REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response
Rural
July 2019

Question:

What does the research say about implementation and best practices for regional or district collaboration for the delivery of educational services to students?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about regional or district collaboration for service provision in education. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on regionally provided education services. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Battelle for Kids. (2016). *Generating opportunity and prosperity: The promise of rural education collaboratives.* Columbus, OH: Author. Retrieved from https://www.battelleforkids.org/learning-hub/learning-hub-item/generating-opportunity-and-prosperity-the-promise-of-rural-education-collaboratives

From the website: "In 2015, Battelle for Kids partnered with Education Northwest to study 17 of the most promising rural education collaboratives across the country to learn how they are advancing equity, economic growth, and educational change for rural students

and communities. Our research and lessons learned are detailed in the white paper, Generating Opportunity and Prosperity: The Promise of Rural Education Collaboratives. In addition, we developed in-depth case studies of the following collaboratives:

- Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium
- Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement Network
- Ohio Appalachian Collaborative
- Vermont Rural Partnership

Each collaborative offers a unique characteristic that, together, provides real insight into what it takes to advance rural educational opportunity—being well grounded, designed, positioned, and timed. There is great promise in rural collaboratives to help elevate the voice of rural districts; uplift and empower isolated educators, administrators, and students; and use limited resources to tackle big issues and move rural education forward."

Fairman, J., & Seymour, M. (2018). *Study of a regional approach for delivering special education programs and services in Maine.* Orono, ME: Maine Education Policy Research Institute. Retrieved from https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/cepare/Study_of_a_Regional_Approach_for_Delivering_Special_Education_Programs_and_Services_in_Maine.pdf

From the executive summary: "At the request of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs of the Maine State Legislature, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) conducted a study of school districts' use of a regional approach for delivering special education services in Maine. A case study approach was used to examine two regional collaboratives in Maine—one located in western Maine that recently formed under the state's EMBRACE initiative for regionalization in education and another collaborative in central Maine that has been successfully operating for nearly 40 years. Some statewide data were also collected from the Maine Department of Education (MDOE). This study was one of several MEPRI workplan projects for the FY2018 year. This report presents findings from the study and describes some implications for state policy."

Holme, J., Diem, S., & Mansfield, K. (2011). Regional coalitions and educational policy: Lessons from the Nebraska Learning Community. In E. Frankenberg & E. Debray (Eds.), *Integrating schools in a changing society: New policies and legal options for a multiracial generation* (pp. 151–164). Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268213434_Regional_coalitions_and_educational_policy_Lessons_from_the_Nebraska_Learning_Community

From the abstract: "This chapter examines the development of a regional integration plan in Omaha, Nebraska. It begins by discussing why regional agreements are important in addressing stratification and segregation between districts in metropolitan areas. It then describes the central elements of the agreement and examines the process by which the agreement in Omaha unfolded. The chapter ends with an analysis of the current state of the agreement, an illustration of the fragility of metropolitan solutions, and a discussion of policy recommendations."

Morken, L., & Baran-Rees, R. (2012). *Joint use: School-community collaboration.* Ithaca, NY: Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University. Retrieved from http://s3.amazonaws.com/mildredwarner.org/attachments/000/000/195/original/face0a4b23b3392ad90169b580183411

> *From the overview:* "Communities are seeking new ways to help stretch lean budgets and meet changing resident needs. Joint use agreements allow cities and school districts to find practical and programmatic synergies by maximizing use of school buildings, athletic fields, parks, libraries, and other often under-utilized community assets. Facility and program sharing enhance service effectiveness in meeting the needs of children and the broader community."

Schuman, J., Enerson, L., & Theall, S. (2010). Educational service agencies in Massachusetts: Building capacity in small school districts. *Perspectives*, *16*, 36–46. Retrieved from http://aesa.cms4schools.net/cms_files/resources/perspectives_2010.pdf#page=47

> *From the preface:* "The following (edited) white paper was written in 2009 by the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives in response to heightening interest on the part of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Secretary of Education to regionalize and/or consolidate smaller school districts (those with less than 5,000 students enrolled) for efficiency and effectiveness of operation. As nearly 60% of the Commonwealths' 329 public school districts enroll less than 2,500 students and 50% enroll less than 1,000, the issue elicited a great deal of debate and discussion among the state agencies and district leaders, who argued for a more studied and individualized plan for increasing efficiency and building capacity within each district while maintaining local control as much as possible. The paper presents a model for maximizing the utilization of collaboratives throughout the five geographical regions of the state as an alternative to regionalization and consolidation. Immediately following the paper is a report on the impact of the model on state policy and on the reorganization of Educational Collaboratives. The model is currently being piloted in the Southeastern region of Massachusetts by 10 member collaboratives."

Additional Organizations to Consult

Battelle for Kids, Networks: http://www.battelleforkids.org/networks

> *From the website:* "For more than 18 years, Battelle for Kids has convened district-level collaboratives of forward-thinking school systems as models for connecting and innovating to improve educational outcomes for all learners. This approach to accelerating change through a coalition of the willing has proven to be both impactful and enduring. Today, we are building on this legacy, organizing networks of districts taking collective action to realize the power and promise of 21st century learning for every student."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (district OR LEA) AND (region*) AND (coalition* OR network* OR shar* OR collab* OR coop*)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover information available within the last 10 years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on July 23, 2019. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.