

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

Program Review and Investigation Committee
Staff Findings and Recommendations: December 16, 2015

Presentation Outline

- ▶ Prevalence of regional cooperation
- ▶ Factors influencing formation of cooperative efforts
- ▶ Discussion and examples of instructional cooperative efforts
- ▶ Discussion and examples of operational cooperative efforts
- ▶ Findings related to other types of educational cooperation

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Cooperative Efforts Defined

What was included under definition of “cooperative efforts”?

- ▶ Voluntary collaborations
 - ▶ School district – school district
 - ▶ School district – regional educational service center (RESA)
 - ▶ School district – other entity

- ▶ In writing or informal
 - ▶ Contractual or in-kind

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Cooperative Efforts Defined, continued

What was excluded under definition of “cooperative efforts”?

- ▶ School district – municipality
- ▶ School district – private provider or consultant
- ▶ School district – parochial/private school
- ▶ Use of state bids
- ▶ Magnet/other school choice program participation

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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How was prevalence determined?

- ▶ We asked school district superintendents
- ▶ We asked RESCs
- ▶ We asked other organizations/state agencies
 - ▶ CSDE
 - ▶ CASBO
 - ▶ CAS/CIAC
 - ▶ CRCOG

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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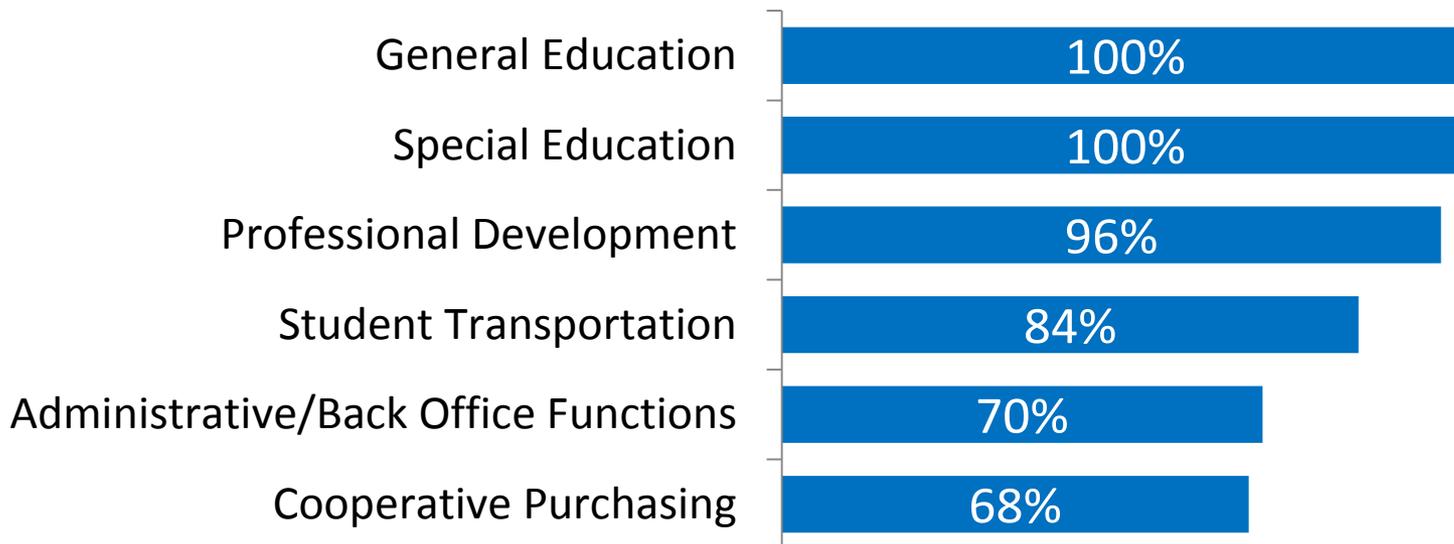
We asked about prevalence in 6 categories:

- ▶ Instructional Categories
 - ▶ Special Education
 - ▶ General Education
 - ▶ Professional Development
- ▶ Operational Categories
 - ▶ Student Transportation
 - ▶ Administrative and Back Office Functions
 - ▶ Cooperative Purchasing
- ▶ Any cooperative effort within nearly 90 specific category areas?

