

MASSACHUSETTS COLLABORATIVES

Making the Most of Education Dollars



BY M. CRAIG STANLEY, ED.D.

Foreword by
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cost-effectiveness
in public education

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FOREWORD

It seems clear that few, if any, Massachusetts school districts can on their own fully meet the ever-increasing service demands placed on them. Evidence from within and outside the Commonwealth confirms that participation in regional educational service agencies, or collaboratives, can enable school districts to offer better and more cost-effective services to their students and their staff members. As Craig Stanley documents in this paper, significant benefits result from the collaborative efforts of school districts of whatever size and type.

The six case studies Dr. Stanley presents, each one highlighting a critical service area, indicate that enormous savings could be achieved from optimal district participation in collaboratives. Dr. Stanley's argument for greater use of collaboratives in Massachusetts is particularly noteworthy for its inclusion of non-quantifiable benefits that are frequently ignored in such analyses. His recommendations form the critical groundwork for achieving the overriding goal—a comprehensive statewide network of educational service agencies that will support both local and state efforts to improve teaching and learning and make the best use of public tax dollars.

A major contribution of this paper is Dr. Stanley's detailed action plan, which delineates the steps that must be taken to move the state's collaborative network forward. Sustained cooperation and ongoing communication among numerous public agencies, legislative committees, private organizations, and education advocacy groups will be required to ensure the long-term success of this very timely initiative.

Commendations to the Pioneer Institute for supporting this research. It is my hope that this paper will galvanize support for the legislative changes and policy reforms that will make Dr. Stanley's vision of a stronger collaborative network a reality for the Commonwealth.

—E. Robert Stephens
Institute for Regional Studies in Education

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So many wonderful people contributed to this paper. First and foremost, I want to thank Elena Llaudet of Pioneer Institute for the many hours she spent poring over literature and other documents on educational service agencies and Massachusetts collaboratives. This paper would not have been possible without her assistance and encouragement.

Kathryn Ciffolillo, editor for Pioneer Institute, provided invaluable assistance, asking those difficult questions and ensuring that the paper contained the data necessary to reach valid conclusions.

The coalition behind the idea to conduct this research included Stephen Adams, former president and chief executive officer of Pioneer Institute; Joseph Keefe, executive director of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC); and John Crafton, executive director of the Massachusetts Organization of School Business Officials (MASBO). I only hope this paper responds satisfactorily to the goals they set for Massachusetts collaboratives.

I would like to thank the executive directors and staff of the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative, the Hampshire Educational Collaborative, the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, the South Shore Educational Collaborative, and The Education Cooperative. These wonderful folks took the time to meet with me and to provide data on the cost-effectiveness of their programs.

I am grateful to Brian Talbott, executive director; Kari Arfstrom, associate director; and Peter Young, chief financial officer, of the Association of Educational Service Agencies for generously sharing their time and expertise with me.

Finally, this paper would not have been possible without the decades of research and writing of Bob Stephens, professor emeritus at University of Maryland and director of the Institute for Regional Studies in Education in Edmond, Oklahoma. I am grateful to Bob for always so graciously sharing his wisdom and experience.

—*Craig Stanley*

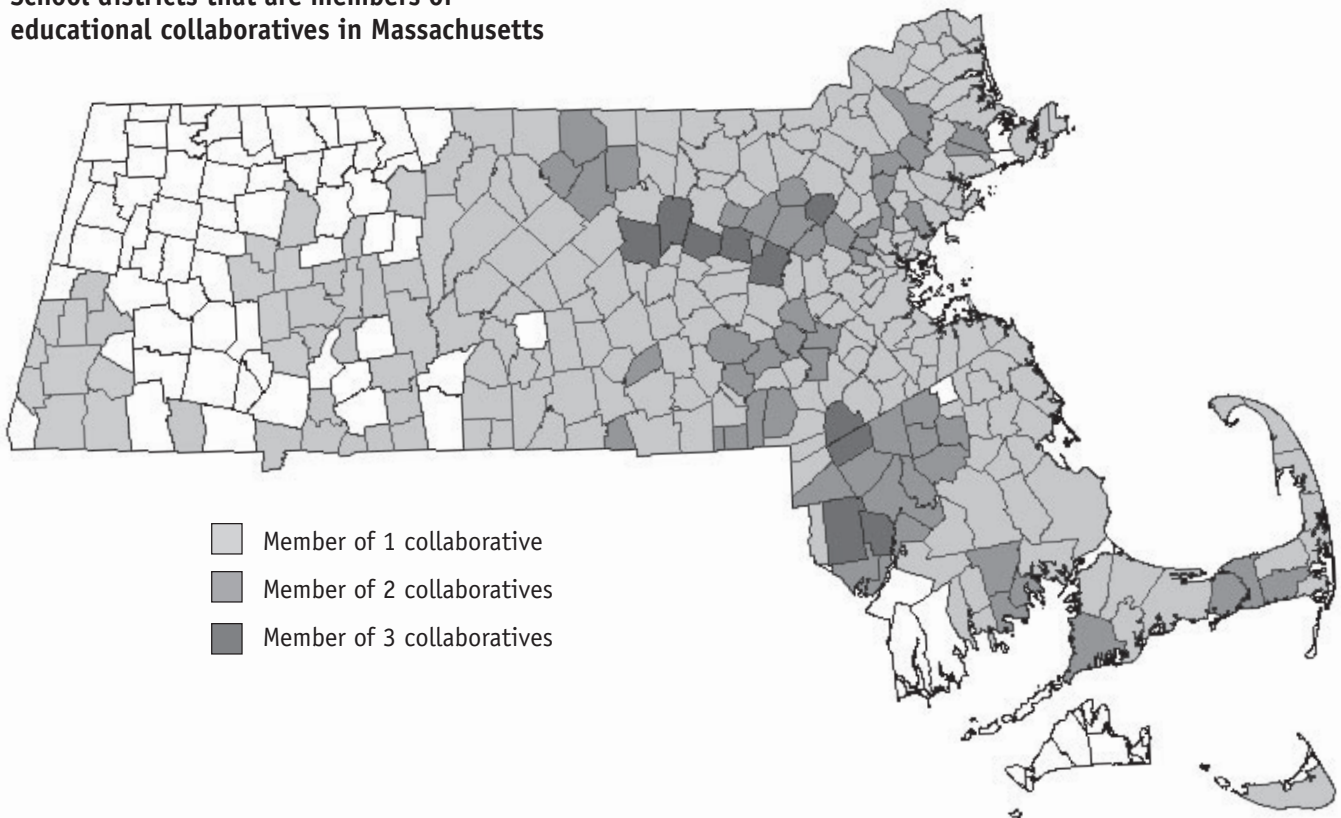
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Educational service agencies (ESAs)—known as “educational collaboratives” in Massachusetts—have proven very efficient at providing high-quality education support services. By assuming many of the routine support functions required to run a public education system, educational service agencies free up the Commonwealth’s Department of Education to provide leadership and Massachusetts school districts to provide quality student instruction. Studies that compare the cost of the services provided by regional agencies to the cost of services provided by individual school districts demonstrate that regional ESAs produce substantial savings.

While great strides have been made in the development of educational collaboratives in Massachusetts over the past 30 years, there is tremendous untapped potential. Regional collaboratives in other states typically offer a broader range of services than Massachusetts collaboratives and save money as a result. Every dollar saved on support services is a dollar that can be redirected to classroom instruction. Included in this paper are case studies from Massachusetts collaboratives in six service areas: special education programs and services, professional development, pupil transportation, educational technology, cooperative purchasing, and energy management. The tremendous savings accruing to member school districts could be realized by all Massachusetts school districts if all were affiliated with a collaborative and if all the collaboratives provided the optimal set of services.

Regional collaboratives in other states typically offer a broader range of services than Massachusetts collaboratives and save money as a result.

School districts that are members of educational collaboratives in Massachusetts



The tremendous savings accruing to member school districts could be realized by all Massachusetts school districts if all were affiliated with a collaborative and if all the collaboratives provided the optimal set of services.

This paper proposes specific policy changes that could result in a more efficient, effective, and equitable system of public education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Although collaboratives are local organizations focused on meeting local needs in a cost-effective manner, the state needs to take a leadership role in fostering their development and utilization. Among the policy recommendations are the following:

- ▶ ***Build a comprehensive network of educational collaboratives.*** While collaborative membership can and should be voluntary, the state should designate geographic collaborative regions and provide strong incentives for school districts to make full use of collaborative services.
- ▶ ***Define a collaborative's core roles and responsibilities.*** Based on 30 years of ESA experience in Massachusetts and similar experience in other states, and cost-effectiveness research, it is clear what the collaborative's core roles should be and which activities should be regionalized:
 - special education programs and services for students with low incidence disabilities
 - professional development opportunities for staff of member school districts
 - cooperative purchasing of large volume goods and services
 - pupil transportation
 - energy management
 - educational technology
 - data collection and processing for district use (currently a state function)
 - technical assistance to districts (currently a state function).
- ▶ ***Provide a stable funding mechanism.*** The state could realize significant economies of scale by using collaboratives to administer many of its grant programs. A stable source of state funds targeted to collaboratives in the core functions they perform would be money better spent than disbursing these funds to individual districts.
- ▶ ***Establish a formal performance accreditation system.*** The Commissioner of Education and the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives should develop a set of standards and performance indicators for educational collaboratives. The state should also consider an ongoing accreditation process for collaboratives.

The author recommends a plan of action for Massachusetts to realize the full potential of a comprehensive network of educational collaboratives. The proposal includes strategies for developing broad consensus on new enabling legislation for educational collaboratives and for implementing the new system quickly.

MASSACHUSETTS COLLABORATIVES

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By M. Craig Stanley, Ed.D.

I. INTRODUCTION

Much is demanded of the American public school and rightly so. Never before in the history of our country has it been so crucial that our children be well prepared for the future. Our public schools are charged with equipping their students with the skills and knowledge they will need to compete in a global economy. Through their implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, state education agencies hold public schools accountable for continuous improvement in student achievement. School districts must meet these challenges within the constraints of federal, state, and local budgets.

Massachusetts has 351 cities and towns and, during the 2003-2004 school year, 386 operating school districts, including 56 charter school districts. Public school officials must examine every possible way to streamline administrative and support services so as to maximize cost effectiveness and avoid duplication of efforts. With so many separate school districts, it is incumbent on our state leaders to pursue potential economies of scale in public education. Individual school districts cannot operate efficiently alone. Regional educational collaboratives offer a practical solution.

Educational service agencies (ESAs)—known as “educational collaboratives” in Massachusetts—have proven very efficient at providing high-quality education support services. Studies that compare the costs of the services provided by regional agencies to those of services provided by individual school districts demonstrate that regional ESAs produce substantial savings. Documented savings range from 15 percent to 50 percent.¹ Every dollar saved on support services is a dollar that can be redirected to classroom instruction.

In April 2003, former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige sent a letter to all chief state school officers suggesting how ESAs can help in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), specifically noting their capacity to provide professional development and technical assistance. Secretary Paige had firsthand experience with the Region IV Educational Service Center in his former role as superintendent of the Houston School District. He stated that ESAs “are able to successfully respond to district needs in a flexible, adaptable, efficient, cost effective, and direct manner. Economies of scale through ESAs allow districts to leverage limited resources into targeted support for multiple schools and to share costs with other school districts.”²

Public school officials must examine every possible way to streamline administrative and support services so as to maximize cost effectiveness and avoid duplication of efforts.

Regional agencies in other states offer a much broader range of services than Massachusetts collaboratives and save money as a result. By assuming many of the routine support functions required to run a public education system, educational service agencies free up the state education department to provide leadership and school districts to provide quality student instruction.

Purpose of this Paper

This paper has a threefold purpose:

► **To highlight the potential cost savings if Massachusetts utilized a fully developed and inclusive collaborative model in six key areas of service delivery.**

This paper will show the staggering cost savings possible, with the hope of encouraging collaboratives to expand their service offerings. Included are case studies in six areas of collaboration: special education programs and services, professional development, pupil transportation, educational technology, cooperative purchasing, and energy management. Studies that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of ESA programs were deemed to be a priority (rated sixth in priority out of 21 areas for research) in a 2004 survey conducted by the Research and Development Committee of the Association of Educational Service Agencies.³

While great strides have been made in the development of educational collaboratives in Massachusetts over the past 30 years, there is tremendous untapped potential. That potential becomes clear when we look at how several innovative Massachusetts collaboratives perform various functions. The tremendous savings accruing to their member school districts could be realized by all Massachusetts school districts if all were affiliated with a collaborative and if all the collaboratives provided the optimal set of services.

