

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 Timeline

- **2021:** Southeast regional Superintendents commission K-12 New Solutions to conduct a feasibility study and needs assessment for regionalized services.
- **2023:** Executive Director hired and agency re-launches with a focus on regional educational services and supports.
- **May 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.*

Educational Service Agencies Provide:

VOICE :



CHOICE :



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:

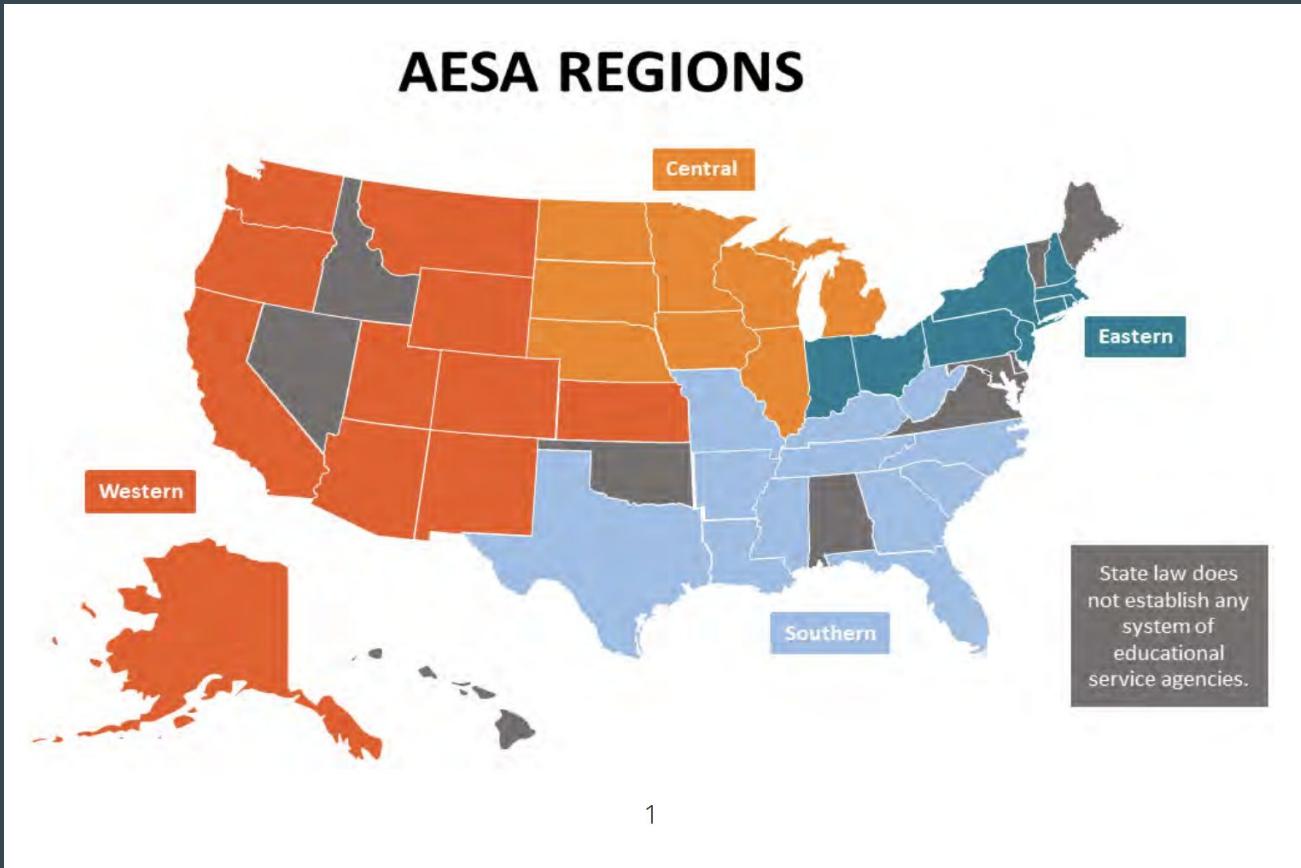
- Academic Evaluation: *(\$200/hr)* **\$2,000 - \$2,500**
- Autism Evaluation: **\$5,600 - \$7,600**
- Psychoeducational: *(\$200/hr)* **\$2,500 - \$3,000**
- SLP Evaluation: *(\$165/hr)* **\$1782**
- Transportation/Mileage: **\$150/hr plus mileage**

