



educational service center
of Central Ohio Serving Delaware, Franklin & Union Counties

Stakeholder Report 2010

Leadership for Learning

Helping Students and Schools Achieve More

The Educational Service Center of Central Ohio partners with districts and schools to improve the learning experiences of all students. The agency provides direct instruction and vital support services for students and quality professional development for teachers, district and school leaders and other staff. Additionally, it offers robust educational consultancy through a growing list of programs, including instructional coaching, school and district leader development, professional employment and business services.

The ESC of Central Ohio helps 200,000 children in 25 school districts serving Delaware, Franklin and Union counties achieve more.

About the ESC of Central Ohio

Ohio's first accredited educational service center, the ESC of Central Ohio leverages resources and coordinates programs to help districts and schools meet the needs of their students – and to help those young learners achieve more.

The agency is funded through \$3.7 million in annual state support, \$46 million in district-elected services and competitive grants totaling \$33 million. Therefore, each \$1 of state subsidy yields another \$21 in needs-based local services and competitive grants.

ESC of Central Ohio Member Districts

Delaware County

Big Walnut Local School District
Buckeye Valley Local School District
Delaware City School District
Delaware Area Career Center
Olentangy Local School District

Franklin County

Bexley City School District
Canal Winchester Local School District
Columbus City School District
Dublin City School District
Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Schools
Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District
Grandview Heights City School District
Groveport-Madison Local School District
Hamilton Local School District
Hilliard City School District
New Albany•Plain Local School District
Reynoldsburg City School District
South-Western City School District
Upper Arlington City School District
Whitehall City School District
Westerville City School District
Worthington City School District

Union County

Fairbanks Local School District
Marysville Exempted Village School District
Tolles Career & Technical Center

ESC Partners

Action for Children
Columbus Catholic Diocese
Cisco Learning Institute
Columbus Coalition Against Family Violence
Delaware Morrow Mental Health
and Recovery Services Board
Delaware County Family and
Children First Council
Educational Council
eTech Ohio Commission
Franklin County Children Services
Franklin County Department of Jobs
and Family Services
Franklin County Family and Children
First Council
Help Me Grow
Ohio Center for Essential School Reform
Ohio Coalition for Autism Low Incidence (OCALI)
Ohio Department of Education
Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
Ohio Historical Society
Ohio State Research Foundation
Ohio State School for the Blind
The Ohio State University
Rehabilitation Services Administration
School Redesign Network
Stanford University
U.S. Department of Education

A Message to Our Stakeholders

Dear Friends:

Facts are “stubborn things,” as John Adams told us. For public schools in Delaware, Franklin and Union counties, the need for dramatic, penetrating changes in teaching and learning – and in the way schools are operated – is reflected in two intractable facts. First, education is more important than ever before for students’ success and Ohio’s future vitality. Second, schools and districts are facing unprecedented challenges as they search for ways to ensure that all of their students graduate ready for success in college, careers and citizenship.

What are these challenges? One involves financial shortfalls and human resource limitations. Very simply, schools and districts do not have enough money or enough competent professionals to meet a multitude of needs. Both districts and schools require timely assistance, supports and resources – particularly as they struggle to meet the learning and developmental needs of students in special education, students with a range of physical limitations, students whose first language is not English, and students who have dropped out and now seek to get back on track.

These districts and schools also are faced with soaring transportation and personnel costs as well as costs of administrative overhead and instructional materials. Educators are struggling to target their funds to the classroom in support of students’ learning, academic achievement and healthy development. They are developing fiscally responsible strategies that enable them to do as many or more things and doing them better.

Workforce development and retention is a second challenge facing schools and districts today. It is a crisis, starting with teachers and school leaders. Arguably, this problem is most prevalent in urban schools serving growing numbers of children challenged by poverty, social isolation and limited English language proficiency. But urban schools are not alone in confronting workforce challenges. Owing to flat and declining resources, most districts’ plans to hire new teachers have been put on the back burner; some have had to lay off newer hires while others have offered early retirement incentives without firm plans to replace teachers who opt for them.

This is hardly a formula for success, given that many of today’s teachers need to improve their knowledge and skills, especially in the areas of classroom management, science and mathematics, and special education. Often, they have not been sufficiently prepared to work with diverse learners at a time when unprecedented numbers of students entering our schools have special learning needs. In the same vein, when principals are not targeted for timely and strategic professional development because of limited resources, they are not in a position to get the conditions in their schools right for teaching and learning.


A third challenge is reflected in a new “goal line” that has been established for all of our schools and districts – the need to prepare every student to be college and career ready. With due recognition of fast-changing jobs, careers and entire industries in the new global economy, as well as the more rigorous and expansive learning every person needs for responsible citizenship, this points to the need for an aligned birth-to-career education system.

The assumption underlying such a birth-to-career (P-16) system is that high school graduation no longer constitutes the goal line for P-12 success. Yet, the challenge here for schools and districts goes beyond the years of education that are completed. Competence in conventional, core academic subjects is no longer enough. New knowledge, skills and abilities are needed for 21st

century careers and civic engagement. Accelerated learning and degree completion must become priorities, which is the basis for dual enrollment and other innovative programs.

Such are the unprecedented challenges confronting our schools and districts – and they need help in meeting them. The ESC has readied itself to provide that assistance. In partnership with its member districts, the agency is supporting student success, strengthening and advancing workforce development, and building new school and district capacities in a birth-to-career framework. We are providing bold leadership for learning in four priority areas: (1) shared services; (2) birth-to-career learning; (3) technical assistance and capacity-building; and (4) leadership development.