► **To propose, based on best and most effective practices nationwide, a better system of collaborative structure, governance, and funding.**

Massachusetts has one of the weakest enabling laws for ESAs in the country. Educational collaboratives in Massachusetts are by statute temporary organizations; collaboratives can be dissolved by a vote of their member districts. School districts can choose to belong to as many collaboratives as they like or none at all. ESAs are not eligible for most grant funds, and they have no direct access to school building assistance funds.

Elected representatives from the general populace or from member school districts comprise ESA governing boards in most states. In Massachusetts, some collaboratives have superintendent boards, some have school committee boards, and some have member school district employees such as special education administrators and school business officials on their boards.

Massachusetts collaboratives derive almost all of their funding from selling services to school districts. Since the Massachusetts Department of Education has deemed collaboratives to be ineligible for most state funds, as well as most federal funds administered through the state, they are at an extreme disadvantage, unable to develop the service networks common in other states.

By assuming many routine support functions, educational service agencies (ESAs) free up the state education department to provide leadership and school districts to provide quality student instruction.

► **To recommend a plan of action for Massachusetts to realize the full potential of its existing network of educational collaboratives.**

It is incumbent on school leaders to make every effort to minimize waste and inefficiency. The Commonwealth could aid in this effort by providing incentives to school districts to utilize educational collaboratives for the services in which savings are well documented. These incentives should save, not cost, the Commonwealth. If some of the funds the state currently gives directly to school districts were instead given to collaboratives to provide services to school districts in a more cost-effective manner, the state would save money.

The primary audience for this paper is the education policy makers, including the Massachusetts legislature, the Governor’s Office, the Board of Education, and the Department of Education. Although collaboratives are local organizations focused on meeting local needs in a cost-efficient manner, the state needs to take a leadership role in fostering their development and utilization.

This paper will propose specific changes that could result in a more efficient, effective, and equitable system of public education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The plan includes strategies for developing broad consensus on new enabling legislation for educational collaboratives and for implementing the new system quickly. It is the author’s hope that the Commonwealth’s policy makers will implement these recommendations so that the Massachusetts public school system can benefit fully from educational collaboratives.

Massachusetts has one of the weakest enabling laws for ESAs in the country.

II. EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES AND COLLABORATIVES

Educational service agencies (ESAs) are publicly funded agencies, organized on a regional basis and authorized in state statute or rules and regulations. They are known by various names, including educational service districts (ESDs), intermediate units (IUs), boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), regional educational service agencies (RESAs), intermediate school districts (ISDs), and more. In 2004, there were more than 630 ESAs in 42 states.⁴

In 1998, the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) conducted a detailed national survey, updated in 2000, of 527 ESAs in 37 states. The survey indicated that services were provided to local school districts serving more than 43 million students, which represented 80 percent of the K-12 student population in the United States. The 527 ESAs employed 100,000 full-time staff, numerous consultants, and part-time employees.⁵

Educational service agencies provide schools and other clients with a range of programs and services. ESAs are particularly effective providers of high-cost programs, those that require specialized staff, programs with significant startup costs, and those that can benefit from economies of scale. Figure 1 provides a partial listing of services offered by ESAs across the United States in 2001.⁶

The most frequently cited benefits of interdistrict collaborative programs and services are improvements in efficiency, quality and/or equity. If one of these benefits comes at the expense of another, a regional service may not be best solution. If a service declines in quality or increases in cost

Figure 1. ESA services, Nationwide, 2001

| # of ESAs | Type of service provided |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 527 | Professional development |
| 440 | Special education |
| 429 | Educational technology |
| 390 | Early childhood |
| 350 | Leadership training |
| 340 | Cooperative purchasing |
| 318 | Computer |
| 316 | Adult education |
| 308 | Learning - Libraries |
| 297 | Vocational education |
| 286 | Gifted education |
| 253 | Incarcerated students |
| 251 | Student testing/evaluation |
| 239 | Computer and audiovisual repair |
| 228 | Personnel recruitment/screening |
| 186 | Printing |
| 186 | Insurance |
| 164 | Safety/Risk Management |
| 159 | Teacher training centers |
| 147 | Telecommunications |
| 128 | Energy management |

Source: Association of Educational Service Agencies, *History of the Association of Educational Service Agencies*, 2001.

when provided by a collaborative, then regional delivery is not recommended. Also, if regional service delivery favors one school district over another, despite its quality or cost effectiveness, it will not be politically viable.⁷

Massachusetts Collaboratives

In Massachusetts, ESAs are referred to as “educational collaboratives.” Most collaboratives started circa 1974 in response to the passage of Chapter 766, the state’s special education law, which required school districts to provide a free and appropriate education program for all children, regardless of disability. School districts reasoned correctly that they could address this task more efficiently if they worked together with neighboring school districts. The state legislature responded by enacting MGL Chapter 40, Section 4E, which begins as follows:

Pursuant to the provisions hereof, two or more school committees of cities, towns and regional school districts may enter into a written agreement to conduct education programs and services which shall complement and strengthen the school programs of member school committees and increase educational opportunities for children. The school committees shall collaborate to offer such programs and services, and the association of school committees which is formed pursuant hereof to deliver such programs and services shall be known as an education collaborative.

Massachusetts has 32 collaboratives; 246 (75 percent) of the Commonwealth’s 330 operating school districts (excluding the 56 charter school districts) belong to at least one educational collaborative, leaving 84 districts and all 56 charter school districts unaffiliated with a collaborative (of the 84 districts, 15 do not belong to a collaborative as individual districts but are part of a regional district that does belong to a collaborative. The map in Appendix A shows these districts as shaded). Fifty-eight school districts are members of more than one collaborative.⁸ Some non-member districts pay to utilize collaborative services; they do not “own” any part of the organization and are not represented on the collaborative’s governing board. Non-member tuitions and fees are usually higher than member tuitions and fees, by an average of 15 to 20 percent. (See Appendix A: District Membership in Educational Collaboratives.)

In 1974, collaboratives generally offered only special education programs and services, but during their 30-year history, most have evolved to offer a wider range of services. Massachusetts collaboratives include a few very small single-purpose cooperatives with annual budgets of a few hundred thousand dollars, as well as large multi-purpose organizations with annual budgets of close to \$20 million. An annual survey conducted by the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives found that all 29 collaboratives belonging to MOEC in 2004 offered special education programs and professional development; 18 offered some pupil transportation services (typically only for special education students); 11 offered cooperative purchasing for their member districts; 17 offered some technology services; 12 managed their districts’ Medicaid reimbursement; 15 had job alike groups (job-specific discussion and learning networks); and seven offered regular education programs.⁹

The premise of this paper is that public education would benefit from ESAs assuming a greater role, through a better distribution of public resources. The paper examines “best practices” within the state of Massachusetts, as well as organizational, structural, governance, and funding models that exist in other states, to determine how Massachusetts could make better use of its collaboratives.

This paper examines “best practices” within Massachusetts, as well as organizational, structural, governance, and funding models that exist in other states, to determine how we could make better use of collaboratives here in Massachusetts.

Why Do Collaboratives Work?

Massachusetts school administrators unfamiliar with ESA structures in other states often ask just how a collaborative venture will improve efficiency, quality, and equity across school districts. It may help to look at a specific example.

Professional development for educators is an activity that lends itself well to a collaborative model and is, in fact, one of the core services provided by Massachusetts collaboratives. When districts pool their professional development funds, the savings can be substantial. In this hypothetical example, a regional professional development program does the following:

- ▶ **Improves quality.** By pooling state and local resources, the collaborative can contract with a presenter with more expertise than an individual district can afford.
- ▶ **Avoids duplication of services.** Instead of 15 school districts running 15 after-school workshops on No Child Left Behind (admittedly a worst-case scenario), a collaborative might run three workshops on NCLB in three schools spread out across the collaborative area to enable all teachers in the region to attend.
- ▶ **Reduces administration and coordination costs.** Each district would no longer need a full- or part-time professional development coordinator; the entire professional development function would be handled by the collaborative, with input provided through an advisory committee composed of district representatives.
- ▶ **Saves on materials cost.** Districts would no longer have to design and print their own brochures on professional development opportunities. A larger, more comprehensive schedule of offerings would be distributed to all district educators through the collaborative. In Texas, for example, each of its 20 Educational Service Centers (ESCs) publishes a catalog of several hundred pages of workshops, seminars, and courses available to all educators within the service area.
- ▶ **Improves equity of opportunity.** Teachers from smaller and/or poorer districts could avail themselves of the same professional development opportunities available to educators from larger or more affluent districts.
- ▶ **Facilitates standardization.** By contracting with fewer presenters, the state Department of Education and its collaboratives could better monitor the content of what is being presented to ensure that all educators are receiving the same information.

In fiscal year 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education granted \$49.5 million to school districts for professional development.¹⁰ If these funds were pooled and local funds were also leveraged through collaboratives, the level of services provided could be increased substantially. This paper will document savings through collaborative activities of 15 percent to 50 percent. If we apply this level of savings to FY 03 professional development grant funds alone, we can estimate a reduction in costs of between \$7.43 million and \$24.75 million. These funds could be freed up for other school district purposes or used to enhance the professional development program.

Unfortunately, there are few studies documenting the savings of ESA initiatives. However, seven studies conducted over the past 15 years demonstrate the significant savings that can be realized by adopting a regional approach to education support services. These are provided in Appendix C: Review of Cost-Effectiveness Research.

Hypothetically speaking...

If just 10 percent of the FY05 \$3.1 billion in the Massachusetts Chapter 70 Program aid to school districts was leveraged by local education agencies through collaboratives, based on a conservative savings rate of 15 percent, savings state-wide could total \$46.5 million.

III. COST-EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES: CASE STUDIES OF SIX MASSACHUSETTS COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

Six case studies were conducted to determine the cost-effectiveness of specific areas of collaborative endeavor in Massachusetts. The activities chosen are among the most prevalent collaborative activities nationwide. Although Massachusetts collaboratives other than those studied have experience and expertise in these six programmatic areas, the collaboratives studied have developed their programs to a degree that could be considered “best practices” and worthy of replication by other collaboratives. This comprehensive program development has been aided by strong and consistent utilization by member districts over a considerable period of time. The collaboratives chosen also represent various geographical regions of the Commonwealth.

Levin describes five general ingredients to consider when computing the cost of an educational service: personnel, facilities, equipment and materials, other inputs (those that do not fit into one of the first three categories), and client inputs (resources contributed by the clients, in this case the participating school districts). Every effort was made to include all cost ingredients in the analyses.¹¹

Service Area: Special Education Programs and Services

► Provider: Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative

The Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative (GLEC) is a multi-purpose educational service agency located in Methuen, Massachusetts. It comprises the school districts of Andover, Boxford, Greater Lawrence Technical School, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Methuen, Middleton, North Andover, and Topsfield. These ten districts serve 57,296 students in 89 school buildings. Organized in 1975, GLEC conducts programs in five major service areas: special education, cooperative purchasing (including energy management), professional development, special needs transportation, and multicultural enrichment. It employs 175 staff and has an annual operating budget of \$11 million.

The Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative has a 30-year history of providing special education programs and services to its member school districts. A major program expansion in 2000 addressed the need for a collaborative program in all disability areas where member districts were unable to provide “in-house” programs.

Individual school districts frequently have difficulty educating students with low-incidence disabilities at a reasonable cost because there are not a sufficient number of students within the district that have the same needs. Hiring a teacher and instructional support personnel and purchasing specialized curricula and equipment are usually cost-prohibitive. Therefore, students are tuitioned into private schools or, since the advent of educational collaboratives, into collaborative programs, which this study demonstrates are indeed cost-effective alternatives to private placements.

It is reasonable to assume that the service levels of collaborative programs and private programs are roughly equivalent, since these levels are dictated by each student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the quality of both program types is monitored by the same agency, the Massachusetts Department of Education’s Quality Assurance Division.

The collaboratives studied here have developed their programs to a degree that could be considered “best practices” and worthy of replication.

Cost Savings: To compute the tuition savings realized by collaborative programs, we compare the annual tuition of the collaborative program to the average annual tuition of comparable private placements in the same geographic area.

For the 2003-04 school year (FY04), GLEC's member school districts spent \$2,617,624 on tuitions for 94.5 students to attend GLEC special education programs. For these same students to attend comparable private schools, the cost would have been \$3,398,097. The districts saved 23 percent in tuition costs. (See Appendix B: Special Education Tuition Savings by District.)

Other Benefits: Collaborative programs are located within member district communities, while private schools frequently are not. Districts realize a significant savings in pupil transportation costs, not included in the calculation above. Yet another advantage of collaborative programs is local control; they can be modified to meet the needs of students more easily than can private schools.

Collaborative special education programs are indeed cost-effective alternatives to private placements.

