EVALUATION OF COLORADO'S BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES SYSTEM—BACKGROUND, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

April 2004

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An evaluation of Colorado's Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) system was conducted from November 2003 to March 2004 by The Adams Group, in collaboration with Schoolhouse Communications. The study is sponsored by the Donnell-Kay Foundation and the Colorado BOCES Association. The goal of the study is to find out how the BOCES service delivery system can better serve school districts across Colorado. We examined BOCES' functions and their current system and structure to identify what is working well and not working well, and what new services districts and schools need.

The study included a review of reports and laws regarding cooperative services in Colorado and other states; interviews with state and national education experts and stakeholders across the state; focus groups involving elected officials, local school board members, school administrators and BOCES leaders; surveys of local school board members, principals, superintendents and teachers; and input and guidance from the Cooperative Educational Services Advisory Council (CESAC), which is composed of legislators and education leaders. (See Appendix A for a more detailed description of the project.)

The report, *Evaluation of Colorado's Boards of Cooperative Educational Services System—Background, Findings, and Recommendations*, provides key findings and recommendations designed to strengthen Colorado's BOCES system.

The research shows that customers and policymakers value the work of BOCES because BOCES are locally controlled, customer-driven, entrepreneurial, save money, and are effective conveners and networkers. A majority of survey respondents also indicated that they are "somewhat" or "very satisfied" with the services provided by their BOCES.

However, a number of concerns and opportunities for improvement were also identified. Significantly, in reviewing the BOCES system, it was clear that the current laws and practices do not constitute a "system." In part, this results from the fact that the functions of a BOCES are determined by local school districts (or participating institutions of higher education) and can provide an unlimited variety of services. For example, one BOCES executive director runs a charter school; another administers an insurance program; still others provide professional development, special education programs, and a variety of services to meet state and federal requirements. Although the diversity of locally-driven services is generally viewed as a positive attribute of Colorado's current structure, it negatively impacts the ability of BOCES leaders to have a shared vision and communicate effectively about the value they add to Colorado's educational system.

The study identified numerous opportunities for improving BOCES' effectiveness. Critical opportunities and needs exist regarding funding, collaboration, needs assessments, communications, leadership, technology, areas of excellence within individual BOCES, accountability, and the role of and funding for the Colorado BOCES Association (CBA). Some major recommendations include:

Improved Collaboration

- BOCES leaders should work with the State Board of Education (SBE), the Commissioner of Education, and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to develop a formal, collaborative relationship that recognizes their unique, complementary roles and addresses issues, such as ongoing communications and funding.

- BOCES and CBA should maintain a strong partnership with appropriate state and national organizations including Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), CDE, Colorado Education Association (CEA), Association of Education Service Agencies (AESA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and Colorado Community College System (CCCS) to provide quality educational services for all children.

Funding

- The SBE should define BOCES as Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of leveraging federal funds on behalf of member districts in order to increase student achievement.

- The SBE, CDE, and BOCES should work together to develop a long-range plan for providing funding for appropriate, high-quality BOCES services to accomplish such goals as closing the achievement gap and addressing geographic isolation.

- The Legislature and the CDE should offer financial incentives for districts to provide services cooperatively through BOCES and for BOCES to work together.

- The SBE should utilize BOCES in a leadership role for the regional delivery of services and technical assistance to schools and districts across Colorado.

- Individual BOCES should review their current funding formula(s) for member districts and services, reaffirm or revise as needed, and share their analysis with other BOCES.

Conduct Needs Assessments and Planning

- In order to provide new and cost-effective services, BOCES should formalize their needs assessment process with the member districts and the CBA.

Improved Communications

- Both the CBA and individual BOCES should immediately develop a comprehensive communications plan educating core constituencies about the services they provide and the cost-effective ways they add value to the work of school districts and improve student achievement.

Strengthening BOCES Leadership

- The CBA, in partnership with BOCES boards, superintendents, and other professional organizations, should take a leadership role in recruiting and retaining effective BOCES leaders, and providing assistance in the recruiting process.

- The CBA should develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen BOCES leadership by further enhancing the leaders' skills and knowledge of educational trends and research.

Capitalize on Areas of Expertise within BOCES

- BOCES, in collaboration with the CBA, should capitalize on areas of expertise regarding services provided by a BOCES and share those services with other BOCES.

Role and Funding for Colorado BOCES Association

- The CBA should annually assess the priority needs of BOCES, provide technical assistance and other services addressing those needs, continue its networking functions, and increase its advocacy and visibility.

- Funding for the CBA must be commensurate with the broader role and services it needs to provide to ensure BOCES and its leaders are effective.

Related Areas Impacting BOCES

- The CDE, in partnership with the CBA, should evaluate the efficiency of special education administrative units.