Therein lies the ESC of Central Ohio's challenge and opportunity. We will assist districts and schools as they respond to their challenges, work proactively in anticipation of future ones, and help them maximize their resources in the process.


Greg Spencer
Governing Board President


Bart Anderson, Ed.D.
Superintendent

June 2010



Our Mission

The ESC of Central Ohio accelerates the missions of our member school districts and helps students achieve more, through career- and college-ready research-based programs and services.

Our Priorities

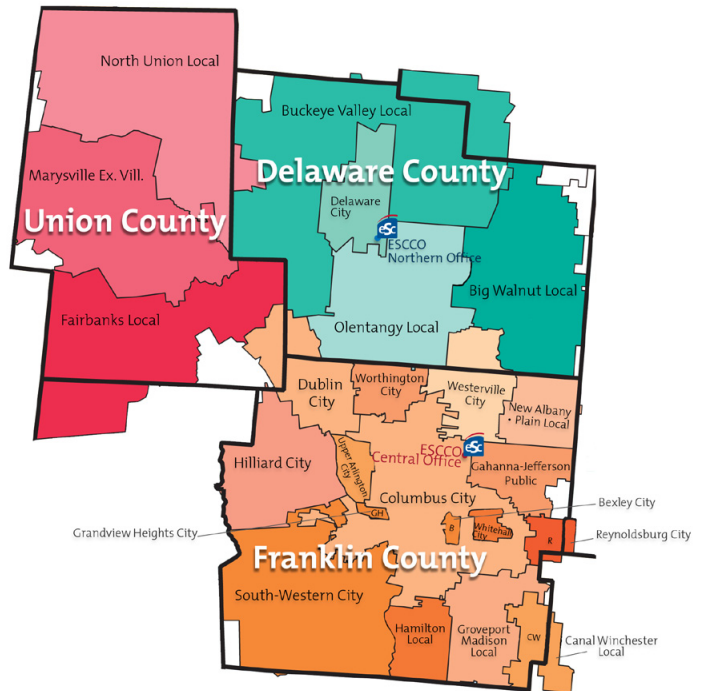
The ESC of Central Ohio exists to improve students' academic learning and performance, and to support their healthy development. We are a resource to improve the performance of our member school districts. We are committed to offering personalized, accessible and – most importantly – relevant programs that help schools and students achieve more at the lowest cost possible. Adding value in countless, often unseen ways, our priorities are driven by seven criteria:

1. We support modest reforms and transformational change that improve teaching and learning.
2. We support renewed traditions because we don't have an "out with the old, in with the new" agenda.
3. We design and deliver our services around what works – ensuring that we use proven practices that make a positive difference for students, schools and communities.
4. We focus on initiatives that benefit from our expertise and our unique competencies, and we work collaboratively to measure the results of our work.
5. We do things that others are not doing, or things that others can't do as effectively,
6. We promote sustainability and the scale up of proven practices.
7. We reflect our communities' values and respond to their needs.

The ESC of Central Ohio's mission supports the state of Ohio's education reform initiatives as reflected in the Ohio Department of Education's 10-year strategic plan and House Bill 1, which was enacted by the Ohio General Assembly in July 2009. In addition, the agency's priorities and services are tightly aligned with the charge state lawmakers gave last year to the School Funding Advisory Council, which was directed, in part, to make recommendations for the improved funding and delivery of (1) special education services, including services for gifted children and limited English-proficient students; (2) career-technical education, including early college high schools and other innovative learning models; and (3) regional services with emphasis on educational service centers' support for districts and schools in the areas of academic achievement, teacher quality, shared educational services, and the purchasing of educational services and commodities.

ESC of Central Ohio By The Numbers

School districts served	25
Public school buildings served	420
Students served	200,000
ESC employees	989
ESC of Central Ohio budget	\$86 million
Competitive grant funding	\$33 million
Help Me Grow children served	3,223
Students earning dual high school-college credit hours	924
Total college credit hours earned through ESC Dual-Credit programs	6,018
Performance-based assessments conducted for	52 schools
Special education students served directly	917
Students served by Related Services therapists and specialists	6,200
Truancy interventions	764



Making a Difference for Students, Schools and Communities

By augmenting its strengths and capitalizing on timely opportunities, the ESCCO has positioned itself to become an exemplar – in Ohio and across the nation – for the critical roles played by intermediary organizations in “whole systems” educational improvement. The agency’s leadership for learning is reflected in its innovative programs and services that help students and schools achieve more while reducing costs to districts. Our leadership is the focus of this report.

Shared Services

According to a recent report from Deloitte Research, up to 40 percent of every dollar spent on education never makes it to the classroom. Administrative overhead devours increasingly precious resources. As a result, the core mission of schools and districts – instruction in support of student academic learning and achievement, healthy development and overall school success – too often finds itself at risk.

The ESC of Central Ohio thinks there is another solution: shared services that consolidate certain functions across several school districts, allowing for more effective and efficient operations. It is a way to meet identified needs of individual students and like groups of students, particularly in settings where there are a small number of them or where schools’ overall capacity to meet those needs is limited.