Service Area: Professional Development

► Provider: Hampshire Educational Collaborative

The Hampshire Educational Collaborative (HEC) is a multi-purpose educational service agency located in Northampton, Massachusetts. It comprises the school districts of Amherst, Pelham, Amherst/Pelham Regional, Belchertown, Easthampton, Frontier Regional High School, Conway, Sunderland, Hadley, Hampshire Regional, Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Hatfield, Northampton, South Hadley, and Ware. These 19 districts have a combined enrollment of 18,000 in 51 school buildings. Organized in 1974, HEC conducts programs in 13 major service areas: special education, professional development, adult education, vocation/work training, cooperative purchasing, Medicaid reimbursement, after-school programs, early childhood education, alternative education, physical and health education, technology, community service learning, and character education. HEC employs 233 full-time and 184 part-time staff and consultants and has an annual operating budget of \$17 million.¹²

The Hampshire Educational Collaborative has been a leader in the field of collaborative professional development since 1979. HEC offers a comprehensive menu of professional development programs to its 19 member and 50+ non-member school districts in the western and central Massachusetts counties of Franklin, Hampshire, Hampton, and Berkshire. It offers several innovative and cost-effective service delivery options to school districts, such as shared "in-house" specialists in a variety of need areas.

Cost Savings: For teachers who need only professional development points (PDPs) and not graduate credits, HEC courses are extremely cost-effective. Each three-credit course costs \$400, and students are awarded 37.5 PDPs. Typical tuition and fees for a three-credit graduate course at Fitchburg State College, for example, total \$666.¹³ The HEC course represents a 40 percent savings for students over FSC. Tuition and fees for a three-credit course at Lesley College total \$1,905 (\$625 per credit and a \$30 registration fee).¹⁴ The HEC course represents a 79 percent savings over Lesley College.

For students who do need graduate credits, HEC offers three graduate credits from Fitchburg State College for an additional \$225, for a total of \$625, a 6 percent savings over Fitchburg State's own program and a savings of 67 percent over Lesley's program. In addition, students save the travel time and cost of traveling to the Fitchburg or Lesley campuses.

HEC consultation services are typically afforded to member districts at rates of less than \$1000/day. This compares to standard rates of \$1200 to \$1500 in the private sector, an average savings of 26 percent. With a consultant on the collaborative payroll, the district is assured of a consistent consultative presence. Teachers can form a professional relationship with the consultant, who is accessible to answer questions and for further training, troubleshooting, and guidance.

Other Benefits: HEC offers four types of professional development programs to school districts. Each option offers unique and significant advantages:

- Courses and seminars are offered either at a central collaborative location or on-site at district schools. Collaborative courses offer many advantages over courses offered by colleges and universities. Course content can be tailored to the needs of participating public schools and teachers, targeting content and skills in which MCAS scores or internal assessments indicate instructional or curricular problems. Instructors can be chosen based on criteria selected by the school districts. Many instructors are practitioners who have completed terminal degrees; they bring knowledge of current research and best practice to the courses they teach. Courses can be scheduled at times and places convenient to the participants, such as immediately after school in the high school media lab. Usually, collaborative courses are offered at substantially reduced tuition rates when compared to private colleges, because collaboratives do not have the high overhead typical of colleges and universities. Collaborative courses also offer several advantages over individual school district courses. Working collaboratively, districts are able to afford higher quality instructors and fill classes with more students, resulting in a lower per-participant cost.

- Online courses, offered in partnership with PBS TeacherLine, afford scheduling flexibility and reduce costs for school districts by not requiring release time or substitute coverage for participants. The cost of recruiting and compensating trained substitute teachers is increasingly beyond the means of many school districts. Teachers welcome the opportunity to do coursework as their schedule permits. Developed by HEC staff, courses reflect Massachusetts Frameworks and are facilitated by Massachusetts teachers familiar with state assessments and standards.

- Coaching and consultation with HEC's education experts are available to teachers of member school districts in areas such as elementary literacy, mathematics, and differentiated instruction. Recruiting and retaining specialists who can work effectively with students in the classroom is extremely expensive for individual districts. By collaborating and pooling their resources, districts can offer the competitive salaries and benefits that will attract experts the districts in the collaborative can then share. HEC staff provides long-term coaching at the school site, addressing instructional issues and shaping teacher change. Coaching has a very strong track record in improving teachers' understanding of content and their capacity to teach content to struggling learners.

- Distance learning through an interactive teleconferencing network allows educators to deliver live courses over great distances and provides tremendous potential for information sharing among practitioners. Distance learning provides an opportunity for teachers to form long distance study groups or for practitioners from different geographic areas to work collectively on a problem. Long distance learning is also invaluable in rural areas where it is frequently the only option available for some types of professional development. Schools use the videoconferencing network for virtual field trips, opportunities to talk with content area experts and to interact with professionals implementing real-world applications of science and mathematics.

By pooling their resources, districts can attract experts for professional development that the districts in the collaborative can then share.

HEC also offers four licensure programs at a cost of \$4,400. Licensure programs include all required coursework (six non-sequential courses so that participants may begin at any time) and supervised field experience. Programs are available in the following areas: school administration (superintendent/assistant superintendent, school principal/assistant principal, supervisor/director and special education administrator), teacher of reading, special education (teacher of students with moderate disabilities, pre-K-8 and 5-12), and middle school teacher (mathematics teacher 5-8 and middle school mathematics/science teacher). Licensure can be completed in 12 to 15 months. By comparison, teacher licensure through Westfield State College takes two years. Westfield's tuition rate for graduate courses is \$90/credit, plus a \$75 registration fee, which is significantly less than the \$150/credit plus fees charged by Fitchburg State College, as cited above.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the non-cost advantages of the HEC program outlined above may make it preferable to the Westfield State program.

Service Area: Pupil Transportation

► Provider: Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative

The Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) is located in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. It comprises the school districts of Agawam, East Longmeadow, Hampden-Wilbraham Regional, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Southwick-Tolland Regional and West Springfield. These seven districts serve approximately 23,300 students in 44 schools. Organized in 1974, LPVEC conducts programs in eight major service areas: special education, vocational-technical education, transportation services, professional development, cooperative purchasing, technology, municipal Medicaid management and energy management. It employs 384 staff and has an annual operating budget of \$18.7 million. LPVEC offers the largest and most comprehensive pupil transportation service of any Massachusetts collaborative.¹⁶

Cost Savings: LPVEC transports 14,000 students each day using 112 big buses, 47 small buses, and 63 vans. Drivers and monitors are employed by the collaborative. The cost for the current 2004-05 school year is \$8,122,389. This compares favorably to the low bid of three received by the Chicopee School Department, one of LPVEC's member districts, for 59 full size buses, 24 small buses and 9 vans. If we applied the rates received on this bid to all the LPVEC routes (and since they include over half the LPVEC routes it is reasonable to do this), we end up with a cost of \$10,286,766 for an individual school district bid. The savings of \$2,164,377 represents a 21 percent savings, or an annual savings of \$155 per student.

Using a formula developed by the American Public Transportation Association, School Transportation News states that 631,272 Massachusetts public school students receive bus services to and from school at public expense. Although admittedly a rough approximation, if we were to extrapolate LPVEC's \$155 per student annual savings to all the Massachusetts students bussed on a daily basis, we would have statewide annual savings potential in excess of \$97 million.

How is a collaborative able to provide the same service as the private sector at a 21 percent savings? As a public organization, the collaborative operates without a profit margin, and it has very low overhead compared to the transportation industry as a whole. LPVEC's administrative costs average only 5 percent of its total budget. Typical private contractor overhead rates average 15 to 20 percent. The collaborative purchases gasoline

and diesel fuel jointly with member school districts, so it is able to obtain a very competitive price. It does not have to pay the \$.21/gallon state tax on fuel because it is a public entity and therefore exempt from this tax. The collaborative is also exempt from the state excise tax on vehicles, which is typically 2.5 percent of their value.

Other Benefits: Advantages to a collaborative transportation network include the following:

- *More control without additional expense.* Routes can be changed to accommodate more or fewer students, different destinations and different program times without incurring greater costs, because LPVEC operates on an assessment model as opposed to a cost-per-student model; the collaborative absorbs all of the changes during the school year and utilizes its fund balance to pick up any unbudgeted ancillary costs during the school year.
- *Lower cost for incidental transportation.* Transportation for mid-day field trips and athletic events for LPVEC districts costs less than half of what a private company would charge. The buses are owned by the collaborative and drivers are frequently already on site, as they start or end their daily runs at the school. The collaborative, therefore, does not need to pay a company for the time it takes their driver to get to the school to begin a special run or to get back to the garage after completing a special run. Since the collaborative has already budgeted the cost of the vehicle and insurance, it only has to charge the school district for any additional personnel and fuel costs.
- *Computerized routing and scheduling are available to participating districts.* The capital cost of these efficiency-enhancing but expensive tools is shared among participating districts.
- *A well-trained workforce of drivers and monitors can be assured.* In-house training programs tailored to the needs of participating districts are designed and offered to all transportation personnel. Districts are assured that all personnel are adequately screened and trained.
- *Sharing of fixed costs improves efficiency.* Through the multi-district utilization of vehicles and routes, districts share the capital and other fixed costs of providing student transportation. Districts only pay for their share of the total costs.

Service Area: Educational Technology

► Provider: South Shore Educational Collaborative

The South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) is a multi-purpose educational service agency located in Hingham, Massachusetts. It comprises the school districts of Braintree, Cohasset, Hingham, Hull, Norwell, Quincy, Randolph, Scituate, and Weymouth. These nine districts serve 36,000 students in 68 schools. Organized in 1975, SSEC conducts programs in seven major service areas: special education, professional development, technology (including assistive technology), residential services, energy management, mental health services, and services for multi-handicapped adults. It employs 295 full- and part-time staff and has an annual operating budget of \$10 million.¹⁷

SSEC offers a comprehensive range of technology services to its member school districts. It has developed a menu of technology services including hardware purchases, networking service, staff training, and curriculum development. The collaborative operates a high-speed network that connects schools in seven of its nine member districts. It provides professional development for teachers on how to use technology and integrate it into the curriculum.

Specific services provided to participating districts include the following:

- **Internet service.** SSEC provides Internet service to participating school districts and municipalities, including T-1 and fractional T-3 lines, as dictated by need.
- **E-mail service.** E-mail service is provided to participating school districts and municipalities.
- **Content filtering and anti-virus software.** Websense® affords student safety while navigating the Internet and WebShield® guards email against viruses.
- **Consultation.** SSEC's network administrator is available to work with school district personnel on a variety of issues, from designing webpages and district databases to fixing broken printers.
- **Training and professional development.** A broad spectrum of opportunities is available to participating districts, ranging from basic courses on how to use the Internet and e-mail to courses on website design, desktop publishing, digital photo-editing and computer graphics and animation.

Cost Savings: SSEC's cost savings is based on two factors:

- **Management.** For a cost of \$60,000 a year (split among all locations) SSEC funds a full-time network administrator who manages all equipment for the participating schools and provides training, technical assistance, and troubleshooting services. He manages a content filter (Websense), a Barracuda® email spam filter, a Network Associates webshield antivirus appliance, a Cisco PIX 515 firewall, a webserver, a mail server and all of the WAN routers that connect all systems together. It is a reasonable assumption that each district, in addition to duplicating all of the hardware above, would have to pay at least \$60,000 per year for its own network administrator.
- **Internet access.** SSEC rents a rack at GlobalNAPs in Quincy, Massachusetts. The cost of Internet access and the rental is split up among the locations. Also, GlobalNAPs has offered SSEC a huge discount on a T3 for the wide area network. It costs \$1000 per month; Verizon's cost was \$4000 per month. This allows SSEC to bring a T1 to a location for a total telecom charge of \$454.18 per month. The collaborative may add up to 17 more lines for only a \$200/month/line additional cost.

Other Benefits: Expert on-site technical assistance/consultation and professional development for district staff provided by a consistent person who is always available to them, day after day and year after year, are two major benefits of a shared collaborative program. These benefits are very difficult to find in the private sector through a commercial provider.

Service Area: Cooperative Purchasing

► Provider: The Education Cooperative

The Educational Cooperative (TEC) is located in Dedham, Massachusetts. It comprises the school districts of Dedham, Dover, Dover/Sherborn, Holliston, Hopkinton, Medfield, Natick, Needham, Norwood, Sherborn, Walpole, Wayland, Wellesley, and Westwood. These 14 districts serve 50,000 students in 75 schools. Organized in 1968, TEC conducts programs in seven major service areas: special education, cooperative purchasing, professional development, enrichment classes, career services, emerging technologies, and

A collaborative can provide expert on-site technical assistance/consultation and professional development for district staff.

teacher and administrator licensure. TEC employs 91 staff and has an annual operating budget of \$4.3 million.¹⁸

TEC was chosen to highlight the benefits of collaborative purchasing services for three reasons: the number and variety of the items purchased (figure 2), the number of purchasing entities involved (55 purchasing entities participate in TEC’s classroom supplies bid, 25 in the custodial equipment and supplies bid, 23 in the athletic equipment and supplies bid, 30 in the cafeteria food and supplies bid, 19 in the fuel oil bid, and 20 in the natural gas bid), and the extensiveness of the services offered to participating districts and municipalities.