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Overall Prevalence

- ▶ Almost all school districts participate in at least one cooperative effort in general education, special education, and professional development categories
- ▶ At least 2/3s participate in at least one cooperative effort in student transportation, admin/back office functions, and cooperative purchasing



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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The Most Frequent Areas

- ▶ Within **General Education**:
 - ▶ Adult education (93%)
 - ▶ Interdistrict cooperative grants (91%)
- ▶ Within **Special Education**:
 - ▶ Separate classrooms or programs (98%)
- ▶ Within **Professional Development**:
 - ▶ Training for teachers, professional staff (93%)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Preferred Choice of Partner: District-District

Areas where school districts more likely to partner with other school districts:

- ▶ Adult education
- ▶ Shared athletics
- ▶ Summer school
- ▶ Programs for suspended/expelled students
- ▶ Student transportation, especially for special education

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Preferred Choice of Partner: District-RESC

Areas where districts more likely to partner with a RESC:

- ▶ Separate special education classrooms or programs
- ▶ Clinical and extended day treatment programs
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ Special education summer school
- ▶ Services for deaf or hearing impaired students

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Preferred Choice of Partner: District-Municipality

School districts more likely to partner with municipality for **cooperative purchasing**

- ▶ Heating oil/gas (64%)
- ▶ Other utilities (52%)
- ▶ Health insurance (55%)
- ▶ Premises liability insurance (64%)
- ▶ Other insurance (59%)
- ▶ Waste management (52%)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Preferred Choice of Partner: District-Municipality

School districts more likely to partner with municipality for **administrative and back office functions**

- ▶ Facilities and grounds (96%)
- ▶ Financial services (75%)
- ▶ Human resources (64%)
- ▶ Information technology (57%)
- ▶ Shared administrative staff (45%)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Prevalence Related to District Characteristics

▶ **School district size**

- ▶ Smaller (< 2,000 students)
- ▶ Medium (2,000-7,999 students)
- ▶ Larger (8,000+ students)

▶ **Geographic location**

- ▶ Six RESC regions

▶ **Economic measures**

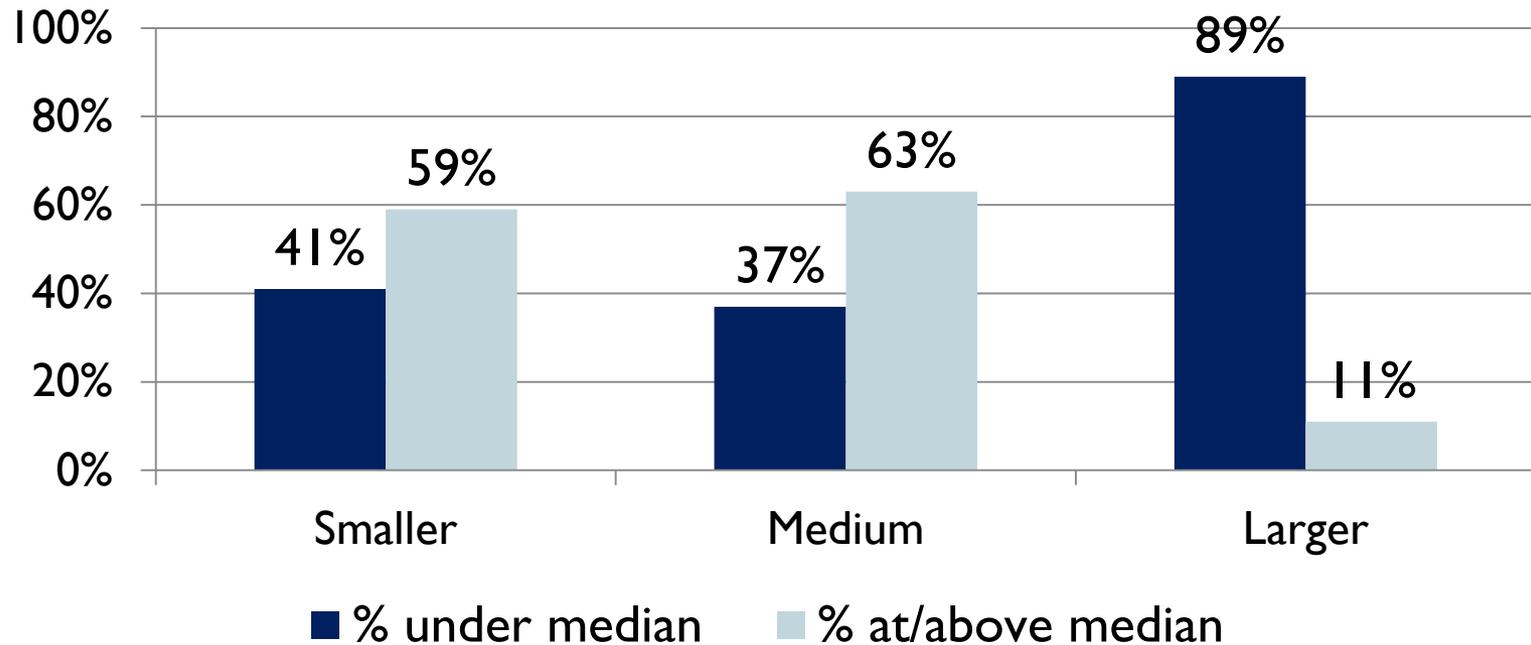
- ▶ District Resource Group (DRG)
- ▶ Adjusted Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita (AENGLC)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Prevalence Related to District Size