Shared services have defined, in part, the ESC’s distinguished past. The agency’s identity and some of its core functions are rooted firmly in services to special populations of students located in multiple schools and districts. Not surprisingly, the agency’s future trajectory is grounded in this exemplary part of its past, and its leaders have positioned it to build on this strength by providing direct services to some schools while brokering them for others.

Increasingly, some of these services have a new look. For example, online learning and career support services, already provided, will be increased in the near future. These new learning services represent proactive planning for “anytime, anywhere, anyone learning” that is not place bound, and they support Ohio’s new “flexible credit” option.

Fortunately, the ESC has its fingers on the pulse of rapid, dramatic change and especially the growing fiscal and human resource challenges facing districts and schools. Therefore, it is committed to pioneering new organizational configurations that will allow a greater share of public dollars to reach children and teachers in classrooms throughout Central Ohio.

In this new configuration, shared services refer to cooperative agreements involving the several, diverse and resource-devouring administrative and support functions of central district offices and, by extension, principals’ time and energy. The ESC’s shared services maximize precious fiscal and human resources because they trim schools’ and districts’ operating costs, and they enable school personnel to spend less time on routine functions with greater focus on higher-impact, strategic ones. Examples of this new kind of shared service configuration are plentiful, and some are being pioneered even as this report is being written.

Shared Services: Assessing Our Performance

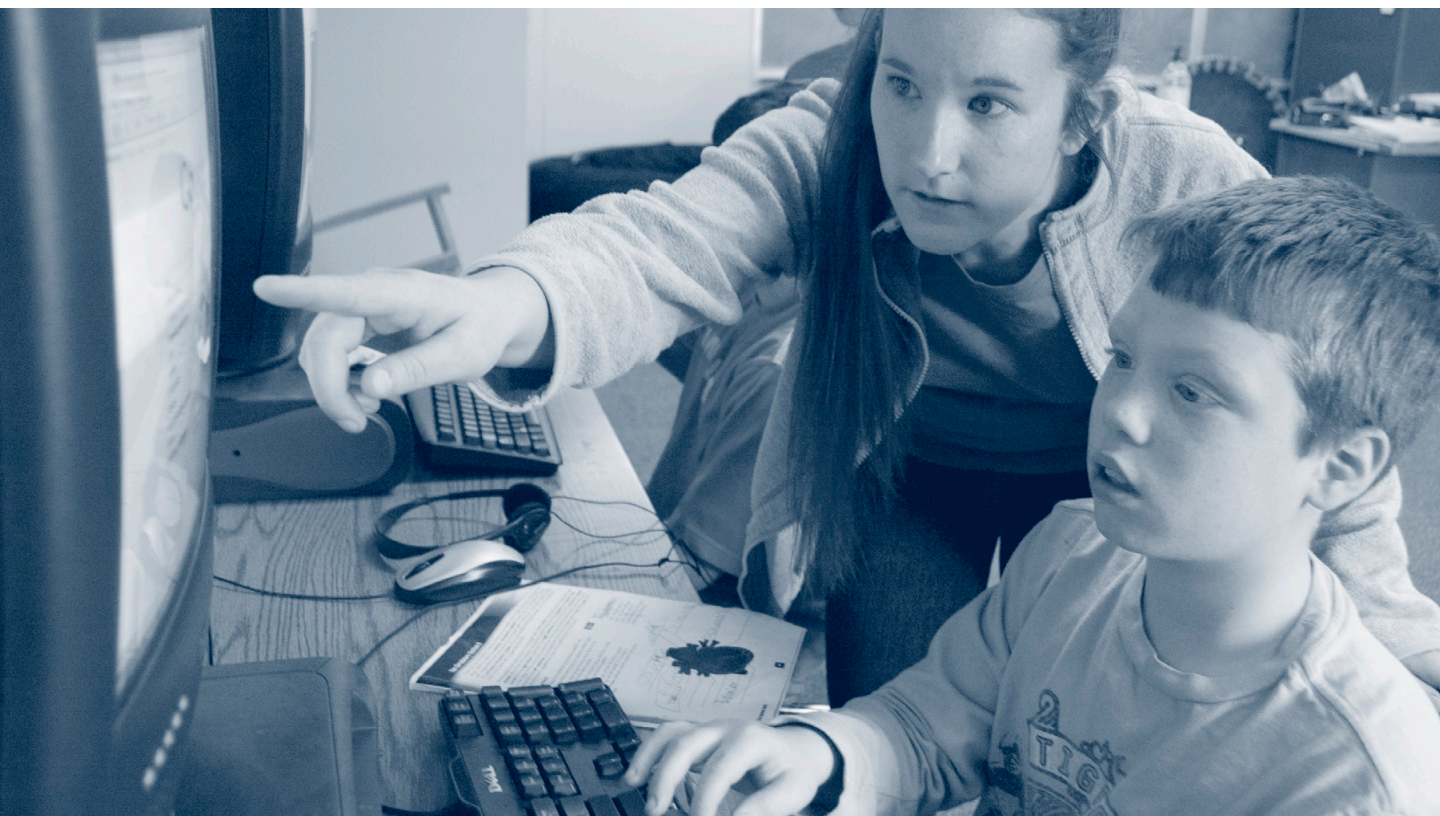
Nowhere is the value of the ESC of Central Ohio's shared services greater than in special education programs and services that support the unique needs of students in multiple districts who have moderate to intensive disabilities, or severe emotional and behavioral challenges. For example:

- The agency is collaborating with several districts to provide high-quality programs and related services to help **students with special needs**, including students with multiple disabilities, autism, social-emotional and behavioral conditions, as well as vision, hearing, communication, cognitive and attention impairments. It offers several alternative education programs with learning environments tailored to help at-risk students not succeeding in traditional classrooms. The ESC operates 65 classrooms in Central Ohio teaching more than 900 students, and it provides related services to 6,200 students each year.
- By blending demanding academic programs with summer internships and service learning, the **Crossroads** program is helping low-income, at-risk high school students who are not succeeding in the classroom largely because they don't see the relevance of learning to their lives. This year alone, the program is helping more than 450 students in Franklin County.
- The **STACK (Structured Teaching for Communication-delayed Kids)** program provides a continuum of learning services for students with autism and their families. Begun in the 1990s, the program provides teams of highly skilled and licensed/certified staff including a teacher, paraprofessional and related service personnel specializing in services to autistic children.
- A collaboration between the ESC and Buckeye Ranch, the **Cross Creek Day Treatment** program serves students with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. Interdisciplinary teams of professionals work with students and families to set academic, social and behavioral change strategies that allow young people to return to their home school districts with support services. Recognizing that they did not have the capital nor human services required to meet the needs of students with intense behavioral and mental health issues, participating districts asked the ESC of Central Ohio to provide this service.
- Launched in 2007, **Project Key (Keep Engaging Youth)**, in partnership with the Franklin County Commissioners, uses school-based advocates to divert truants from court involvement, improve their school attendance rates and prevent them from dropping out of school. The program links students to a variety of school and community resources and provides wraparound services designed to achieve these purposes. Presently, the program serves 250 students a year in six Columbus elementary and middle schools with impressive results: a more than 70 percent decrease in chronic truancy between 2007 and 2009 with a similar cut in unexcused absences for more than one-third of the students by the end of the first year of mediation.
- On the administrative side of shared services, the ESC's **substitute teacher pool** recruits, trains, processes and coordinates the placement and payroll of substitute teachers and various classified employees for 11 Franklin, Delaware and Union county districts. It also deploys substitute teachers, teacher assistants and English language learner interpreters for special education classrooms in Central Ohio. With shared services, substitute teachers have received more training and fill rates have increased by more than five percent during the past five years. Critically, participating districts report their costs have been reduced by 14 percent.

Shared Services: Investing in Our Promise

The ESC's growing investment in shared services is reflected in two new initiatives: English Language Learners (ELL) and a Shared Inter-District Transportation initiative.

- Central Ohio has the largest ELL population in Ohio – over 12,000 students and growing each year. Faced with the difficulties of serving this population, districts asked the ESCCO to help with professional development for teachers, evidence-based intervention and instruction, the identification and training of interpreters and the assessment of learning. So the agency launched the **English Language Learners** initiative in 2009, beginning with professional development for educators focused on literacy skills, interventions and classroom instruction. An online course is scheduled to be available during the next school year and a Summer Tutoring Academy will be offered for high school students during summer 2010.
- A shared services approach to **Inter-District Transportation** has real advantages for schools and children alike. Each year, districts in Franklin County have 1,500 active bus routes at a cost of \$120 million. On a per student basis, the cost of out-of-district transportation is four times higher than in-district transportation. Launched in January 2010, the goal of the ESCCO's new initiative is to reduce the overall spending across and within districts, while maintaining the integrity of each district's service commitment to its students. Nationally, studies of cross-district collaboration indicate that this goal is achievable.



Birth-to-Career Learning

With a growing recognition of the importance of learning beyond high school, Ohio and other states are seeking to create aligned levels of schooling with solid connections among them, including transitions that students, educators and parents can navigate. In Ohio, educators and state policy leaders are scrambling to work out the details and to get started strategically. The ESC of Central Ohio is equipped to make significant contributions to this effort and is gearing up to do even more in the future.

Examples of the ESC's enduring strengths and developing innovations in this area are numerous. They include a home visitation program for young children and their families in Franklin County. They also include transition supports for highly mobile students who frequently change schools and districts, dual-credit opportunities, campus-based transition services that help students with disabilities pursue learning opportunities after high school, and more.

Today, the agency is helping school and district leaders plan beyond classroom walls, district boundaries and even the traditional school day. This is a strategic contribution because most birth-to-career systems are not oriented in this way. When their leaders talk about alignment and systems change, they have a narrowly defined education system in mind, assuming that educators can do it all by operating within school and district boundaries and focusing exclusively on the school day.

Not so with the ESC of Central Ohio. It recognizes that without family and community assistance and supports, even the best aligned education system will leave countless children behind. So the agency is pioneering a new approach to Family and Civic Engagement, as well as taking on what is perhaps the most perplexing educational challenge – timely dropout prevention, early intervention and recovery.

"We need every single one of you to develop your talents, skills and intellect so you can help solve our most difficult problems. If you don't do that – if you quit on school – you're not just quitting on yourself, you're quitting on your country."