Figure 2. TEC’s purchased items, 2004-2005

- Copy paper
- Office supplies
- Classroom paper and supplies
- Technology and related computer supplies
- Custodial equipment and supplies
- Cafeteria food and supplies
- Athletic equipment and supplies
- Fuel oil
- Natural gas

Cost Savings: The cost of the items bid through the collaborative program is compared to the cost of other purchasing alternatives. For school districts, these alternatives include an individual school district bid or, in some cases such as milk and copy paper, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts bid. While it is admittedly counter-intuitive that a regional bid such as TEC’s should result in a lower cost than the Massachusetts statewide bid, this is indeed the case. It the author’s experience that far more vendors have the capacity to supply a smaller regional demand than do a statewide demand, which results in more responses to the Invitation to Bid. In addition, state bids frequently require more from bidders in the way of performance bonds and paperwork. Figure 3 demonstrates the savings available to purchasing entities through TEC’s cooperative bid.

Other Benefits: Financial advantages to cooperative purchasing programs include the following:

- Rather than each participating district needing to employ purchasing personnel, through the TEC program they can share the cost of one purchasing person who writes the bid specifications and handles the sales calls for all the districts.
- Districts save money in not having to place legal ads; at an average cost of \$300 for a legal ad, the 56 entities participating in the class-room supplies bid saved \$16,800.
- Participants save legal costs in not having to have contract awards reviewed and not having to address challenges to contract awards levied by unsuccessful bidders.

Figure 3. The Education Cooperative: Bid Summary and Estimated Savings

| Bid item | TEC award | Alternative | Savings |
|--|-----------------|--------------|---------|
| Athletic Equipment and Supplies | \$470,464 | \$611,603 | 23% |
| Cafeteria Food and Supplies ^a | \$1,042,708 | \$1,157,406 | 10% |
| Custodial Equipment and Supplies | \$611,603 | \$795,084 | 23% |
| Fuel Oil – Zone #1 delivery ^b | \$1,528,342 | \$1,809,627 | 16% |
| Fuel Oil – Zone #2 delivery ^c | \$1,095,682 | \$1,376,558 | 20% |
| Copy Paper Bid ^d | \$687.20/pallet | \$820/pallet | 16% |

^a Comparison to Commonwealth of Massachusetts contract for milk

^b Market price \$1.039/gal. – TEC price \$.8775/gal.

^c Market price \$1.039/gal. – TEC price \$.8270/gal.

^d Comparison to Commonwealth of Massachusetts contract for paper. Total contract amount not available. A pallet is a 40-case lot.

Sources: TEC bid summary documents for FY04; paper bid for FY05.

• Districts save money by having all quality testing of prospective commodities and reference checking of prospective vendors done by the collaborative instead of by each purchasing entity.

• By awarding to many vendors instead of to just one, competition remains keen year after year. At TEC, 54 vendors requested classroom supply bid specifications and 36 bids were received. Frequently with individual district bids, all the business is awarded to one vendor because the volume is small. Not

only is it advisable to split up a supply contract among several vendors from a cost standpoint, but it makes good business sense for one vendor not to be identified as “owning” a particular contract for any length of time, as other vendors become reluctant to devote the time and effort required if they believe the purchasing entity is predisposed to retain the same vendor. Although this may well be a matter of perception on the vendor’s part, and not true on the part of the purchasing entity, it nonetheless results in less interest on the part of vendors.

- Once purchasing networks are in place, other goods and services can be added as the purchasing entities deem appropriate. Purchasing networks have been especially valuable in helping school districts address new governmental requirements. In the 1980s, collaborative purchasing networks helped districts to address the newly promulgated asbestos abatement requirements by bidding engineering services. In the late 1990s, collaboratives issued joint bids for the accounting services required to help districts meet the provisions of Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 34.¹⁹

Service Area: Energy Management

► Provider: Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative

The Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative (GLEC) administers a joint energy management program that serves the school districts and municipalities of Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, and North Andover, along with the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative, Technical School, and Sanitary District. It employs the services of W. Robert Patterson & Associates of Wellesley, Massachusetts, to manage its energy program. GLEC has realized significant savings for participating members by purchasing electricity and natural gas from a third-party competitive supplier. The electricity and natural gas are delivered by the local distribution utility as required under industry deregulation.

Cost Savings: Collaborative energy management programs go well beyond the benefits of other energy purchasing programs, such as those offered by private aggregators and marketers. Such energy supply programs are typically negotiated for the extension of supply at the end of the contract term—not at the time of market lows—and incorporate substantial overhead and fees. They require that the members individually tailor contract terms and conditions and thus incur legal and contract negotiation costs individually. Finally, these programs seek to realize a percentage savings goal rather than the most competitive market price.

With a collaborative energy management program, energy contracts are negotiated when market lows occur—often well ahead of contract start. Savings are locked in, as supply is pre-purchased at a guaranteed price. There are no fees, overhead, or profit, as the purchasing is coordinated by the collaborative rather than by a third-party aggregator. Legal costs incurred in the bidding and contracting process are shared among all participating entities.

GLEC members realized substantially lower energy costs for their electricity, natural gas, and fuel oil through the economies of scale in the volume of purchases, the competitive bidding of their energy requirements, market-timed purchases at favorable prices, and the supplier’s consolidation of customer demands and supply risks.

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Energy management offers collaborative members energy purchases at competitive market rates most utilities do not provide to individual customers. Through collaborative purchasing, members can be assisted by energy experts in negotiating competitive prices and demanding contract terms and conditions that assure savings and mitigate risk.

To determine cost savings, energy costs over a 12-month period were compared to the cost of purchasing the commodities through the local utility companies. For electricity, the local utility company is Massachusetts Electric Company. For natural gas, the local utility companies are Keyspan and Bay State Gas, depending on the community. The actual expenditures for the commodities through the collaborative contract were compared to the cost the districts would have spent for a purchase through the utility companies. The computation was straightforward, as the utility company's cost is set by tariff and the actual usage was a matter of record.

For the period November 2003 through October 2004, the participating school districts and municipalities as a group saved \$883,379 on electricity purchases (figure 4) and \$659,499 on natural gas purchases (figure 5). These figures represent a 16 percent savings on electricity commodity costs and a 15 percent savings on natural gas commodity costs.

Total savings ranged from about \$8,000 for the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative and the City of Methuen to more than \$100,000 each for the Haverhill School Department, the Lawrence School Department, and the Lowell School Department. The high energy use at the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District, a regional waste treatment plant, netted it savings of over \$300,000.

Average savings from GLEC's energy purchasing program were \$6,333/school on electricity and \$6,437/school on natural gas for a total saving per school of \$12,770 annually. There are 1,860 public schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.²⁰ If the savings received by the schools on the GLEC contract were realized by the rest of the schools in the state, the annual savings would total more than \$20 million.

The GLEC electricity and natural gas supply program saved participating cities and towns an average \$82,600 on their electricity purchases and \$15,000 on natural gas. Based on these figures, a statewide collaborative energy purchase program could save the state's municipalities tens of millions of dollars annually.

Many states have collaborative enterprises that offer statewide purchasing programs for school systems. The majority of Massachusetts school districts (75 percent) are represented by one of its 32 collaboratives. Energy purchasing could evolve into a statewide program where greater

Figure 4. GLEC savings through energy management: Electricity purchases, Nov. 2003-Oct. 2004

| Participating purchasing entities | Annual realized savings |
|--|--------------------------------|
| City of Lawrence | \$45,773 |
| Lawrence School Department | \$95,905 |
| City of Haverhill | \$159,447 |
| Haverhill School Department | \$62,396 |
| City of Methuen | N.A. |
| Methuen School Department | \$87,844 |
| Town of North Andover | \$42,816 |
| North Andover School Department | \$51,531 |
| Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative | \$6,247 |
| Greater Lawrence Technical School | \$49,688 |
| Greater Lawrence Sanitary District | \$281,732 |
| Total - twelve-month savings | \$883,379 |

Figure 5. GLEC savings through energy management: Natural gas purchases, Nov. 2003-Oct. 2004

| Participating purchasing entities | Annual realized savings |
|--|--------------------------------|
| City of Lawrence | \$8,127 |
| Lawrence School Department | \$114,415 |
| City of Haverhill | \$16,398 |
| Haverhill School Department | \$49,004 |
| City of Methuen | \$7,864 |
| Methuen School Department | \$91,361 |
| Town of Andover | \$26,761 |
| Lowell School Department | \$217,538 |
| North Andover School Department | \$55,544 |
| Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative | \$2,086 |
| Greater Lawrence Technical School | \$34,565 |
| Greater Lawrence Sanitary District | \$35,836 |
| Total - twelve-month savings | \$659,499 |

economies of scale are achieved by pooling the energy needs of all the collaboratives' districts and sharing the cost of expertise for pricing and contracting. Each collaborative could handle the collection of its member districts' school energy usage data, invoice reconciliation, and other district issues as they arise during the term of the contract.

Other Benefits: Collaborative energy management programs can offer many other benefits that are not available from existing marketers, aggregators, or the utility companies.

- Many energy supply programs are beset by billing and data management errors. These errors require staff time to negotiate corrections. Current energy supply programs do not provide bill reconciliation for their members or the review of current invoices prior to payment. Bills are frequently paid that are incorrect. A collaborative energy management program can provide these services.

- Energy supply programs do not assist in forecasting and budgeting, and individual school districts cannot usually afford such consultation. While current energy supply programs provide contract prices, the collaborative member is challenged to forecast energy usage and budget for coming fiscal years.

- School districts save personnel costs through the sharing of costs for the bidding and contracting process. With a specialized focus on purchasing, the supplier's proposals can be efficiently evaluated and a competitive selection made. The collaborative bidding and contracting process allows for greater attention to the contract negotiation, which can facilitate agreement on contract terms and conditions and allow the members to realize favorable terms and conditions.

- Collaborative purchasing permits members to receive summary consolidated billing for their facilities, have the contract protection of a performance bond for their supply security, and to have the assistance of energy management and bill reconciliation services for the review and approval of both the third-party supply invoices as well as the local utility company billing.

- The collaborative purchasing process requires that the members' monthly energy demands be assembled for a combined energy demand profile for the collaborative. By combining these demands, the third-party supplier can work to realize cost savings at the local electricity transmission and gas distribution level. The balancing of energy use among members' facilities and members' contracts can average out peaks and valleys and enables a lower competitive price. In many cases, town facilities require electricity service during the peak "cooling" summer months when schools are not in session. Similarly, in the winter, electricity use by the schools surges with heating and ventilation use.

The collaborative bidding and contracting process allows for greater attention to the contract negotiation, which can facilitate agreement on contract terms and conditions and allow the members to realize favorable terms and conditions.

IV. BUILDING A BETTER SYSTEM OF COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, FUNDING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

How can educational collaboratives in Massachusetts be structured, governed, and funded more effectively? How can they be held accountable to school districts and the Commonwealth? The author interviewed three prominent experts on educational service agencies to determine the major points of consensus and explore these issues toward developing a plan for Massachusetts:

- *Dr. E. Robert Stephens*, Director, Institute for Regional Studies in Education, Edmond, Oklahoma

- *Dr. Brian Talbott*, Executive Director, Association of Educational Service Agencies, Arlington, VA
- *Dr. Peter Young*, Chief Financial Officer, Association of Educational Service Agencies, Arlington, VA and Executive Director (ret.), Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), North Haven, Connecticut

Structure and Size

A look at how other states structure their ESAs could help Massachusetts develop a more effective structure.

Educational service agencies fill two major roles: 1) They provide cost-effective instructional, support, and management services to school districts. 2) They manage some of the more unwieldy state education functions, such as data collection and processing, technical assistance to districts, and teacher certification and licensure. The way in which an ESA is structured in large part dictates the roles it will perform.

E. Robert Stephens developed a descriptive typology of the three basic types of ESA structures:

► **Special district ESA.** This is a legally constituted unit of school government between the state education agency (SEA) and a collection of local education agencies (LEAs). This type of ESA is established by the state, or by the SEA and a collection of LEAs acting together, to provide services to both the SEA and the constituent LEAs. Its legal framework is structured in legislation or state regulations, its governance tends to be lay control, its programs and services tend to be a mix of services for the SEA and member LEAs, and its funding tends to be a mix of local, regional, state and state/federal.

► **Regionalized SEA/ESA.** This is a branch of the state education agency. This type of ESA delivers services for the SEA. Its legal framework is structured in SEA regulation only, its governance is professional advisory only, programs and services are determined by the SEA, and funding is almost exclusively state or a state/federal mix.