Smaller school districts cooperate in relatively more areas than larger school districts

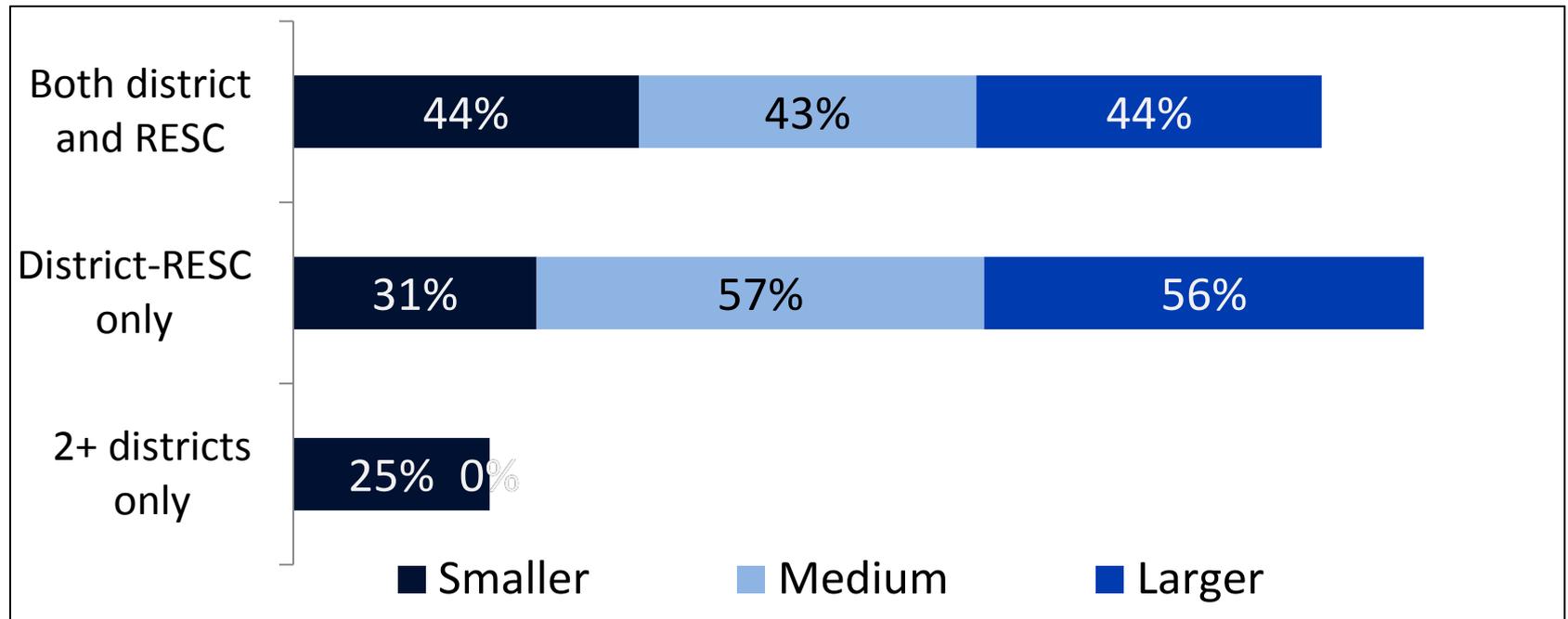
➔ But there are many cooperative efforts occurring in middle sized school districts



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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District Size and Partner in Special Education