*President Barack Obama
(at a back-to-school event)
September 8, 2009*

Birth-to-Career Learning: Assessing Our Performance

Research confirms that children are born ready to learn and that investments in high-quality early learning yield impressive economic and social results. It is not surprising, then, that the impact of the ESC's services is felt early in a child's life and that the agency continues to generate benefits for young learners into college and their working years. Consider, for example, three areas of which the agency is promoting birth-to-career learning:

- The agency coordinates **Help Me Grow** services to more than 3,200 Franklin County children and their families. Help Me Grow is a community-based service that promotes trans-disciplinary, family-centered services for expectant parents, newborns, infants, toddlers and their families. Its home visits focus on child development, and its parent mentors and family support professionals conduct development screenings and connect families to community resources.
- The ESC is a leader in expanding dual-credit opportunities enabling students to earn college credits while in high school. Giving students an early taste of college courses enhances their aspirations to continue formal learning beyond high school and helps them prepare for the rigor of college. It also reduces the price tag of a college education for students and their families.

The past two academic years, the ESC of Central Ohio's **Dual-Credit Enrollment Program** engaged 13 school districts and students from 17 high schools in college-level courses. In all, 1,512 students earned 10,094 college credit hours without leaving their high schools – saving \$5.8 million in tuition. As of January 2010, approximately 70 percent of the 25 districts in the ESC's service area offered dual-enrollment courses. Other districts are now exploring their dual-enrollment options and most of the districts currently offering dual enrollment are preparing to expand their offerings. Presently, nine colleges and universities are partnering with the ESC of Central Ohio to meet the demand of students for dual-enrollment experiences.

- The agency's **Campus-Based Transition** programs allow 18- to 22-year-olds with disabilities to learn life and career skills on college campuses. For more than a decade, the ESC has partnered with area institutions of higher education to give Central Ohio students with disabilities – particularly in smaller school districts with limited resources – community-based transition services needed to improve their lives after completing high school. Presently, more than 30 students are being trained for future employment and self-care through Columbus State Community College's WINGS program and The Ohio State University's STEP and Project PLUS.

Launched in 2008, the **Autism College Transition (ACT) Program** provides direct instruction and academic coaching designed to develop independence for aspiring college students with autism. In partnership with Columbus State Community College, the agency is helping students develop the tools that are required for success in college, including organization, time management, social skills, communication and self advocacy.

Birth-to-Career Learning: Investing in Our Promise

The ESC of Central Ohio's commitment to future initiatives in this area is reflected in two ventures.

- In July 2009, Ohio's leaders enacted a two-year budget bill (HB 1) that identified family and civic engagement in schools as a key component of state's education reform agenda. That legislation directed school districts to appoint teams to work with county Family and Children First Councils and with family and community liaisons to develop and carry out five-year **Family and Civic Engagement** plans. HB 1 also identified ESCs as the source of professional development, technical, and facilitation and guidance for counties' family and civic engagement initiatives. At the request of ODE, the ESC of Central Ohio is part of a statewide advisory committee focused on planning for the statewide implementation of this mandated initiative. It also has engaged 25 Family and Children First Councils, educational service centers and school districts in a "learning community" that will help ODE develop a systems model for building statewide the capacity of similar agencies to meet the expectation of HB 1 by aligning systems, services and action plans.
- Every day an estimated 164 Ohio young people drop out of school. In Ohio and across the nation, the school dropout problem has become an epidemic that calls for an effective cure as well as solid strategies for both intervention and prevention. This is the basis for a new **Dropout Recovery** program through which the ESCCO will provide both classroom and online courses for out-of-school students who need to complete their requirements for high school graduation. By the 2010-11 school year, courses will be provided for credit recovery, career-technical learning, early college opportunities, credit flexibility and assessment preparation.

Technical Assistance

When birth-to-career education systems are being developed and aligned, an important need become evident. People need new skills and abilities, just as organizations need new capacities. Understanding this, the ESC of Central Ohio has repositioned itself to address these needs and its leaders are preparing to launch new, innovative initiatives that build on the agency's strengths and distinctive achievements.

In a nutshell, the agency has long provided districts and schools multiple kinds of technical assistance from coaching and training for teachers and student support professionals to support for district-level continuous improvement plans, and from technical support for Ohio's Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs) to training for those who are engaged in early learning, school readiness and literacy.

Technical Assistance: Assessing Our Performance

The ESCCO's technical assistance programs serve a broad range of districts and schools, and they impact what children learn – and how – in unique and diverse ways. Yet, these and other agency programs share two fundamental features. First, they illustrate the agency's success in strengthening districts' capacity to achieve more and/or to serve a broader range of students. Second, they demonstrate that the ESC's footprint is growing larger as it is given and accepts new responsibilities, both in terms of its geographic reach and the substantive focus of its services.

- Perhaps the ESC's most innovative work is reflected in the **Columbus Coaching Project**, which offers classroom-level instructional coaching, data analysis and teacher team facilitation in 55 Columbus elementary, middle and high schools. The project's purpose is to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development, technical assistance and support to teachers in low-performing schools. Launched in 2007, this evidence-based initiative is predicated on the fact that the application of skills is much higher when professional development includes theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and peer coaching with follow-up.

The project's 50-plus instructional coaches are working with teachers in more than 70 schools, providing more than 84,000 hours of direct instructional coaching over three years. Instructional coaches help teachers with classroom instruction aligned to district improvement plans. They analyze data from short-cycle diagnostic assessments and value-added tests and improve teachers' ability to design differentiated instructional strategies that are matched to individual students' strengths and weaknesses. All of these coaches are experienced teachers and administrators who work with the agency at least three days a week.