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



Kentucky: Educational Development Corporation



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



597

Kentucky Schools



368,932

Kentucky Students



21,725

Kentucky Teachers



21

States



www.kedc.org

Ohio: Educational Service Centers

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.

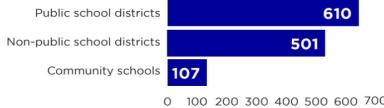
For every \$1 in
state subsidy

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

ESCs **employed 14,785 personnel** statewide, most of
them working directly in schools.



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.***

Nebraska: Educational Service Unit ESU - 3



Educational Service Unit³ presents: An Evolving Vision of Service

4 Counties | 18 Districts | 86,830 Students | \$44.6 Million | Contracts/Grants
25% Property Taxes | 9% Core Service Dollars

Departments Providing Our District, Contracted, and Grant Services:

Professional Learning



Provides, Supports, & Evaluates over 5,000 hours of high-quality professional learning annually to drive student success for the 5,900+ Educators in the 160+ schools served.



Customized & Personalized Professional Learning to Support ALL Educators and Impact Outcomes for ALL Students.



Our Focus Includes:

- Instructional & Leadership Excellence
- High-Quality Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Multi-tier Systems of Support and Continuous Improvement
- Digital Learning & Future-Ready Skills
- Research, Innovation, and Grant Services

Information Systems & Technology





Supports Education by providing:

- High Speed Internet Connections
- Content Filtering
- Single Sign on and MFA
- Network Consultation
- Cyber Security Consultation



Guides Administration by providing:

- Finance Systems
- Group Purchasing
- Hardware and Software Support
- Managed Services
- Technology Policy Guidance



Drives Innovation by providing:

- AI Supports
- Custom programming
- Use of our Flagship Product



Student Services



Manages Grants & Contracts worth over **\$15.25 Million**



Provides a safe, small alternative setting to meet 90+ individual students' needs.



Serves Students and Professionals in the areas of:

- Autism
- Multi-tiered Systems
- Professional Development
- Inclusive Practices
- Leadership & Compliance
- Early Childhood Leadership
- Services Coordination: B-3
- Psychology & Speech Services
- Postsecondary Transition
- School Mental Health
- Blind/Visually Impaired
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing
- Inclusive Education Law
- Early Learning Connections

Gifford Farm Education Center



400 Acre Farm Serving More than 22,000+ Students Annually at 700+ Educational Programs & Hosting over 50 Community Programs



Cultivates hands-on learning in agriculture, nature, history, and science to connect learners of all ages to the natural world.



On the Farm Focus Includes:

- Inclusive Experiential Learning
- Animal Interactions
- Welcoming All Learners
- State Aligned Curriculum
- Community Partnerships
- Fostering Stewardship
- Careers in Agriculture & Environmental Fields



Program Services



Ensures the **operational** and **physical** foundations for learning are met through diverse service offerings.



Efficiency: Delivering over \$1.1 Million in savings through Statewide Cooperative Purchasing.



Connection: Hosting over 25,000 guests annually in our 13 room Conference Center



Student Safety: Serving 405 students through our Driver Education program.



Administration: Managing a \$3.0 Million Head Start Grant supporting 140 children and 45 employees

Educational Service Unit³ will advance **access, efficiency, and excellence** through innovative and collaborative leadership and service to positively impact member school districts and all students.

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
SSEC	<u>\$798</u>	SSEC	<u>\$0</u>
Total gas Savings	\$406,616	Total electric saving	\$544,247

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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