► **Cooperative ESA.** This is a loose consortium of LEAs and reflects the view that ESAs should be established by two or more LEAs to provide services exclusively to the member LEAs. Its legal framework is usually intergovernmental relations statutes, its governance is by representatives of its member LEAs, its programs and services are determined by its member LEAs, and its funding is almost exclusively local and state/federal. Cooperatives can be further subdivided into multi-purpose (five or more services), limited purpose (not more than four services), and single purpose.²¹

Massachusetts collaboratives are structured along the lines of the cooperative ESAs. The Massachusetts legislation is very generic, similar to state laws governing inter-local agreements. It enables districts to enter into collaborative agreements with neighboring districts but neither requires nor even encourages collaboration. It does not recommend how many collaboratives the state should have, neither prescribes nor suggests any service regions, and allows districts to join as many collaboratives as they want or none at all.

Massachusetts legislation requires collaborative agreements to be approved by the state's commissioner of education. It requires the commissioner to appoint a representative to every collaborative board to serve in an ex-officio capacity, although this requirement is not typically followed. Collaborative teachers are required to possess state licensure. The Department of Education must approve collaborative special education programs each year, using the same criteria as they use to approve private schools.

A look at how other states structure their ESAs could help Massachusetts develop a more effective structure. Of 27 states surveyed by Stephens in 1991, 13 had ESAs that were special districts, eight had ESAs that were regional SEAs, and six (including Massachusetts) had ESAs that were cooperatives.²² Stephens expects that more and more cooperatives will begin performing functions for states as the states begin to realize the advantages of their cooperative network, and that many of these cooperatives will then be classified as special districts.

Bob Stephens recommends a structure in which the ESA provides a set of services to the state while at the same time is responsive to local districts. The structure can be a special district, a formal cooperative, or a combination of the two. The “state establishes a set of core programs and services that they want the ESA to deliver, the state supports the ESAs with adequate funding and legislation, and allows them substantial discretionary power to respond to the specific needs of local districts.”²³

Brian Talbott agrees that the state needs to provide a structure; cooperatives with no formalized ties to the state are weaker and typically do not receive any state funding. He stresses that the role the ESA fills for the state must be clarified so that districts view their ESAs as helpers, not as monitors; monitoring and evaluating should always be state functions, not ESA functions.²⁴

Peter Young, who ran an ESA in Connecticut for 30 years and is familiar with the New England tradition of local autonomy, finds the formalized cooperative to be very effective. “Connecticut can rely on its network of six ESAs to perform certain services; its ESAs are a bridge between the state and local districts.”²⁵ Connecticut ESAs have a broader mandate (and commensurate legal authority) than those in Massachusetts. They run magnet schools, spearhead state initiatives, operate media libraries, and administer federal grants. All Connecticut school districts belong to one of the six educational service agencies. ESA directors meet monthly with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education and hold leadership positions in the Connecticut Association of School Superintendents.

The size and number of collaboratives varies across states. For example, in 1999, Pennsylvania had 29, Texas had 20, while Connecticut had six. One-third of the ESAs surveyed by AESA served 10 or fewer districts; two-thirds of the 527 ESAs served 20 or fewer districts (figure 6).²⁶

Several states have reduced the number of service units in order to improve efficiency. In 1980, Michigan reduced the number of intermediate units from 58 to 57. In 1984, Wisconsin reduced the number of cooperative educational service centers from 19 to 12. In 1990, Iowa reduced the number of area education agencies from 15 to 12. Ohio reduced the number of Educational Service Centers in stages over a period of years, from 89 to 50 to the current 19.²⁷ Among the reasons for these changes were population losses in large non-metropolitan regions and revisiting of initial decisions to make ESA boundaries the same as previous county offices of education.

Stephens offers the following advice to states as they look to re-structure their ESAs. States should consider 1) educational factors such as the number of member school districts (20 to 25 is optimal), public school enrollment size (30,000 to 40,000 in more sparsely populated regions and 50,000 to 75,000 in more densely populated regions), travel time from the service agency to the majority of member school districts (maximum

Figure 6. Number of districts served by ESAs, 1999

| Districts Served | # of ESAs | % |
|------------------|-----------|----|
| 1-10 | 173 | 33 |
| 11-20 | 175 | 33 |
| 21-30 | 73 | 14 |
| 31-40 | 42 | 8 |
| 41-50 | 27 | 5 |
| 51-60 | 16 | 3 |
| 61+ | 21 | 4 |

Source: AESA, Database of Educational Service Agencies, 2000.

of 60 to 90 minutes), and the presence of a public postsecondary institution; planning factors, such as coterminous boundaries with other sub-state regional public service providers; and other factors such as boundaries with regional economic, social, and cultural centers.²⁸

Governance

The governance of Massachusetts collaboratives is prescribed in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 4e:

The education collaborative shall be managed by a board of directors which shall be comprised of one person appointed by each member school committee. Such person shall be either a school committee member or his designee or the superintendent of schools or his designee. Members of said board of directors shall be entitled to a vote according to the terms of the education collaborative agreement. The department of education shall appoint an individual to serve in an advisory capacity to the education collaborative board. Said individual shall not be entitled to vote on any matter which comes before the board of directors of the education collaborative. The board of directors of the education collaborative shall have the authority to employ an executive officer who shall serve under the general direction of such board and who shall be responsible for the care and supervision of the education collaborative.

“Regional governance, not regional government.”

Of the 28 member agencies of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives in 2005, 15 are governed by boards composed of school superintendents, seven are governed by boards composed of school committee members (typically utilizing an advisory board of superintendents), one is governed by a special education administrator board, and the remaining five are governed by boards composed of various combinations of the above.²⁹ The Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative, for example, is governed by a board composed of two superintendents, one assistant superintendent, three special education administrators, and two school business officials.

Cooperative ESAs are usually governed by boards appointed by their member districts. Stephens sees an increasing use of advisory groups composed of consumers of the services of the agencies, typically the superintendents of schools.³⁰ Special district ESAs tend to have elected rather than appointed boards, either elected by members of constituent member district school boards or by general election. Regional SEA/ESAs are typically governed directly by the state with an appointed advisory board.

Appointment or election of board members by the member districts, as opposed to a general election, contributes to the board having a direct knowledge of the needs of the ESA. *“Regional governance, not regional government”* is Stephens’ axiom.³¹ The same holds true for the executive officer. He or she should be appointed by the governing board instead of elected by the general populace. In Ohio, Oregon, and Nebraska, board members are elected by the general populace, and in Arizona, Arkansas, California, and Illinois, the chief executive officer is elected.

In Talbott’s opinion, the most effective ESA board members are those who are either members of or elected by constituent district school boards. Young concurs that having local school board members sit on the ESA board is crucial. He cites increased accountability as an attribute when an agency is governed by the same parties that own and operate it.³²

Models for Massachusetts. Two potential models for the governance of Massachusetts ESAs are Connecticut RESAs (regional educational service agencies) and Colorado BOCES (boards of cooperative educational services). Both are governed by boards composed of representatives of constituent school committees rather than independently elected governing boards. This maintains the operative construct of “regional governance” as opposed to “regional government.”

Local control has generally proven very effective, and when the superintendent serves as the school committee representative on the collaborative board, he or she can act directly on behalf of the district, streamlining the decision-making process. However, a superintendent can sometimes find him- or herself in an uncomfortable position when the interest of the collaborative conflicts with the interest of the individual school district. This, combined with the rising turnover rate among superintendents, provides a valid argument for a school committee member to serve on the collaborative board instead. Although there are notable exceptions, school committee members are typically more “connected” to the community over the long term than today’s superintendents. The state department of education representative is extremely important to provide linkage to the state, but over the last decade, cutbacks in staffing have led to DOE representatives being generally absent from collaborative boards. This is unfortunate; the state should make every effort to restore its representatives to collaborative boards.

Funding

The primary sources of funding for ESAs are state and local. New York’s BOCES and in the recent past Texas’s ESCs received approximately half their budgets from the state. Iowa’s AEAs receive 90 percent of their funding from the state. Collaboratives in Connecticut and Minnesota receive almost all their funding from local school districts. ESAs receive varying amounts of money from federal grants and from private sources, such as corporations and foundations, but these usually amount to a very small percentage of an agency’s revenue stream.

Massachusetts collaboratives rely on local tuitions and fees as their primary source of revenue. State funding is non-existent except for the occasional discretionary grant, a consolidated grant application submitted on behalf of two or more member districts, or a few collaboratives that act as vendors for state-run programs for institutionalized or incarcerated youth or developmentally delayed adults. Some collaboratives receive limited amounts of corporate and foundation grant money, and a few have received federal grant money.

Significant state funding is probably not a realistic expectation for Massachusetts given today’s fiscal climate. Stephens cites “pass-through funding,” utilized in Iowa and Pennsylvania, as a means of maximizing the potential effectiveness of limited state money. In the case of a state appropriation for professional development, for example, the amount appropriated to each district based on enrollment is deducted from that district’s state appropriation and passes through the ESA. This way, the state is able to access and support proven economies of scale to the benefit of both the state and the local districts.³³ Other benefits include avoiding duplication, improving equity among districts, and minimizing the monitoring, record keeping, and other burdensome paperwork involved in tracking grant expenditures across hundreds of individual school districts.

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Massachusetts should recognize and support the potential of its regional organizations by providing some direct funding for collaborative initiatives that have been proven cost-effective.

Some states have local taxing authority. Oregon, for example, utilizes a local tax levy to fund its Education Service Districts. While this type of solid funding can be advantageous to the ESA, it is doubtful whether other states would embrace any new burden on local taxpayers. Young heralds the advantages of the entrepreneurial model followed in Connecticut.³⁴ There, ESAs develop services and sell them not only to member districts but to the state as well. Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) in North Haven, Connecticut, has an annual operating budget of \$76 million, and only \$350,000—less than one-half of one percent—comes from the state. Although a small amount, this state money is very important as it is targeted to research, development, and initial implementation of new products and services. Talbott sees the strongest ESAs as those which receive, and are able to leverage and balance, a funding commitment from the state, district fees for services provided, and state/federal grants.³⁵

Massachusetts should recognize and support the potential of its regional organizations by providing some direct funding for collaborative initiatives that have been proven cost-effective. If districts were required to work collaboratively to access state money for activities such as professional development, transportation, and technology, they would probably do so rather than forego the state money. This would encourage districts that are not currently members of a collaborative to join one.

Accountability

Educational service agencies have not shied away from the issue of accountability. In fact, AESA's Research and Development Committee ranked fourth and fifth, respectively, out of 21 possibilities, the following two projects as priorities for further study:

- measuring performance of the ESA (e.g., Baldrige criteria or other performance measurement approach)
- profiling accountability systems in use by ESAs.³⁶

Collaboratives must be accountable both to their constituent districts and to the state. Likewise, school districts and the state must be accountable to the collaborative. This mutual accountability is crucial to the development and sustainability of any effective partnership. Stephens suggests the following components as essential to an effective ESA accreditation system:

- standards of excellence for collaboratives
- specific performance measures based upon the standards
- defined procedures to ensure that performance measures are being met
- strategic five-year plans for all educational collaboratives
- annual reporting mechanism to address a collaborative's progress toward meeting the performance measures and strategic goals
- periodic evaluation to grant continuing accreditation to the collaborative.³⁷

Texas has a very well developed accountability system for its 20 ESCs. Each year, the Texas commission of education conducts an evaluation that includes the following components:

- an audit of the center's finances
- a review of the center's performance on standards and indicators established by the Texas legislature and the commissioner

- a review of client satisfaction regarding services provided
- other factors deemed appropriate by the commissioner.³⁸

Service centers found to be deficient are subject to sanctions that, pursuant to Chapter 8.104 of the Texas code, can include, if necessary, the appointment of a “master” to oversee the center, replacing the executive director and/or board and even closing the center.³⁹

Iowa is also a leader in the development of ESA accountability systems. The Iowa Department of Education annually conducts a statewide survey as part of the accreditation process for its area education agencies (AEAs). Nearly 4,000 educators participated in the 2004 survey. Individual AEAs use the data in their annual progress reports to show how well they are meeting their goals.⁴⁰

V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as private sector organizations outsource services that support their core functions, school districts can and should pool and leverage public resources for maximum cost effectiveness.