- **New Ventures**, a unique partnership with the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation, is designed to serve the educational, cultural and workforce readiness needs of Somali youth. This pilot offers classes and other services free of charge to students at a community center near the neighborhoods where many children live. By reaching out to Somali community leaders and hiring Somali teachers and case managers, the agency is bridging the cultural chasms that these youth faced when they entered Columbus classrooms for the first time.

Of the 67 Somali youth who attend weekend classes, 25 have re-enrolled in high school courses at a nearby community school. Turning dropouts into graduates and transforming refugees into

citizens who will share their talents and creativity in this county of immigrants is a tremendous challenge – and the lessons the agency learns will be shared with partner districts that are serving school-age Somali children from these same homes.

- The **State Support Team Region 11** is another example of how the agency’s footprint is expanding. Supported by a state budget allocation and federal dollars, the SST assists school districts, educational groups and families in seven counties with a focus on improved planning and training for school personnel in four key areas: (1) school improvement; (2) special education compliance; (3) literacy and early learning; and (4) school readiness. The early results are encouraging as all of these districts have experienced increased graduation rates, higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics, and the growth of instructional time in general curriculum for students with disabilities over the past three years.
- The agency’s **Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)** was created to serve, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, as a clearinghouse of information, professional development and technical assistance for the state’s multiple systems as they relate to Ohioans with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. Specifically:
 - State lawmakers directed OCALI to design and implement statewide, regional and district-level professional development opportunities, including those that address assessment and quality program and instructional indicators, for general and special educators serving children with autism and low-incidence disabilities.
 - In collaboration with a number of state agencies, universities and parent and professional groups, OCALI has provided professional development to 40 agencies across the state, offered training to approximately 116 groups across all regions of the state with a parent focus, and worked with 28 universities addressing pre-service needs for developing highly qualified special education teachers.

Technical Assistance: Investing in Our Promise

When the state of Ohio began to develop a new generation of student assessments, it asked the ESSCO to help. Through the **Ohio Performance Assessment Pilot Project**, the agency is assisting in training more than 120 teachers – 11th and 12th grade English-language arts, mathematics and science teachers across the state – to pilot the new, more rigorous assessments. The project is being carried by the ODE in consultation with the Stanford University School Redesign Network and the ESC of Central Ohio.

With its Columbus location, the ESC is in a unique position to provide logistical support to ODE and the participating schools. As the project progresses, the agency will provide the professional development that teachers and staff will need to implement the new performance assessments.

The rationale for the Performance Assessment Project is that because current (i.e., paper and pencil) student assessments do not provide a complete and accurate portrait of a student’s knowledge and skills, a more rounded, multiple-measures approach to assessment is needed, which would include the use of performance assessments.

Leadership Development

All principals and superintendents must have the skills and abilities needed to effectively manage their schools and districts, and they should be equipped to be instructional leaders in their own organizations. This kind of leadership is vital in the most stable of times. In times of great challenge and flux, its importance cannot be overstated.

Ohioans' expectations for their schools are higher than ever before. Schools and the people who lead them are being asked to prepare all of their students for postsecondary education without remediation. They are being challenged to graduate young people who can compete and succeed in the 21st century economy.

Yet, the schools of yesteryear cannot meet these challenges without substantial changes and, in the cases of schools that persistently cannot achieve desirable results, total redesign. In such an environment, quality school leadership is at a premium, and the development, recruitment, evaluation and support of quality school leaders must be a priority.

Today's school leaders must be more than effective administrators, and they must face squarely an expanded view of instructional leadership. Leadership for learning is the new mantra, and it applies to teachers and student support professionals as well as to students. This expanded, powerful leadership for learning takes principals, superintendents and district administrators outside the walls and beyond the school day to embrace a new day for learning. It also entails a focus on school climate, including the development of safe, supportive and health-promoting environments.

Much of the ESC's agenda touches leadership development. It is a pillar of strength from the past and a priority for expansion for the future. For this purpose, the ESC has embraced an empowerment-oriented approach to leadership, which means building individual and team commitments and competencies to take on new initiatives, make them work, and share in decision making.

In this fundamental sense, the ESC is at the frontier of ODE's plans for evidence-guided decision making and distributed leadership for continuous quality improvement. Notwithstanding its record of performance in this area, the ESC is presently repositioning itself to do more.

Leadership Development: Assessing Our Performance

Of the several leadership development innovations currently being offered by the ESCCO, five are especially salient to the work of improving Ohio's schools and districts and yielding better outcomes from a newly-configured birth-to career education system.

- The **Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC)** is grounded in legislation calling for key leadership development services for teacher leaders, principals, central office personnel and superintendents that lead to improved instructional practices and student performance. With this legislative charge, OLAC has identified standards for teacher leaders, principals and superintendents. As an extension of this process, the ESC worked with ODE, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Ohio School Boards Association to develop a standards-based evaluation system for district superintendents. The design process was completed in December 2009 and the agency started presenting workshops to train Board of Education members and superintendents.
- The ESC's **Center for Achievement and Leadership Services** offers comprehensive professional development in curriculum, assessment and instruction that effectively support the

development of classroom teachers, instructional coaches, coordinators and administrators. The center's services promote research-based practices around rigorous, standards-based curriculum, balanced classroom assessment systems, and instructional planning and design frameworks for monitoring student progress and accelerating achievement. An estimated 28,500 students have been impacted by ESC training delivered to 1,500 educators the past two years.