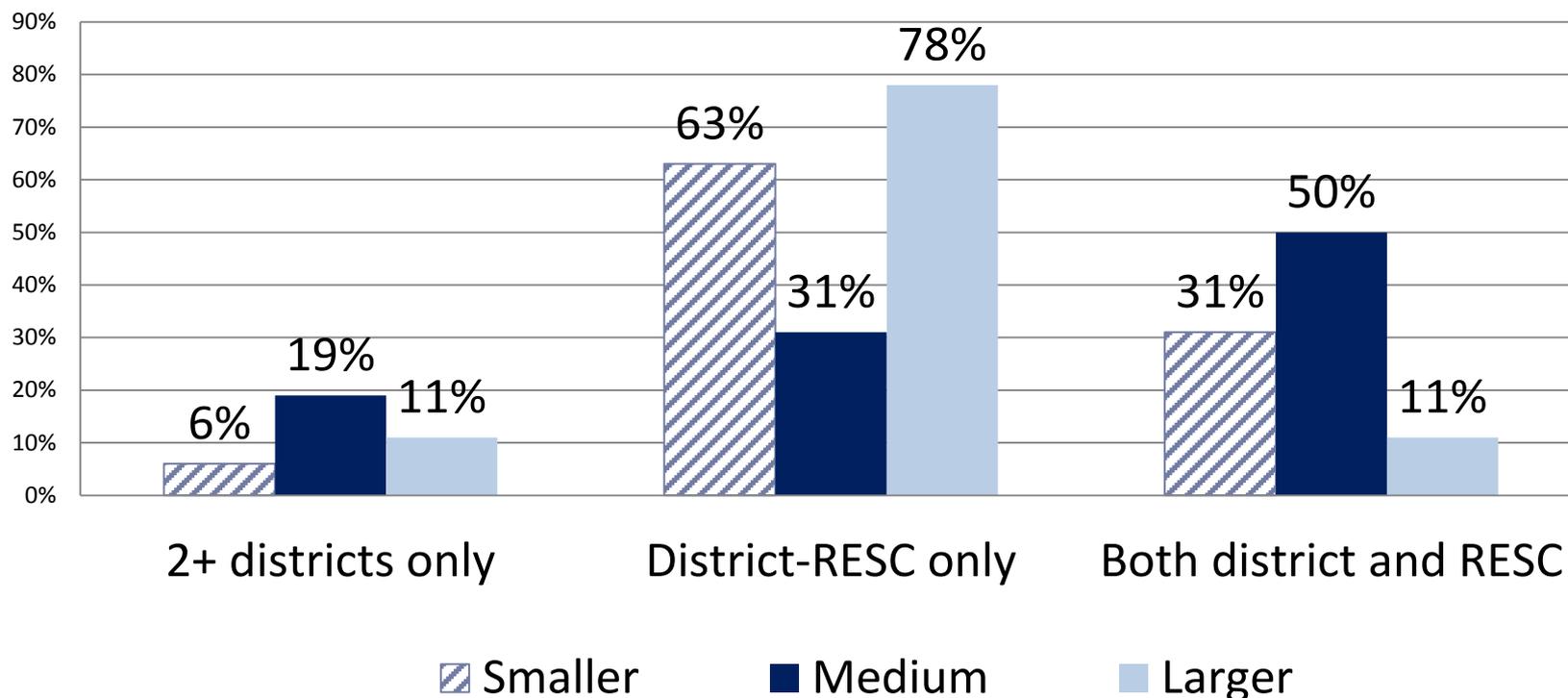
Smaller districts somewhat more likely to turn to other districts for some special education cooperative areas