Bob Stephens envisions six emerging areas of responsibility for ESAs:

- equalizing educational opportunity in the state system
- enhancing the quality of education in the state system
- promoting technical assistance/capacity building in the state system
- the cost-effective delivery of new priorities of the state system
- serving as the information custodian and processing center in a sub-state region
- coalition building among and between the education community and other human service providers.⁴¹

Dr. Mark McQuillan, executive director of EdCo Collaborative in Brookline, Massachusetts, was interviewed by the author while in his former post as deputy commissioner of education for the Commonwealth. When asked how collaboratives could be of greater assistance to the state and what new roles they might assume, McQuillan echoed many of Stephens’ suggestions:

- Provide technical assistance to districts, not just professional development. Technical assistance is provided to districts to help them with a variety of specific tasks, such as how to comply with the provisions of new federal and state legislation, policies, and regulations. According to McQuillan, the Department of Education does not currently have sufficient manpower to perform this function adequately.
- Collect and process for districts data that would aid them in developing strategic improvement plans.
- Help the state address two major needs—services for limited English-proficient students and mathematics instruction—by capitalizing on the “train the trainers” model.
- Help the state with districts declared “underperforming” by the state under the provisions of No Child Left Behind. Collaboratives are needed now more than ever before because many districts just do not have the capacity and/or the knowledge to make the necessary improvements on their own.⁴²

Just as private sector organizations outsource services that support their core functions, school districts can and should pool and leverage public resources for maximum cost effectiveness.

Dr. Tom Scott, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), agreed that collaboratives can play an important role in providing technical assistance to local school districts. The state simply does not have the capacity, in terms of personnel and monetary resources, to do this effectively. Nor does the state have the built-in connections to the regions that collaboratives do, where there already exists a “network of sharing and collegiality.” Collaboratives would have minimal “ramp-up time” time to implement new initiatives. When asked how he thought collaboratives could position themselves to do this, Scott said collaboratives should make their case with the legislature, the commissioner, and the board of education.⁴³

ESAs are included as eligible applicants and program providers in the No Child Left Behind Act. The law’s inclusion of ESAs along with LEAs affords opportunities for development and expansion of services to serve more children in effective and efficient ways.⁴⁴ The federal government has been far more proactive in recognizing ESAs as viable service providers than has Massachusetts.

In addition to providing services for the state and for its local districts, Stephens envisions ESAs developing a strategic platform to advocate for education while promoting networking in a region.⁴⁵

A Blueprint for Massachusetts

Expansion of our educational collaborative network holds great promise for Massachusetts school districts. The reorganization required will build upon existing structures and follow strategies that have proven successful in other states.

► Build a Comprehensive Network of Educational Collaboratives

The existing patchwork of collaboratives in Massachusetts is not optimal. Not all Massachusetts districts are currently members of a collaborative, and some districts belong to more than one. In the vast majority of the 42 other states that have ESAs, all school districts in the state belong to a single ESA. Typically, ESAs form a comprehensive network of intermediary organizations such that they can effectively and efficiently support all school districts and the state.

Young cites 100 percent ESA participation by school districts as one of the major reasons ESAs have been so effective in Connecticut. When ESAs were started in that state, they set 100 percent participation as a primary goal and, in fact, achieved that goal eight years later; they did not want the state department of education to be able to say they couldn’t use ESAs because they didn’t represent all school districts.⁴⁶ A comprehensive network of ESAs is a prerequisite for increased reliance on collaboratives in Massachusetts. As noted above, none of the state’s 56 charter schools and only 75 percent (246) of the state’s 330 other school districts are members of a collaborative. Many of the 84 remaining districts are small, rural districts in northwestern Massachusetts that could benefit greatly from the economies of scale afforded through collaboration. By similar reasoning, the 56 charter schools, also small in comparison to a typical school district, could benefit greatly from collaborative membership. (See map in Appendix A.)

Collaborative membership can and should still remain voluntary in Massachusetts. But the state should designate geographic collaborative regions. Districts would then be

eligible to participate in the services provided by their assigned collaborative, but would not be required to use them. The state should, however, provide incentives for districts to make full use of collaborative services. If a district opts out of its collaborative, it should not receive the state funds for activities determined to be best administered on a collaborative basis, rather than through individual districts. After all, why should the state fund an individual district activity when it has been well documented that the collaborative activity is more cost-effective? For their part, collaboratives must become a more organized community and designate one individual or group, such as the MOEC executive director or board of directors, to represent them in negotiations with the state.

Based on criteria cited above by Stephens (1991), 12 to 20 regional collaboratives encompassing all Massachusetts school districts would be an appropriate number. Each collaborative could serve roughly 20 districts with 30,000 to 70,000 students, and travel time within the districts would be 60 minutes or less.⁴⁷ Smaller existing collaboratives could be incorporated into larger ones, and a new collaborative would need to be developed in northwestern Massachusetts, where there is currently none. Politically, this is a good time to look toward reducing the number of collaboratives, as many collaborative directors are at or near retirement age.

The governor should create a task force to study this issue and determine the optimal number, distribution, and makeup of Massachusetts collaboratives. A study conducted in 1971 by the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education recommended the establishment of such a commission to develop a master plan for school district organization.⁴⁸ This recommendation is as timely now as it was 34 years ago!

The commission should include a representative from the Governor's Office, a member of the Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the chairs of the Joint Legislative Committee on Education, the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the executive director of the Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives, a representative of the statewide Parents Advisory Council and other members as selected by the governor.

► **Develop a More Formal Collaborative Structure**

Massachusetts collaboratives currently have a "cooperative" structure, which is best suited to the New England mindset. ESAs designed as extensions of the department of education (New York BOCES and California County Boards of Education, for example) would not work well in Massachusetts, in part because financial constraints call for streamlining rather than expanding the role of state government. Nor would local communities, in the author's opinion, embrace the creation of "special districts."

Massachusetts cooperatives must become more formal, incorporating the following features of special service districts:

- legal framework structured in legislation
- provision of core services to member school districts and to the state
- collaborative regions specified by state legislation or policy
- governance structure dictated by state legislation or policy
- stable funding mechanisms.

The governor should create a task force to study this issue and determine the optimal number, distribution, and makeup of Massachusetts collaboratives.

This more formal structure will ensure that the improvements in quality, cost-effectiveness, and equity are available to and utilized by all school districts in the Commonwealth.

► Define a Collaborative's Core Roles and Responsibilities

Unspecified and ambiguous roles have contributed to underutilization of collaboratives in Massachusetts. MGL Chapter 40 Section 4E is permissive and broad, simply allowing for two or more districts to offer educational programs and services. It does not provide for nor even envision a statewide collaborative network. It does not specify nor even suggest which services collaboratives should offer. Core roles and responsibilities of educational collaboratives must be clearly defined, either by legislation or by state education policy, as Iowa did in the late 1990s⁴⁹ (see figure 7). Through 30 years of ESA experience in Massachusetts and similar experience in other states, aided by cost-effectiveness research, we now know with reasonable certainty what the collaborative's core roles should be and which activities should be regionalized:

- special education programs and services for students with low incidence disabilities
- professional development opportunities for staff of member school districts
- cooperative purchasing of large volume goods and services
- pupil transportation
- energy management
- educational technology
- data collection and processing (currently a state function)
- technical assistance (currently a state function).

Once the organizations' responsibilities have been defined, the state's expectation should be that collaboratives perform these core services for member districts. However, in no way should this role definition detract from collaboratives performing additional duties for districts as dictated by local need and/or collaborative entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial spirit of Massachusetts collaboratives should be acknowledged and encouraged. ESAs that have always relied heavily on state funding, such as New York's BOCES, are now just beginning to have to look to entrepreneurial activities that are "old hat" to Massachusetts collaboratives.

► Insure Standardized Governance

Collaborative governance requires very little modification. Local control with state advisement, as provided for by MGL Chapter 40 Section 4E, is appropriate for Massachusetts. In the author's experience, collaboratives that have boards composed of members of constituent school committees, with superintendent advisory boards, function better than those with superintendent boards, where board members are both customer and provider. Superintendent board members sometimes wrestle with decisions because what is best for a single district may not be what is best for the collaborative.

The two Massachusetts collaborative boards composed of special education administrators may experience difficulty if the board members are not granted full authority by their school committees to commit funds and act for the district on general education matters outside of special education. Therefore, the following governance standards are recommended:

- Each constituent school committee should elect one of its members to represent it on the collaborative's governing board.

Figure 7. An example of legislative-defined ESA core services

In 1997, the Iowa legislature defined six core services for that state's area education agencies:

- curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- instructional media services
- professional development services
- school-community planning
- school technology
- diverse learning needs

In 1999, three more services were added:

- inclusive schools
- leadership
- management services.

- The Board of Education should appoint a representative from the Department of Education to sit on each collaborative governing board in an ex-officio capacity.
- School superintendents should comprise a board to act in an advisory capacity to the governing board and to the collaborative's executive director.
- Special education administrators, school business officials, technology coordinators, and other school district administrators should comprise operating committees, as needed.

► **Implement Stable Funding Mechanisms**

While the author is not suggesting that Massachusetts appropriate large sums for its collaboratives, it must consider the potential efficiencies of decentralizing some education department functions such as data collection/processing and provision of technical assistance, functions the state has been unable to perform fully due to personnel and budget cutbacks. The state could realize significant economies of scale by using collaboratives to administer many of its grant programs. A stable source of state funds targeted to collaboratives for the core functions they perform would be money better spent than disbursing these funds to individual districts. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- The Massachusetts Department of Education should develop financial incentives for districts to utilize their collaboratives for both core and non-core functions where cost-effectiveness and other efficiencies can be demonstrated. "Pass-through" funding (where the state appropriates funds directly to the collaboratives instead of to each district) should become the rule for these activities. Not only will this save the Commonwealth money, but it will provide an effective incentive to districts to make use of collaborative programs.
- All discretionary (non-entitlement) grant funds available to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) should be made available to educational collaboratives.
- The Department of Education should explore including in its budget an annual appropriation for each collaborative sufficient to handle a few functions currently performed by the state, such as data collection/processing and technical assistance. This might be done on a pilot basis the first year to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness. The rationale for selecting these two activities is as follows:
 - Both functions are routinely performed by ESAs in other states.
 - Collaboratives could analyze the LEA data to clarify and address district needs and then forward it to the state in an organized and useful format.
 - Recently, the state has lacked the funds required to provide effective on-going technical assistance to districts. If collaboratives were organized in a comprehensive statewide network, they could reliably provide technical assistance to districts.

► **Create Solid Lines of Communication**

Consistent communication with the state department of education and with the legislature is among the reasons Connecticut ESAs have been successful, according to Young.⁵⁰ ESA directors meet for one to three hours every month with the state commissioner of education. They also meet regularly with the state legislature's education committee. Connecticut ESA directors hold leadership positions in the superintendents' association—in fact, one served as president a few years ago.

A stable source of state funds targeted to collaboratives for the core functions they perform would be money better spent than disbursing these funds to individual districts.

By contrast, the Massachusetts Department of Education is barely familiar with the term ESA. Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents does not grant full membership to collaborative executive directors; they are eligible only for associate membership with no voting rights.

Iowa also exemplifies effective state/ESA communication. Iowa's former chief state school officer Ted Stilwill was honored by AESA at its December 2004 annual conference in Phoenix for his advancement of regional programs at the state and national level.

Massachusetts collaboratives should be fully incorporated into the mainstream of the public education system and strongly supported by the state department of education, as ESAs are in most other states. Massachusetts collaborative directors should meet monthly with the Commissioner of Education, meet quarterly with the chairs of the Joint Committee on Education and meet semi-annually with the Board of Education.

► **Establish a Formal Performance Accreditation System**

If the state outlines a set of core functions for collaboratives and provides funding, it should also implement a formal performance appraisal system. The Commissioner of Education and the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives should develop a set of standards and performance indicators for educational collaboratives. The Massachusetts Department of Education currently 1) requires external fiscal audits to be conducted on collaboratives, 2) collects annual census information on collaborative students and staff, and 3) subjects collaborative programs that are not housed in public school buildings to a rigorous annual program approval protocol.

However, for the state to determine the effectiveness of its collaborative network, there must be standards for the collaboratives' performance in meeting the needs of member districts and the state. Performance measures and evaluation procedures, based on the standards, should be developed. As suggested by Stephens, all collaboratives should develop strategic plans and issue annual reports detailing their progress toward meeting the performance standards and their strategic goals.⁵¹ The state should also consider an ongoing accreditation process for collaboratives.

Massachusetts collaboratives should be fully incorporated into the mainstream of the public education system and strongly supported by the state department of education.

Obstacles to Restructuring

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to restructuring is that Massachusetts education policy makers are often unaware of the many advantages of expanding the role of the collaborative network. They may not know the degree to which many other states utilize their ESAs to improve quality and cut costs of education support services. Hopefully, this paper will make this knowledge available, as well as provide a solid rationale for role expansion.

Legislative, regulatory, organizational, and other types of barriers impede the implementation of an expanded and more effective model of collaboration. What are these obstacles and what potential remedies are available?

First and foremost is the Massachusetts tradition of "local control." "No, thank you, I'd rather do it myself" could almost be the Massachusetts slogan when it comes to local government. Fear of losing local control over an educational activity can certainly be an obstacle to expanding the use of collaboratives in the Commonwealth. That fear may be quelled by the prospect of a drastic reduction in services or loss of services altogether.