- The ESC's **Professional Learning Leaders Network** provides updated information on current local, state and federal topics and mandates, and a monthly opportunity for curriculum and instruction professionals to network with colleagues. Interest and participation have grown because the network provides an effective and efficient source of information and an opportunity for members to share ideas and action research regarding improved instructional practices.
- The **National Academy for Superintendents** gives participants an opportunity to share expertise, solve common problems, explore shared services and develop timely innovations. Participating superintendents examine current topics that build upon existing understandings of educational leadership and link them to developing trends and practices that the field has or is likely to encounter. Now in its 26th year, the academy became a partnership between the ESC and The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology in 2008. The academy is one of the last serving a national audience with current policy and thought leaders presenting.

The National Academy of Superintendents is structured with an eye toward succession planning and sustainability needs, with due recognition that universities can only provide so much preparation for this challenging job. It also reflects an understanding that "sink or swim" socialization on the job is not a good way to learn how to become an effective superintendent.

Leadership Development: Investing in Our Promise

Additional leadership initiatives are just now coming off the drawing board. They include:

- The **New and Aspiring Leaders Academy** offers presentations and dialogue about leadership theories and practical issues to be considered by aspiring leaders (i.e., teachers with potential and first-year principals). The academy began early in 2010 to address a need expressed by member superintendents to encourage talented teachers to enter administration, or at least increase their leadership skills. Superintendents of 15 Franklin County member districts encouraged 30 teachers and new administrators to participate in this first-year partnership with the Franklin University Leadership Institute.
- Research confirms that improving classroom instruction is highly dependent upon having a strong instructional leader who utilizes distributed leadership practices within learning communities. Therefore, SB 2 (2009) mandated the creation of the **Ohio Principal Evaluation System** as part of the legislation that created the Educator Standards Board. Through the ESC, administrators from the state's educational service centers have been trained to support districts interested in improving their evaluation processes.
- A new professional network, the **Center for the Principalsip**, will provide support for elementary, middle and high school principals as an on-going, job embedded learning experience designed to enhance their leadership knowledge and capabilities. Participants will have access to emerging ideas, research, best practices and peer coaching.

Bridging the Innovation and Implementation Gaps

Ohio's public schools are facing a crisis of relevance. Reforms launched in the past decade have produced substantial progress. Expectations for what all students need to know and be able to do have been raised. Instruction delivery has improved. Students' academic performance is better. But the job is far from complete and there are growing concerns that progress is not fast enough.

It is clear that too many children and young people are failing to make connections between what they are learning and their plans for future training and careers. It is equally clear that students with special needs, including those with multiple disabilities and issues that make it difficult for them to achieve in traditional learning environments, are too often being left behind.

Also, there is a growing consensus that the pace of innovation – for restructuring the traditional, industrial model of teaching and learning and for addressing the needs of lowest-achieving students – is not what it should be. As Ohio's Public-Private Collaborative Commission reported in 2008:

“[D]espite the improvements in teaching and learning that have been made . . . the pace and magnitude of improvement have not matched the pace and magnitude of the change shaping the world in which our children learn and develop and, eventually, will apply the knowledge and skills they acquire as students. . . . Deep down inside, we all know about this growing mismatch between the realities of the world around us and the preparation we're providing our young people for this new world.”

Ohio's educational service centers are well positioned to bridge these gaps by blending modest reforms with transformational change. Both reforms and transformational change will close the innovation and implementation gaps that have plagued public education for too long, ensuring that high-quality learning opportunities are available and relevant for all students. These service centers can make measurable contributions to Ohio's efforts to eliminate student apathy, lower high dropout rates, improve academic achievement and graduate more high school students who are prepared for success in college, careers and life.

Yet, this can only be accomplished if Ohio's leaders take several actions that lay the groundwork for new partnerships between ESCs and the districts they serve – collaborations that build the capacity of districts to help students and schools achieve more. For that purpose, the ESC of Central Ohio proposes several actions that will support its efforts to assist districts and schools as they respond to today's challenges, work proactively to anticipate future ones and maximize their resources in the process.

1 Special Education

The state of Ohio should:

- Develop and fully fund a cost-based methodology for funding special education, ensuring that it accurately reflects the true cost of providing high-quality services to students with special needs, including those with multiple disabilities, autism, social-emotional and behavioral conditions, as well as visual, hearing, speech, comprehension and attention impairments.
- Establish guidelines and provide incentives that discourage the misclassification of students, especially culturally diverse students, as special needs and special education students.
- Preserve existing cost-effective consortia models that allow resources to be managed effectively, and ensure that districts may still contract with ESCs under the new funding model.

2 Preschool Special Education

The state of Ohio should provide adequate funding for existing and new preschool special education units to meet the needs of all preschool special education students and the districts that serve them.