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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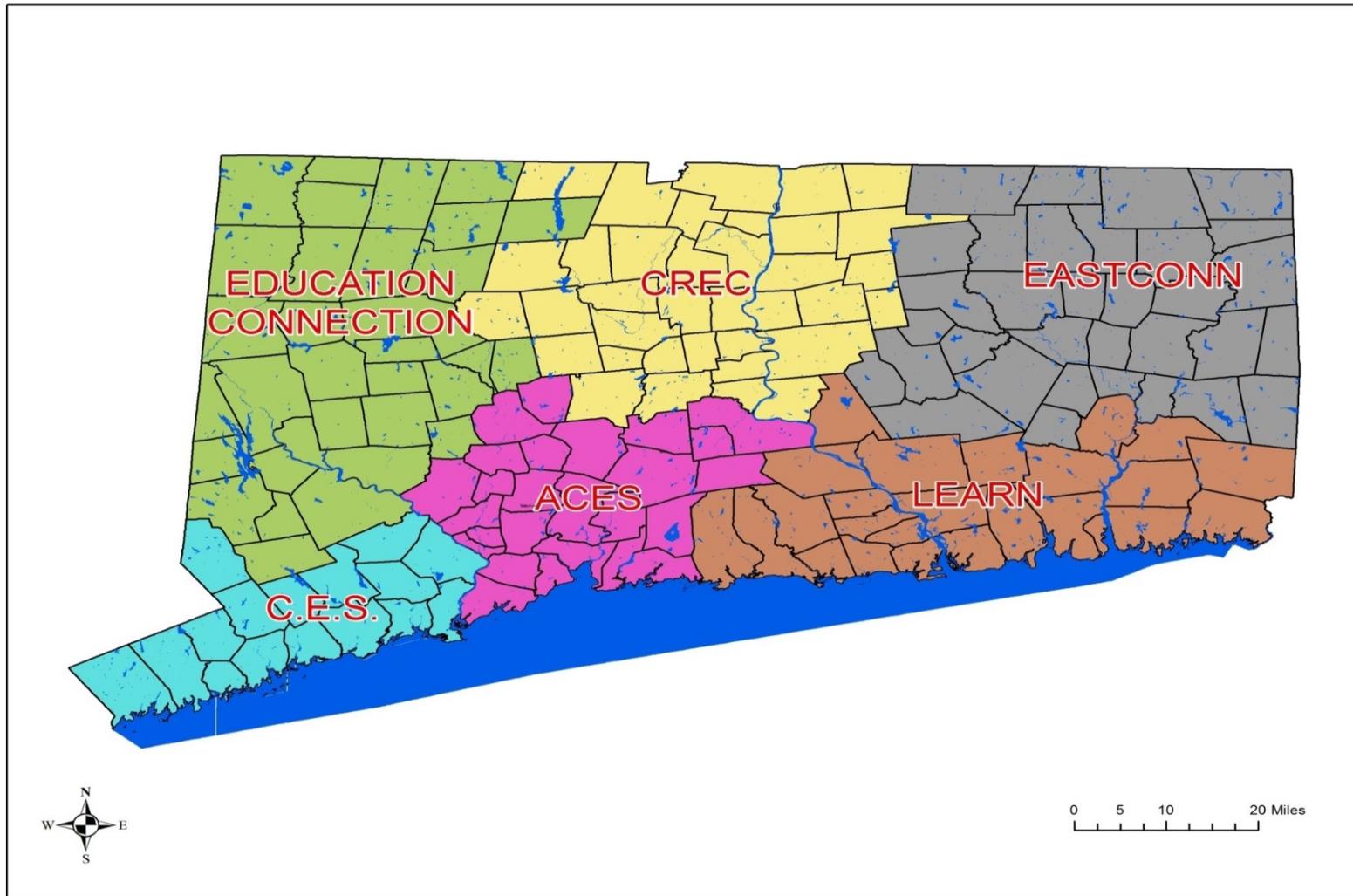
District Size and Partner in General Education and Professional Development

But when it comes to training for professional staff, smaller districts more likely to turn to a RESC



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Prevalence Related to Geographic Location



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Geographic Location and Partner in Special Ed

RESCs play a larger role in certain special education areas, depending on the geographic location

- ▶ 2/3 of districts in ACES region partner with a RESC for physical, occupational, and behavioral (BCBA) therapy
- ▶ Over 80% of districts in the C.E.S. and CREC regions partner with a RESC for summer/extended school year programs
- ▶ All districts in ACES, and at least half in C.E.S. and CREC partner with a RESC for assistive technology

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Prevalence Related to Economic Measures

- ▶ Less affluent districts have collaborations in more special education areas
- ▶ Mid-level districts are more likely to have collaborations in general transportation and special education transportation
- ▶ More affluent districts are less likely to form collaborations in some special education areas:
 - ▶ Physical therapy
 - ▶ Occupational therapy
 - ▶ Psychological services
- ▶ Districts with the highest property values had no collaboratives for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological services

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factors Influencing Formation of Cooperative Efforts

- ▶ Superintendents asked:
 - ▶ “What factors go into deciding whether to form a regional cooperative effort?”
- ▶ 8 Factors Identified
 - ▶ Advantages
 - ▶ Barriers/disadvantages

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #1: Contain costs or save money?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Frees up \$ to be reallocated to another area of school budget
- ▶ Can make budgeting for special education more predictable

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Initial start-up costs for collaborative unavailable
- ▶ Some cooperative efforts do not save \$

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #2: Creates efficiencies or improves quality of services?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Saves districts time to recruit, hire, train, and supervise staff
- ▶ Avoids duplication of services

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ May not improve quality of services
- ▶ May not create efficiencies

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #3: Satisfies a need of the district?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Districts don't have to develop their own programs or services
- ▶ Districts gain access to training by national leaders

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Effort doesn't satisfy a need of district
- ▶ Effort is less flexible and convenient

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #4: Benefits all collaborating parties?

- ▶ Advantages
 - ▶ Creates a win-win situation
 - ▶ Brings communities together
- ▶ Barriers/disadvantages
 - ▶ Unequal benefit for all partners

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #5: Benefits/positively impacts students?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Makes available a beneficial program or service
- ▶ Can provide needed program or service closer to home

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Does not positively impact students despite saving \$

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #6: Logistics can be worked out?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Partnership can move forward
- ▶ Empty space can be used for shared programs/services

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Geographic proximity challenges too difficult to overcome
- ▶ Different school start times and periods prevent districts from sharing potentially beneficial opportunities

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #7: Needs of local control/ politics are met?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Boards of education and town council support make it more likely proposed cooperative efforts will go forward
- ▶ Positive relationships between potential partners are foundation for cooperative efforts

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Strong preference for home rule and control
- ▶ Positive relationships not formed between potential partners

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Factor #8: School district has knowledge of opportunity?

