasing and regional contracts that reduce costs through economies of scale.
- Deploy shared specialists (special education, technology, cybersecurity, curriculum, and behavior supports).
- Support grant development and management, bringing external dollars directly into districts.

Example: Ohio's ESC network documented over \$417 million in combined cost savings and external grants in one year, returning \$8.83 for every \$1 of state operating subsidy. Texas ESCs also provide a similar study to show savings for school districts on a biennial basis.

[Article Link](#)

*“Bottom Line: Education Service Agencies are the infrastructure that allows school systems to operate efficiently, deliver high-quality services, and ensure students—regardless of ZIP code—receive strong educational support.”*

~ John Bass, Senior Advisor  
The Association for Educational Service Agencies

*Thank you for the opportunity to share the impact of educational service agency models within the state of Vermont and nationally.*

*ESA's are a viable, scalable model and one component to support the advancement of Act 73.*

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