3 Regionalization

To improve the effectiveness of Ohio's Educational Regional Service System, which provides support services to districts, community schools and chartered nonpublic schools in each of 16 designated regions, the state of Ohio should:

- Review the system's performance and identify strategies for (1) reducing the unnecessary duplication of programs and services, (2) streamlining and improving the efficiency of the delivery of educational services without reducing the availability of services districts and schools need; and (3) building the capacity of ESCs to support students' academic performance and personal development.
- Evaluate the performance of and relationships among ESCs in the state's 16 regions and determine how they can improve the delivery of support services to districts and schools.
- Identify ways in which ESCs can be better used to deploy broad state and federal initiatives by giving them the authority and holding them accountable for developing and implementing innovative policies and practices that reach beyond the borders of individual districts.
- Designate a regional provider to (1) serve as a clearinghouse for information about how districts and other ESCs can collect and use data to ensure student success, including data on needs and assets (e.g., children's developmental assets, communities that care data, children-at-risk factors, and assessments of students' postsecondary awareness, readiness, access and success); (2) disseminate proven strategies for building leaders' readiness, commitments and competencies for turning data into results-oriented evidence, and then using this evidence into improvement planning; and (3) provide training and technical support that leaders need to fully utilize these resources.

4 Innovation

The state of Ohio should:

- Authorize and support ESCs' efforts to develop and implement innovative school and learning models such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) schools, dual-credit enrollment programs, culturally responsive teacher and learning strategies, and alternative teacher licensure initiatives – in collaboration with member districts and schools.
- Provide weighted funding (e.g., at the 0.1 level) for dual-enrollment programs as an incentive for districts to give their students an early taste of college courses, which enhances their aspirations to continue their formal learning beyond high school and helps them prepare for the rigor of college.

5 Dropout Prevention and Recovery

To support communities' dropout prevention and recovery efforts, the state of Ohio should direct one or more ESCs to:

- Work collaboratively with the state-level Family and Children First Council to help all districts and their community partners (1) develop the data and assessment systems needed for dropout-related early warning and rapid responsive systems; (2) develop strong connections

with community health and social service providers and families to address non-academic barriers to learning (especially health disparities and mental health needs) and (3) develop resources that schools and their partners can use to educate communities about the seriousness of dropout problems.

- Identify ways to redeploy and blend federal dollars (social security and child welfare, special education, funding for children on free and reduced lunch, TANF funds and relevant mental health, health and juvenile justice funding streams) to support school-family-community coordinators responsible for dropout prevention, early intervention and recovery.
- Develop “bridge” programs that allow incoming 9th-graders with weak literacy and mathematics skills to enroll in accelerated summer school programs.
- Streamline relevant data systems that districts can use to (1) facilitate tailored instruction for student success; and (2) track dropouts at all levels, but especially at critical junctures in the education pipeline (e.g., kindergarten and grades 5, 8 and 9), and to support the early identification of students and families who need special services, support and resources.
- Plan for the deployment of “second chance” programs for dropouts who cannot return to traditional high schools – pathways back into the education system that make substantial changes in the conditions of learning using both face-to-face direct instruction and online web-based curriculum, combine high school completion with readiness for postsecondary education, and offer relevant, high-quality learning opportunities through community colleges, adult career-technical centers and/or programs offered by one or more ESCs.

6 Community Engagement

To build district and school leaders’ skills for engaging communities and working collaboratively with families, community-based organizations, employers and other stakeholders, the state of Ohio should:

- Revise Ohio’s preservice preparation programs and embedded professional development for superintendents, principals, district staff and teacher leaders, ensuring that they include special training for expanded school improvement models that use new, community-based approaches to learning.
- Direct the state’s ESCs to provide professional development in this area.
- Designate a regional provider to serve as a clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of emerging research knowledge and best (and promising) practices related to school leaders’ community outreach and engagement efforts.

7 Accountability

To help ESCs develop and sustain high-quality services that expand learning opportunities and supports for the students, schools and districts they serve, the state of Ohio should:

- Develop an accountability system for ESCs that defines and measures the quality and efficiency of their academic programs and related services that support students’ educational achievement and development.
- Require that all ESCs, as a first step in this process, demonstrate the value and credibility of their programs and services through independent accreditation by the end of 2015.

Never have the stakes been so high for public schools and the children, families and communities they serve.

This “stubborn fact” is the basis for the ESC of Central Ohio’s leadership for learning agenda. It drives changes that ripple throughout district offices, schools, preschools and early learning centers, as well as the colleges and universities that are preparing tomorrow’s workforce. More than conventional tinkering, these changes entail and require bold action to create new century learning systems that will fuel economic revitalization and civic renewal.

Building on its strengths while responding to the needs of its communities and schools, the ESC of Central Ohio is developing and delivering innovative services, just as it is working collaboratively and proactively with P-12 schools, districts and other organizations serving infants, young children and their families.

The ESC of Central Ohio is a creator of solutions – a valuable resource as educators face the future.





educational service center *of Central Ohio*

Central Office

2080 Citygate Drive | Columbus, OH 43219
p: 614.445.3750 • f: 614.445.3767

Northern Office

4665 Columbus Pike | Delaware, OH 43015
p: 740.548.7880 • f: 740.548.4466

www.escofcentralohio.org

Governing Board

Greg Spencer, President

Ed Bischoff

Joyce Galbraith

Richard Helsel

Betty Klamforth

Teri Morgan

Robin Reid-Pleasnick

Bart Anderson, Superintendent

Alan Hutchinson, Treasurer

“Sharing support services is a much easier way to start, and the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio offers an excellent model. The center’s work in providing special-education teachers, professional development, purchasing and consulting on a variety of other services has proven itself. Through voluntary contracts with member school districts, the center’s annual operating budget has grown from \$5 million to \$85 million in recent years.

Member districts and their families have access to more sophisticated programs than they could afford on their own and at a lower cost.”

*The Columbus Dispatch Editorial
Sunday, February 1, 2010*