▶ Advantages

- ▶ Awareness of opportunity to join a cooperative effort is a prerequisite to partnering
- ▶ Understanding option to develop a cooperative effort a prerequisite to partnering

▶ Barriers/disadvantages

- ▶ Lack of awareness of opportunities
- ▶ Lack of awareness of advantages of cooperative efforts

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Discussion and Examples of Instructional Cooperative Efforts

- ▶ **Special Education** (Recommendations 1, 2)
- ▶ **General Education**
- ▶ **Professional Development** (Recommendation 3)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Special Education Example: Farmington Valley Diagnostic Center

- ▶ Population served: Students having difficulties remaining in local school, or transitioning between settings
- ▶ Program description: Combines academic programming, intensive therapeutic interventions, and evaluations
- ▶ Partners: School districts of Avon, Canton, East Granby, Farmington, Granby, Plainville, Simsbury, Southington, RSD 10

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Special Education Example: Farmington Valley Diagnostic Center

How it works:

- ▶ CREC staffs FVDC and proposes/negotiates annual budget
- ▶ School districts purchase .25-4 memberships annually
 - ▶ Pay for memberships whether used or not

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Special Education Example: Farmington Valley Diagnostic Center

Advantages of model:

- ▶ Predictability of certain portion of district special education budget
- ▶ Oversight and control through partner districts
- ▶ Flexibility in being able to see unused portions of membership
- ▶ Shared goal of returning students to their home schools
- ▶ Cost savings (~\$100,000 per student/year vs. \$38,500 for FY 15)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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General Education Example: Cooperative Sports Teams

- ▶ Population served: Students from 2+ school districts participating on a shared sports team
- ▶ CAS/CIAC: Establishes cooperative teams for a particular sport such as football or ice hockey
 - ▶ formal application and approval process
 - ▶ maximum numbers of students per sports team; prohibits team cuts

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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General Education Example: Cooperative Sports Teams

Advantages of cooperative sports teams:

- ▶ Districts can share the sports team-related expenses
 - ▶ Ice hockey rink rental costs
 - ▶ Costs to line a football or soccer field
 - ▶ Fees for officials
- ▶ Students are able to participate in a sport that a school district could not otherwise provide (due to expense or lack of student interest)
- ▶ Brings students and parents together from multiple municipalities

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Professional Development Example: Training by Nationally Recognized Speakers

- ▶ A district had an interest in bringing in nationally recognized speakers for a two-day workshop
 - ▶ Dr. Rick DuFour and Becky DuFour titled, “Professional Learning Communities”
- ▶ The fee charged by the presenters was \$12,000, a prohibitively expensive cost for the district to absorb
- ▶ Partnered with their RESC, EDUCATION CONNECTION, to share the workshop with more districts and reduce per attendee costs

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Professional Development Example: Training by Nationally Recognized Speakers

▶ Advantages

- ▶ By sharing training with other districts, the cost to the initiating district was cut in half to \$6,000 for 63 educators to attend (@ \$95.24 per person)
- ▶ Provided training opportunity to 19 other districts, who sent a total of 77 educators to fill remaining open seats (@ \$269 per person)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Three Recommendations Related to Instructional Cooperative Efforts

Related Recommendations

I. Have CSDE publicize the benefits of the special education program membership model as a way to promote replication of these models in Connecticut

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Related Recommendations

2. Legislature should consider either establishing a new grant or loan program to provide (seed) money for start-up costs for new cooperative efforts among local boards of education, or resume funding of the Technical Assistance for Regional Cooperation grants (C.G.S. Sec. 10-262t) to support plans that implement cost-saving strategies.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Related Recommendations

3. In coordination with SERC, the RESC Alliance should develop and publicize a comprehensive list of training opportunities for school personnel. The opportunities would include both special education and general education topics sponsored or planned by school districts, RESCs, SERC, and other entities, that are open to other school districts.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts

- ▶ **Student transportation** (Recommendation 4)
- ▶ **Administrative and back office functions**
(Recommendations 5, 6)
- ▶ **Cooperative Purchasing**

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Transportation

▶ Finding:

Many districts are currently cooperating with other districts in order to transport students to out-of-district destinations and realize cost savings as a result.