I. OVERVIEW OF COLORADO BOCES

Historical Perspective

The Colorado state legislature first authorized formation of regional educational service units called "Boards of Cooperative Educational Services or BOCES" with passage of the Boards of Cooperative Services Act of 1965 (22-5-101 et seq). Two or more local school districts, or local district and postsecondary institutions, may form a BOCES[1] for a very broad range of purposes – "to provide supporting, instructional, administrative, facility, community, or any other services contracted by participating members."

According to the Colorado BOCES Association (CBA), the school board presidents of the 14 districts of the San Luis Valley met and established the first BOCES in Colorado on May 23, 1966.

Although BOCES provide a wide variety of services, the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA), enacted by the state legislature in 1973, made special education an area of focus for BOCES. The legislature required that "by September 1, 1973, every school district in the state shall be either an administrative unit in itself or in a board of cooperative services which shall be designated as an administrative unit. An administrative unit shall be a school district or board of cooperative services which meets criteria established by the state board governing the duties and responsibilities of the director of special education and is either a board of cooperative services which conducts special educational programs for all school districts which are members of the board of cooperative services or is a school district which meets criteria of geographic size, location, and number of pupils established by the state board to achieve maximum efficiency in administering programs of special education." (22-20-106, C.R.S.) School districts or BOCES that do not meet the minimum requirements may contract with a BOCES that is an administrative unit.

The Colorado State Board of Education determined that any special education administrative unit must have at least 4,000 students enrolled or at least 400 children with disabilities. (Districts or BOCES may apply for a waiver from that requirement.) (2220-R-3.01(1), CCR)

BOCES that are special education administrative units receive state ECEA funds directly. According to the executive director of the CBA, because special education services are state and federal mandates, state government was expected to pay for 80 percent of the eligible reimbursement special education expenses, and the federal government would provide 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure times the number of special education students.

The state legislature has authorized BOCES to receive certain state funds from the state board only if they serve school districts with a combined total enrollment of not less than

[1] Note: Some regional educational service units use the acronym "BOCS" rather than BOCES".

4,000 students, and either serve school districts in two or more counties or serve multiple school districts located in the same county. (22-5-114, C.R.S.)
BOCES each received a $10,000 annual state General Fund appropriation until 2003 to be used for professional development.

Beginning in 1996, BOCES were eligible to receive other state funds available for regional educational planning, by submitting a plan to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) regarding how to improve efficiency in providing services, especially in the areas of staff development, communications, use of grant funds, data processing, non-instructional support services, and at-risk student programs. The legislation authorized funding, but neither the legislature nor the Colorado State Board of Education has ever appropriated funds to implement the legislation.

The Regional Centers Grant Program was launched by the CDE in 1999, based upon recommendations developed by the CBA to address improvement in the quality of instruction through enhanced staff development. The program provided professional development and technical assistance to schools and districts in eight regions across the state, and was made up of a consortium of districts, BOCES, higher education institutions, and other partners who agreed to collaborate to deliver services. The competitive grant program, which totaled $3.9 million, tapped federal and state funds from programs, such as Goals 2000, Special Education, Title One, State Gifted and Talented, and other sources. An evaluation of the program conducted by The Clayton Foundation in 2000 noted improved quality, access, and collaboration. Despite that assessment, funding was not continued.

In 2002, the legislature passed legislation approving the designation of 1 percent of the amount of money available annually in five state categorical grant programs for BOCES to assist districts with less than 4,000 students apply for grants supporting instruction. Since then, the legislature discontinued four of the grant programs, leaving only Read-to-Achieve dollars available for such purpose. (22-2-122, C.R.S.)

Current BOCES System

Current Number and Purpose:
As of February 2004, there were 21 BOCES in Colorado and creation of a 22nd BOCES in process. (A map of Colorado BOCES is attached as Appendix H.) Several districts that have been members of another BOCES are forming the new BOCES. Also, the former West Central BOCES with six members disbanded in 2002.

Most of the BOCES in Colorado are general purpose in nature and provide a broad range of services and programs. Special purpose BOCES provide limited programs or a single service.

According to the CBA, 13 of the 21 BOCES are general purpose agencies that provide multiple services to their members or districts with whom they contract; eight are single purpose agencies. Fifteen BOCES are designated as special education administrative

units. (In some cases, a BOCES acts as the special education administrative unit for only some of its member districts.) Of the current 21 BOCES:

- 13 are general, multi-purpose;
- three provide only special education services;
- two provide only vocational education services;
- one provides only self-insurance;
- one only operates a charter school; and
- one provides only staff development services.

The new BOCES will be a general, multi-purpose agency and will be designated as a special education administrative unit.

Approximately 160 of the178 school districts are members of a BOCES, and several of the non-member districts contract with a BOCES for services. Some districts are members of multiple BOCES. BOCES membership varies from a single district and one higher education institution to a BOCES comprised of 17 districts.

