

Shared Service Models in Other States

The 2007 NJSBA-Rutgers Newark report, *Shared Services in School Districts: Policies, Practices and Recommendations*, identified strategies used by boards of education and municipalities to promote cost-efficient and effective services. Efforts include, but are not limited to: special education programs, teachers, instructional aides, child study teams, transportation, cooperative purchasing, banking, insurance, repair and maintenance, professional development and technology. Given current political and economic constraints, increased costs and the 2 percent tax levy cap, districts continue to look to other districts, municipalities and counties to share or regionalize services.

BOCES One regional shared-services model that has proven to be cost-effective and efficient is the New York Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). The mission of BOCES is—

- Preparing diverse populations for roles in the global economy.
- Providing cost-effective shared services to school districts.
- Initiating collaboration to close gaps in student achievement (www.boces.org).

BOCES services are created when two or more districts have similar needs that can be met by a shared program. State aid flows to the districts the year after they purchase shared services. The amount paid back to districts is based on a formula that takes into account each district's financial resources.

Pennsylvania Intermediate Units Another shared service model is the Intermediate Units of Pennsylvania. Like BOCES, these units offer an array of services to their participating school districts, vocational schools and charter schools. Shared services span professional development, special education and technology services, which includes online learning. This model provides districts with programs and services in a cost-effective manner. Of particular interest is the fact that intermediate units provide comprehensive programs within the school district. For example, the Bucks County Unit provides the educational program for all 3- to 5-year-olds in the county. It also provides Training and Consultative Staff (TaC), who work directly in districts to build capacity in a number of initiatives.

Pennsylvania Intermediate Services Units provide the following services:

Transition – Transition coordination involves working with school districts, individual schools, teams, families, and agencies to develop processes, programs, and opportunities leading to successful school and post-school experiences.

Assistive Technology – Services are provided through the BCIU assistive technology team, helping to assist educators, students and family members as they select, acquire, train and use assistive technology systems. The main areas of assistive technology covered by the team are augmentative communication, writing tools/computer access, adapted switches, environmental

controls, assistive listening equipment for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and access technology for individuals with visual impairments.

Behavior Management – To build effective positive behavior supports in schools, it is important to focus on the interactive relationships between student behavior and the context in which it occurs. This is accomplished through a comprehensive systems approach which considers school-wide, setting-specific, classroom-based, individual student environments and utilization of positive behavior techniques.

Interagency Coordination – Coordinators, based at intermediate units, work in collaboration with local school districts and County Child and Adolescent Services System (CASSP) coordinators to enhance access for families to inclusive and well-integrated services. The major emphasis is on using a collaborative, interagency approach to identify and coordinate appropriate community resources and services, resolve identified barriers to families' access to services, and engage community agencies to facilitate appropriate educational programming and placements.

Inclusive Practices/Least Restrictive Environment – Technical assistance and support is available to school districts with regard to state and federal regulations, standards, policies, and legal precedents affecting special education, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Pennsylvania Special Education Regulations, IEP development, Service Agreements under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment/Pennsylvania Alternative System of Assessment, Inclusive Practices, and Supplementary Services.

Response to Instruction and Intervention, Progress Monitoring, Reading, Math – Training and consultation are available to develop and implement a comprehensive multi-tiered system to enable early identification and implementation of scientifically based researched interventions for students at academic and behavioral risk. Technical assistance can be provided on universal screening. The major emphasis is on using a collaborative, interagency approach to identify and coordinate appropriate community resources and services, resolve identified barriers to families' access to services, and engage community agencies to facilitate appropriate educational programming and placement (correspondence with Daniel Vorhis, director of professional education, Bucks County Intermediate Services Unit).¹⁷

¹⁷ For further information about a Pennsylvania Intermediate Services Unit, go to www.bucksiu.org.