▶ Ride Sharing:

- ▶ Both general and special education students
- ▶ 84% of surveyed districts (71% for special education)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Transportation

- ▶ **Relevant Factors:**
 - ▶ #1 – Contains costs or saves money
 - Amounts may be modest, but cost savings documentable
 - ▶ #3 – Satisfies a need of the school district
 - Almost all districts have some need for out-of-district transport
 - ▶ #6 – Logistics can be worked out
 - ▶ #8 – School district has knowledge of opportunity

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Transportation

EASTCONN Small District Collaborative Opportunities
Where Learning Comes to Life

Topics



Shared Staffing

4 new opportunities
2 responses



SPED Transportation

2 new opportunities
3 responses

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COLUMBIA Public Schools is seeking a part-time teacher for an after-school program beginning in February, 2017. [Click for details.](#)

EASTFORD Public Schools is seeking transportation for two students from Windham to Hampton. [Click for details](#)

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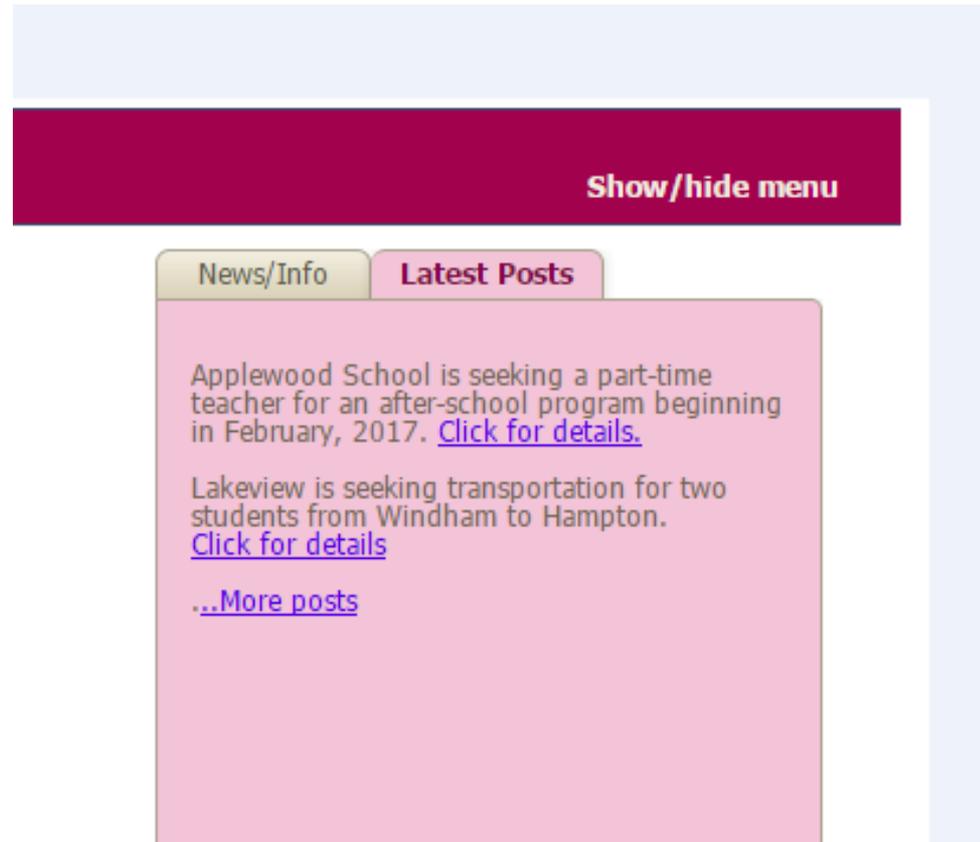
Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Transportation

The screenshot shows a web interface for EASTCONN. At the top left is the EASTCONN logo with the tagline "Where Learning Comes to Life". To the right of the logo is the text "Small District Collaborative Opportunities". Below this, the user is identified as "Eastford Public Schools". A message states: "You have responses from 6 possible partners. There are 4 new opportunities since your last login." A list of menu items follows: "View Topics" (with subtext "Select from current topics"), "Add a new opportunity" (with subtext "Create a new opportunity within an existing"), "Manage my opportunities" (with subtext "Edit or delete existing"), "Manage my preferences" (with subtext "Change options to suit your needs"), and "Help and F.A.Q.". A "Sign out" button is located in the bottom right corner of the interface.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Transportation



Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Related Recommendation

4. Each RESC should look for structured ways to facilitate communication between districts about opportunities to share rides to out-of-district destinations.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Administrative and Back Office

- ▶ **Administrative and Back Office Functions**
 - ▶ Food Services – Recommendation #5
 - ▶ Information Technology – Recommendation #6
 - ▶ Business Office and Human Resources
 - ▶ Facilities Management
 - ▶ Security
- ▶ In many of these categories there is cooperation, but the majority of such cooperation is with municipalities.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Food Services

▶ Finding:

A relatively small number of districts are providing food services cooperatively, but those that do find the arrangements beneficial.