Another obstacle is our reluctance to review critically the entrenched systems we have built over the years and consider new ways of doing things. Although the current environment of severe budget constraint provides a compelling rationale for the development of more efficient service delivery systems, it is human nature to want things to remain the same.

Some confusion exists over what ESAs are and what they are not. Some confuse ESAs with regional school districts and ask, “Why don’t we just regionalize these smaller districts” instead of expanding collaboratives? While smaller school districts may benefit from regionalization, the expansion of collaborative services should not be confused with regionalizing school districts. ESAs provide support services, not regular pre-K to 12 education programs. Large districts can benefit every bit as much as smaller districts from collaborative services.

The Massachusetts Department of Education has a history of being less than supportive of educational collaboratives. Collaboratives have been viewed as merely one of many providers of special education programs and services, along with private schools. Until recently, collaboratives were virtually unrecognized by the state, deemed ineligible to receive most grant funds, and rarely invited “to the table” to discuss any school issues except for special education. Officials in other states frequently say they could never do their jobs without their regional service agencies. For example, Iowa’s Ted Stilwill has said, “Educational service agencies are likely to be one of the most critical assets available in building the capacity needed to significantly improve student achievement.”⁵²

As is frequently the case, “we are our own worst enemy.” Collaboratives in Massachusetts have evolved each in its own way, carving a unique niche. They have resisted standardization and frequently balked at adapting to some of the more restrictive aspects of participation in the public educational system. As a group, collaboratives lack a plan for their own future. They are divided over what their role should be. One area of disagreement is whether they should be considered LEAs. Another is whether many state or federal education policies applicable to school districts apply to collaboratives. As was noted by Mark McQuillan, collaboratives need a strategic direction. “They have to decide what they want to be.”⁵³

Even though most have been in business for more than 30 years, Massachusetts collaboratives are, by definition, “temporary” organizations. State statute requires that collaborative agreements include a procedure for dissolving the organization. What is needed instead is strong legislation that defines the key features and functions of education collaboratives and ensures their most effective use.

Yet another obstacle, again historical, is Massachusetts’ “false start.” In the early 1970s, the Commonwealth created a dual system of regional entities, setting up six regional DOE centers and, at the very same time, enacting loose and permissive legislation for educational collaboratives. Instead of creating special service districts, under regional governance (not regional government), it instead created extensions of state government and informal cooperatives; neither model is efficient. It is time the state corrected its previous mistakes and re-designed regional service agencies.

Although there are always obstacles to systemic change, budget constraints, at least theoretically, create an ideal environment for introducing reforms that maintain or even improve quality while cutting costs. The state’s fiscal situation may finally prompt the Department of Education to look to other means of getting its job accomplished.

Even though most have been in business for more than 30 years, Massachusetts collaboratives are, by definition, “temporary” organizations.

Action Plan

How can Massachusetts educational policy makers best implement the suggestions contained in this paper?

► **Disseminate the findings of this paper.** Pioneer Institute can take the lead here, along with the other two members of the coalition, the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC) and the Massachusetts Organization of School Business Officials (MASBO). A serious and committed dialogue can begin.

► **Meet with stakeholders.** Initial exploratory meetings, followed by planning meetings, should be scheduled soon after the findings are disseminated. These “summit” meetings should involve the following groups in addition to the three coalition members listed above: Massachusetts Board of Education, Joint Committee on Education, Governor’s Office, Massachusetts Department of Education, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, selected Massachusetts human service agencies, and advocacy and parent groups. This group will develop and build support for a new ESA design (role, structure, governance, funding, and accountability) and decide on the set of core activities for collaboratives. Further research, such as surveys of districts regarding their specific collaborative activities, should be conducted to guide the design of a new model.

► **Draft proposed changes in MGL Chapter 40 Section 4E, the act governing educational collaboratives.** Changes should incorporate language relating to all six recommendations for re-structuring, as proposed in this paper, and reflect decisions made in the stakeholders meetings. If the meetings with stakeholders include a broad base of constituents, it should not be difficult to garner sufficient support to insure passage of the necessary legislative changes.

► **Implement the new legislation.** The Board of Education, acting through its Department and with the support of the Governor’s Office and the Joint Committee on Education, will develop an implementation plan for the new legislation. With the assistance of MOEC, MASBO, MASS, and MASC, a series of statewide meetings will be convened to disseminate the new plan. Training and technical assistance will be provided to collaboratives and LEAs to insure the success of the new initiatives.

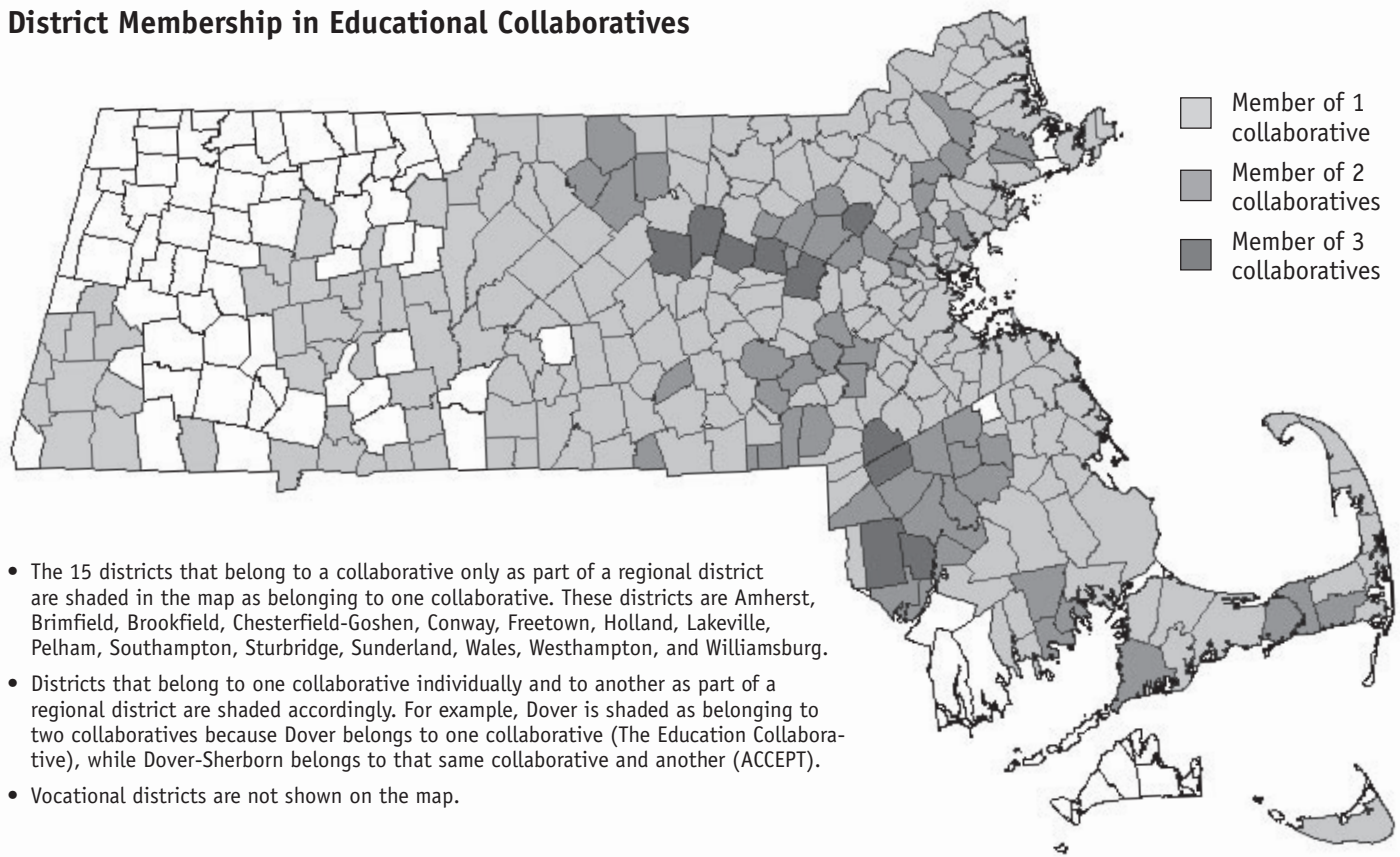
► **Track progress and evaluate success.** Periodic progress reports will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Education. The quality and cost effectiveness of the new service delivery mechanisms will be evaluated utilizing criteria determined by the stakeholders.

It is reasonable to expect that dissemination of findings and meetings with stakeholders could be completed within a six-month time frame. If legislative changes are “fast-tracked” by the Governor’s Office, the Board of Education and the Education Committee, it is probable that implementation activities could begin within the year.

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APPENDIX A

District Membership in Educational Collaboratives



- The 15 districts that belong to a collaborative only as part of a regional district are shaded in the map as belonging to one collaborative. These districts are Amherst, Brimfield, Brookfield, Chesterfield-Goshen, Conway, Freetown, Holland, Lakeville, Pelham, Southampton, Sturbridge, Sunderland, Wales, Westhampton, and Williamsburg.
- Districts that belong to one collaborative individually and to another as part of a regional district are shaded accordingly. For example, Dover is shaded as belonging to two collaboratives because Dover belongs to one collaborative (The Education Collaborative), while Dover-Sherborn belongs to that same collaborative and another (ACCEPT).
- Vocational districts are not shown on the map.

Districts that do not belong to any collaborative (whether individually or as part of a regional district):

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Adams-Cheshire | Gateway | Minuteman Voc Tech | Pittsfield |
| Blue Hills Voc | Gill-Montague | Mohawk Trail | Richmond |
| Bristol County Agr | Gosnold | Monson | Rowe |
| Bristol-Plymouth Voc Tech | Granby | Montachusett Voc Tech Reg | Savoy |
| Brockton | Granville | Mount Greylock | Shawsheen Valley Voc Tech |
| Central Berkshire | Greater Fall River | Nashoba Valley Tech | Shutesbury |
| Chicopee | Greater Lowell Voc Tec | New Salem-Wendell | South Shore Reg Voc Tech |
| Clarksburg | Greater New Bedford | Norfolk County Agr | Southeastern Reg Voc Tech |
| Dartmouth | Greenfield | North Adams | Southern Worcester County Voc Tech |
| Deerfield | Hancock | North Brookfield | Springfield |
| Edgartown | Hawlemont | North Shore Reg Voc | Tisbury |
| Erving | Holyoke | Northampton-Smith | Up-Island Reg |
| Essex Agr Tech | Lanesborough | Northern Berkshire Voc | Westfield |
| Fall River | Leverett | Oak Bluffs | Westport |
| Farmington River Reg | MA Academy for Math and Science | Old Colony Reg Voc Tech | Whately |
| Florida | Manchester Essex Reg | Palmer | Whittier Voc |
| Franklin County | Martha's Vineyard | Pathfinder Voc Tech | Williamstown |
| Freetown-Lakeville | | Pioneer Valley | |

| | ACCEPT | Assabet | BICO | Blackstone | CAPS | CASE | Cape Cod | Central Mass. | CHARMS | Coastal | EDCO | FLLAC | GLEC | HEC | LABBB | Lower Pioneer | Merrimack | NEED | North River | North Shore | Pilgrim | SPOKE | READS | SEEM | SMARTS | Shore | So. Berkshire | South Coast | South Shore | SMEC | So. Worcester | TEC | TOTAL | |
|---------------------------|--------|---------|------|------------|------|------|----------|---------------|--------|---------|------|-------|------|-----|-------|---------------|-----------|------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|---------------|-------------|-------------|------|---------------|-----|-------|---|
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| Shirley | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Shrewsbury | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Silver Lake | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| So Middlesex Voc Tech Reg | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Somerset | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | |
| Somerville | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | 1 |
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| Southbridge | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 1 |
| Southern Berkshire | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | 1 |
| Southwick-Tolland | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Spencer-E Brookfield | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 1 |
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| Upper Cape Cod Voc Tech | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Uxbridge | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
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| Watertown | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Wayland | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 1 |
| Webster | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 2 |
| Wellesley | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 1 |
| Wellfleet | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| West Boylston | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| West Bridgewater | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| West Springfield | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Westborough | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Westford | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Weston | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Westwood | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | 1 |
| Weymouth | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | 1 |
| Whitman-Hanson | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Wilmington | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Winchendon | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Winchester | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Winthrop | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Woburn | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Worcester | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Wrentham | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |

Sources: 2004-2005 MOEC Directory and individual collaborative websites.

