

Fostering Relationships with Your Educational Collaborative(s)

1. Overview

Massachusetts Educational Collaboratives bring school districts together to form partnerships that maximize efficiency by sharing expertise and costs. They benefit students, families, educators and taxpayers. Collaboratives serve as regional educational resources, playing a leadership role in developing a broad range of innovative programming to meet emerging needs. These partnerships provide Professional Development, enable the sharing of exemplary educational practices, and serve and educate many of our most vulnerable students across the Commonwealth.

Collaboratives are an extension of the school districts, they work together with districts to provide high quality programs and services in a cost effective way. The collective strength of the superintendents working with the Executive Director has an important role in moving the work of the member districts and the Collaborative forward.

2. Students with Specialized Needs

As a member of a collaborative, superintendents partner with the collaborative to support the students with highest needs in their schools and district. Collaboratives provide programs for students with a variety of needs: social/emotional, autism, severe multiple disabilities, deaf, blind, deaf-blind and others. These highly specialized programs are developed with input from districts to be high quality and cost effective, designed to be the first place for member districts to look for services.

In order to meet the needs of all students, superintendents are encouraged to be sure that their Special Education leaders and out-of-district coordinators understand the range of specialized student programs their collaborative/s offer so that they are able to confidently refer families based on the needs of the students and the attributes of the program in addition to the cost savings they offer.

Over the years, more and more districts are providing programs in-district to address an increasingly broad range of students. Often, collaboratives work with the district to develop these programs and to support transitioning students back to the district.

As a result, the students in collaboratives are now presenting with increasingly complex needs. Collaboratives can provide less restrictive options to meet these student needs, and should be considered the preferred provider as an extension of your district.

3. Space

Superintendents are advised to consider how to make space available for collaborative programs. Some of your most vulnerable students are being educated in collaborative classrooms and deserve equitable learning spaces. MSBA points could be available.

4. Innovation

Many collaboratives provide expanded offerings and provide opportunities for professional networking. Collaboratives serve as places to solve regional complex "problems of practice" and superintendents are encouraged to use their collaboratives in that way to expand their leadership capacity, and solve the problems together as a region. Superintendents are encouraged to turn to their collaborative when they need something for their district that they are struggling to provide on their own; collaboratives are facile organizations that continue to change to meet the needs of districts by working together. As partners, services can be negotiated, customized and contracted directly and responsively.

Often they are able to pursue regional or specialized opportunities for programs and funding. Examples of these opportunities range from recovery high schools, to virtual learning, to working with districts around equity, to supporting districts and families to meet the needs of their students with mental health concerns.

5. Professional Development

Most collaboratives provide Professional Development to expand district capacity such as required restraint training, Sheltered English Immersion, Social Emotional Learning, and others matched to the needs of districts. These offerings emerge as a result of collaboration between district and collaborative leaders. Superintendents are encouraged to communicate needs with their collaboratives to find multi-district solutions to local initiatives or issues.

6. Board Oversight Responsibilities

Superintendents that are board members have a fiduciary responsibility with their collaboratives to which they must attend. There are legal responsibilities, liabilities, and implications of a collaborative board including monitoring of the collaborative budget. It is important to understand how financially healthy your collaborative is.