▶ Examples

- ▶ Shared Food Service Directors
- ▶ Food Service Oversight From RESC
- ▶ One District Operating Another's Food Service Program

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Food Services

▶ Relevant Factors:

- ▶ #2 – Creates efficiencies or improves quality of services
- ▶ #4 – Benefits all collaborating parties (including #5: students)
- ▶ #6 – Logistics can be worked out
 - Recordkeeping and reporting requirements for NSLP
- ▶ #8 – School district has knowledge of opportunity
 - Some districts reported not knowing it would be possible for a single program to operate in multiple districts.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Related Recommendation

5. CSDE devote available resources to disseminating information to school districts about the possibility of realizing efficiencies through either sharing food service directors or sharing food service operations. Such dissemination efforts could potentially be supported by CASBO, CAPSS, and the six RESCs.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Information Technology

▶ Finding:

Although there are several RESC-based opportunities for districts to cooperatively participate in software licensing and/or hosting arrangements, there is no centralized listing of what opportunities exist statewide and which districts are able to participate in each.

▶ Examples:

- ▶ Student Information Systems (SIS) – PowerSchool
- ▶ Messaging software – SchoolMessenger
- ▶ Learning Management – BlackBoard, Schoology
- ▶ Educational Software – Virtual High School, Odysseyware

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Operational Cooperative Efforts: Information Technology

▶ Relevant Factors:

- ▶ #1 – Contains costs or saves money
 - Pricing inversely proportional to number of students
- ▶ #3 – Satisfies a need of the school district
 - Almost all districts use one or more of the listed types
- ▶ #4 – Benefits all collaborating parties
 - Not all districts agree on best package
- ▶ #8 – School district has knowledge of opportunity

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Related Recommendation

6. RESC Alliance develop a centralized listing of all available opportunities for districts to obtain reduced rates for software licensing or hosting and that each RESC include links to this list on their website.

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Other Types of Educational Cooperation

▶ Finding:

Formation of a regional school district is only one way for municipalities and/or school districts to combine resources and realize efficiencies of scale in educating students from multiple towns.

▶ Other Options:

- ▶ Regional school districts
- ▶ Designated high schools
- ▶ Agri-science centers

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Regional School Districts

- ▶ Two or more municipalities follow process to form a single BOE to oversee education of some or all students from each town.
- ▶ Currently 17 regional school districts in Connecticut
- ▶ Recent attempts at change not successful
 - ▶ Adding grade levels (Region #4)
 - ▶ Create new district (Norfolk and Colebrook)
 - ▶ Dissolution (Region #11)

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Regional School Districts

▶ Relevant Factors:

- ▶ #1 – Saves money/contains costs
 - Potential cost savings not a given
- ▶ #2 – Creates efficiencies and improves quality of service
- ▶ #7 – Needs of local control/politics/relationships are met
 - Community concern about losing school building
 - Proportional representation requirements
 - Potentially irreversible decision

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Designated High Schools

- ▶ Every board of education must provide education for students through grade 12 – C.G.S. §10-33
- ▶ If no high school maintained, must tuition students to another high school – C.G.S. §10-33
- ▶ Agreement can be terminated by either party as specified in statute – C.G.S. §10-35

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Designated High Schools

▶ Relevant Factors:

▶ #3 – Satisfies a need of school district

- Sending district legal obligation

▶ #4 – Benefits all collaborating parties

- Increased number of students/tuition may allow expanded offerings

▶ #7 – Needs of local control/politics/relationships are met

- Ability to terminate/alter sending and receiving status
- Receiving district maintains full authority over curriculum and policies

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Agri-Science Centers

- ▶ Programs to provide opportunity for students to receive an agricultural science and technology education
- ▶ Vocational agriculture programs date back to the 1920s
- ▶ Requirements that each school district either host one or form relationship with district that does dates to 1950s
- ▶ Vo-ag became agri-science to reflect breadth of possibilities and depth of STEM skills needed

Prevalence	Factors	Instructional	Operational	Other Types
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Agri-Science Centers

▶ Relevant Factors:

▶ #5 – Positive impacts for students

- Opportunity for agriculture sciences education
- 5-year post graduation outcomes

▶ #6 – Logistics can be worked out

- Largely worked out via statute

▶ #8 – Knowledge of opportunity

- Not so much an issue at district level but at individual student level

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Questions?

Regional Cooperation Between Local Boards of Education

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