APPENDIX B

Special Education Tuition Savings by Member Districts, Cost of Collaborative Program versus Cost of Comparable Private Program, 2003-04

| School district | Medical/Multi-handicapped Grades PreK-12 | | | Social/Behavioral Grades 7-12 | | | Developmental/Behavioral Grades 1-12 | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| | # | Collaborative | Private | # | Collaborative | Private | # | Collaborative | Private |
| | Andover | 4.75 | 144,400.00 | 179,022.75 | 1.00 | 23,600.00 | 31,819.00 | - | - |
| Boxford | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| GLTS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Haverhill | 5.30 | 161,120.00 | 199,751.70 | 0.10 | 2,360.00 | 3,181.90 | - | - | - |
| Lawrence | 2.66 | 80,864.00 | 100,252.74 | 17.50 | 413,000.00 | 556,832.50 | 4.00 | 117,600.00 | 178,584.00 |
| Lowell | 2.00 | 60,800.00 | 75,378.00 | 0.50 | 11,800.00 | 15,909.50 | 5.50 | 161,700.00 | 245,553.00 |
| Methuen | 8.25 | 250,800.00 | 310,934.25 | 7.00 | 165,200.00 | 222,733.00 | 6.00 | 176,400.00 | 267,876.00 |
| Middleton | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| North Andover | - | - | - | 2.50 | 59,000.00 | 79,547.50 | - | - | - |
| Topsfield | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Totals | 22.96 | 697,984.00 | 865,339.44 | 28.60 | 674,960.00 | 910,023.40 | 15.50 | 455,700.00 | 692,013.00 |

| School district | Social/Psychiatric Grades 7-12 | | | Vocational Grades 7-12 | | | District Totals | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | # | Collaborative | Private | # | Collaborative | Private | # | Collaborative | Private |
| | Andover | 1.00 | 35,500.00 | 42,907.00 | 1.00 | 19,750.00 | 21,932.00 | 7.75 | 223,250.00 |
| Boxford | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| GLTS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Haverhill | 2.50 | 88,750.00 | 107,267.50 | 1.75 | 34,562.50 | 38,381.00 | 9.65 | 286,792.50 | 348,582.10 |
| Lawrence | 1.00 | 35,500.00 | 42,907.00 | 4.30 | 84,925.00 | 94,307.60 | 29.46 | 731,889.00 | 972,883.84 |
| Lowell | 0.75 | 26,625.00 | 32,180.25 | - | - | - | 8.75 | 260,925.00 | 369,020.75 |
| Methuen | 7.00 | 248,500.00 | 300,349.00 | 0.75 | 14,812.50 | 16,449.00 | 29.00 | 855,712.50 | 1,118,341.25 |
| Middleton | 0.75 | 26,625.00 | 32,180.25 | - | - | - | 0.75 | 26,625.00 | 32,180.25 |
| North Andover | 2.66 | 94,430.00 | 114,132.62 | 4.00 | 79,000.00 | 87,728.00 | 9.16 | 232,430.00 | 281,408.12 |
| Topsfield | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Totals | 15.66 | 555,930.00 | 671,923.62 | 11.80 | 233,050.00 | 258,797.60 | 94.52 | 2,617,624.00 | 3,398,097.06 |

APPENDIX C

Review of Cost-Effectiveness Research

► **Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives Study**

The Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives conducted a survey in 1989 among its 29 member collaboratives to estimate the savings realized by collaborative programs and services.⁵⁴ The data indicate a significant savings in the following three special education services.

- Special education tuitions - 40% to 60%
- Special needs transportation services - 20% to 30%
- Itinerant therapists (OTs, PTs, SLPs) - 25% to 50%

► **The Southwest and West Central Educational Cooperative Service Unit (Minnesota) Studies**

This Minnesota service agency conducted two very comprehensive cost-effectiveness studies, one in 1989 and another in 1995. Both studies report significant savings from purchasing products and services regionally.⁵⁵

• **The 1989 Study**

For every service offered by this Educational Cooperative Service Unit (ECSU), the cost through the ESA was compared to the individual school district cost. Figures for the 1988-89 school year (FY 89) were used for all analyses. Results for four major service categories follow:

Special Education: The cost of services obtained through the ECSU was compared to the cost of services through private schools, mental health centers, and hospitals. During the year under study, member districts paid \$1,176,101 to the ECSU, while the cost for the same services through the other providers was \$3,767,550. The difference of \$2,591,449 represents a 69 percent savings to the participating school districts.

Cooperative Purchasing: The cost of supplies purchased through the ECSU joint bid, \$3,324,944, was compared to a cost of \$4,443,944, resulting in a savings of \$1,118,726, or 25 percent. Table C-1 indicates the percentage of savings by product.

Film services: The ECSU rental price per film or videotape (\$6.84) was compared to the only local alternative available, the film library of the University of Wisconsin, where the cost averaged \$21.14 per film or videotape. ECSU fees for this service during fiscal year 1989 were \$240,546. The cost of the alternative would have been \$752,909. The ECSU saved \$512,363 or 68 percent.

Workshops: The ECSU average daily price per participant for workshops was \$27.32. This was compared to an average price of \$50 through other sources available to district teachers. During FY 1989, a total of 2,903 educators participated in work-shops at a cost of \$79,296. The comparative cost was estimated at \$145,140. Total savings were \$65,854 or 45 percent.

Table C-1

| | |
|---|-----|
| Custodial supplies | 28% |
| School paper | 37% |
| Office/classroom furniture and audio-visual equipment | 19% |
| Computer hardware and supplies | 19% |
| Cafeteria food | 13% |
| Office and classroom supplies | 51% |

Overall, member school districts of the Southwest and West Central ECSU spent \$11,409,798 for collaborative services during fiscal year 1989. Without the benefit of the ECSU, they would have spent an estimated \$16,926,415. The difference of \$5,516,617 represents overall savings of 33 percent.

- **The 1995 Study**

In 1994-95, the Southwest/West Central ECSU analyzed the audited records of member districts' expenditures in 10 categories: media services, cooperative purchasing, equipment maintenance, health and safety services, science kits for classrooms, special education, a Regional Management Information Center, group insurance, technology services, and professional development activities.

Table C-2

| | |
|--|-----|
| Film/video services | 70% |
| Equipment repair service | 45% |
| Computer repair service | 44% |
| Health and safety programs | 49% |
| Health and hospitalization insurance | 33% |
| Life insurance | 12% |
| Long-term disability insurance | 20% |
| Professional development activities | 80% |
| Shared personnel costs in special education (compared to individual district hiring) | |
| shared special education directors | 78% |
| shared psychologists | 65% |
| program coordinators | 51% |
| teachers and therapists | 42% |
| low incidence consultants | 88% |
| Cooperative purchasing of materials and supplies | |
| paper | 24% |
| custodial supplies | 26% |
| office and classroom (including audiovisual) equipment and supplies | 52% |
| computer peripherals and supplies | 42% |
| athletic and industrial arts supplies | 22% |

Records of 98 school district members were reviewed. Membership fees to the Southwest/West Central ECSU totaled \$168,194. The total amount spent by all the entities was \$25,140,886 for the products and services they needed. Estimated savings for a single school year were \$16,085,758. The percent saved is shown in table C-2.

► **The Stanley Study**

This research compared the cost of individual school districts performing six specific services to the projected cost of the districts acting jointly to provide the services.⁵⁶

Actual fiscal year 1990 costs for eight school districts in northeastern Massachusetts were compared to the projected costs of a collaborative service, as determined by the researcher and stakeholders from each of the eight districts participating in the study. Projected costs rather than actual costs for the collaborative service were used for this analysis as the collaborative models could not actually be implemented during the course of the study without the approval and funding of the school districts.

Analyses of the cost data indicated significant savings in three of the six services studied: shared personnel recruitment/job bank, shared staff for low-enrollment courses, and cooperative purchasing of printing services. Projected savings in these three areas were 39 percent, 78 percent, and 22 percent, respectively.

Very slight and insignificant differences in costs were found in the grants directory (1.2 percent less expensive) and learning resource library (1.7 percent more expensive). Start-up costs for a shared computer network were responsible for a lack of cost savings, as the savings in materials through a cooperative purchase were determined to be 21.7 percent. A cost comparison of data-processing services could not be performed. Districts were unwilling to share the required data because that was not an option school districts wanted to pursue at the time.

In general, regional programs tend to make sense if a critical mass of students is required for a program to be operated cost-effectively, or if a high degree of staff specialization is required. High start-up costs, if shared among many school districts, can prompt collaboration or, as seen in the cases above, they can limit the development of a program if districts are unwilling or unable to fund these costs.

► **The Washington State Study**

In 1995, the Legislative Budget Committee (LBC) for the State of Washington evaluated the services provided by the state's Educational Service Districts (ESDs).⁵⁷ This study is notable in that it assessed the perceived quality of ESA programs in addition to their cost-effectiveness. Seven services were chosen for analysis: data processing, unemployment insurance, special education, educational technology, workers compensation, Head Start programs, and Early Childhood Education and Assistance programs.

The LBC found that recipients of ESD services were generally, if not highly, satisfied with service quality. In fact, access to quality services was stated to be one of the major benefits of ESD programming. Also, the report stated that some of the services were unlikely to be available to school districts if not performed by the ESD.

Regarding cost-effectiveness, the report stated that districts viewed ESD prices to be affordable, especially when the only other alternative was to provide them internally. For example, districts with low numbers of children receiving physical therapy as part of a special education program would have not been able to afford to hire a therapist. ESDs were among the largest providers of in-service professional development training in the state. They provided workshops and nationally recognized speakers on a regional scale, again, services that many local districts would have not been able to afford.

In summary, the LBC found that the current ESD system indeed met the "criteria of providing quality and affordable services to its customers."⁵⁸

► **Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative, A 20-Year Study**

Since 1979, the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative (GLEC), a consortium of 10 school districts in northeastern Massachusetts, has been comparing its tuition rates and fee schedules for special education programs and services to rates available in the private sector for the provision of comparable services.⁵⁹ Over the 20-year period between FY79 and FY98, the author demonstrated that GLEC member districts saved \$13,221,163 in special education tuitions alone. This does not include additional savings in transportation costs, gained by having students closer to home than they typically would be if they were attending private schools. The average savings from interdistrict collaboration in special education programming during this 20-year period was 33 percent.

A comparison of collaborative special education program tuition rates to similar private sector program rates is made by many collaboratives on an annual basis to support their budget requests; savings are typically similar to those documented by the GLEC study.

► The Clackamas (Oregon) ESD Study

Campbell (2001) conducted a cost-effectiveness study of four services provided by the Clackamas Education Service District (ESD) in fiscal years 1996-97 and 1997-98.⁶⁰ Campbell determined the unit of measurement for identifying and describing the cost of each program, product or service, then compared this cost against private sector providers offering comparable programs, products, and services. For example, in the case of professional development, he took into account the number of participants, the length of the activity in hours and all direct and indirect costs and then compared the unit cost per service to private sector providers.

Campbell's Process

- 1) *Identify unit of measurement for each service/product:*
 - Production Services - the specific printing job
 - Technical Repair - the specific piece of equipment to be repaired
 - Staff Development - participant hour and participant day
 - Media Center - the specific film video tape or instructional item
 - Evaluation Center - time per specific type of evaluation
 - Transportation - miles traveled and students transported
 - Delivery Services - mileage
 - Network and Information Services - CPU seconds used, disk space used for storage in megabytes and pages printed
 - Attendance Services - referrals and consultations
 - Test Scoring and Reporting - tests scored and specific reports prepared
- 2) *Determine the direct and indirect cost of each function (including administrative costs)*
- 3) *Calculate unit costs for each function*
- 4) *Identify other providers*
- 5) *Collect data on other providers' costs for each function*
- 6) *Compare*

Analyses of actual audited expenditures were completed in each of the four program areas, as follows:

- Media library rental fees – \$9.13/item Clackamas cost versus \$60.40/item vendor cost; *85% savings*
- Clackamas print shop – Item A: \$45.54 Clackamas versus \$104.35 private vendor; Item B: \$33.05 versus \$59.60; Item C: \$2,420 versus \$3,011; *41% average savings*
- Professional development activities - \$78.18 for a six-hour Clackamas workshop versus \$103.88 for a comparable workshop from other providers; *24% savings*
- Student evaluation – a full evaluation requiring 30.75 hours conducted by Clackamas cost \$1804 whereas a comparable evaluation conducted by a private vendor costs \$2380; *24% savings*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



M. CRAIG STANLEY served for 27 years until 2004 as the executive director of the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative, a multi-purpose collaborative comprising 10 school districts in northeastern Massachusetts. Prior to that he was a classroom teacher and a school psychologist. He holds a doctorate in school administration from Boston College where his area of expertise was school finance. His doctoral dissertation was an analysis of the cost effectiveness of educational collaborative service expansion. Having served as a member of the Executive Council of the Association of Educational Service Agencies and as President of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives, he has written and lectured extensively on the cost effectiveness of regional educational service delivery. Dr. Stanley is currently engaged in educational research and development.

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