Nineteen of the 21 BOCES are members of the Colorado BOCES Association (CBA).

Creation and Board Structure:
The composition of BOCES governing boards is determined by participating entities (participating districts and higher education institutions), but must have at least five members and alternates. Each participating entity is entitled to at least one board member. They must meet at least four times a year.

Local district representatives must be members of the local school board, except that the district superintendent may be appointed if the BOCES consists of a single district and a postsecondary institution. Postsecondary institution representatives must be from the institution's governing board or the governing agency's chief executive officer. One or more public members may be jointly appointed by all participating entities.

BOCES Advisory Councils:
Although the law does not require the formation of advisory councils, according to the CBA, every BOCES has an advisory council composed of each member district's superintendent or his/her designee from each member district. This group advises the executive director and BOCES board, and assists in planning and implementing the programs and services provided to the members.

Funding:
BOCES may receive federal, state, or local funds, and have other powers and duties given to local school boards. The majority of BOCES funding is through fees charged to district members or from districts that contract with a BOCES.

Although Congress authorizes cooperative educational services agencies to be local educational agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of applying for federal No Child Left

Behind Act (NCLB) funds, Colorado's BOCES are not defined as LEAs by the state, and none are funded by designated mill levies, as are local school districts.

Currently, the only state funds directly available to BOCES are ECEA funds, if they are special education administrative units, and Read-to-Achieve grant funds, although other state funds are available if their member districts designate their BOCES to receive them. BOCES may also be authorized by their member districts to directly receive federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds. According to the CBA, a majority of the excess costs of special education are funded through school districts rather than from the state and federal governments as envisioned when the ECEA was enacted.

II. WHAT'S WORKING

In reviewing the Association of Education Service Agencies (AESA) list of factors for success, survey responses, and input from the Cooperative Educational Services Advisory Council, focus groups, and interviewees, a number of strengths and successes emerge. These include the fact that Colorado's BOCES are **locally controlled**, **customer driven**, **entrepreneurial**, **save money**, are **cost-effective**, and are **effective conveners and networkers**. (The AESA represents cooperative educational services agencies across the country.)

A majority of respondents to all four surveys indicated that they are somewhat or very satisfied with the services provided by their BOCES – 64 percent of teachers; 76 percent of superintendents; 67 percent of principals; and 86 percent of board members.

As noted previously, Colorado BOCES are ***locally controlled*** by their member districts and, in a few cases, local institutions of higher education. This aspect of Colorado's system was noted as a strength by legislators, superintendents, BOCES executive directors, and others. Maintaining local control was most frequently selected as an important criterion in strengthening the BOCES system by board members responding to the survey.

The BOCES local governance structure results in a more ***customer-driven*** system. It provides more flexibility to meet changing priorities than does a more centralized system. Many focus group participants stated that BOCES staff could be more successful in working with the local community than, for example, state education department personnel, because they live there and understand community culture, values, and norms. Although the diversity of BOCES services may negatively impact, for example, creation of a shared vision among BOCES members, as described in section III of this report, such diversity is common across the country and reflects the customer-driven nature of successful cooperative educational service agencies.

And, although limited state and federal funds for BOCES are considered to be a problem by many study participants, several people indicated that reliance on local funding forces BOCES to be ***entrepreneurial*** in order to stay in business.

BOCES ***save money*** for Colorado districts and schools by taking advantage of economies of scale – from the Centennial BOCES shared computer system to providing psychologists and speech therapists in rural districts that could not otherwise afford to hire specialists to providing high quality professional development opportunities through the Front Range BOCES.

BOCES are viewed as especially cost-effectiv*e* for small and rural districts. In fact, while BOCES save money for large districts, there are a number of services that simply would not exist in small and rural districts if they were not available on a cooperative basis. A state school board member pointed to BOCES' ability to provide consulting expertise to

districts: "We can't always afford specialists on the Western Slope, but the BOCES can bring them in. BOCES are a lifeline for the rural areas."

Many BOCES are effective ***conveners and networkers***, bringing together superintendents, principals, teachers, and other BOCES leaders. As a Denver metropolitan area superintendent said, "BOCES allow teachers to go outside their district to learn from others."

Although the next section of the report discusses areas needing improvement, the assessment should be read in the context of stakeholders across the state acknowledging the valuable, critical services provided by BOCES to educators and students in Colorado.

III. WHAT'S NOT WORKING

A number of areas of concern were identified through the study relating to, among other issues, **no BOCES system**, **shared vision**, **leadership**, **collaboration**, **resources**, **communications**, **performance measures**, and **lost savings opportunities**. There are many areas in which BOCES could play an increasingly valuable role as addressed in section V.

In evaluating the current BOCES system, it was clear that the **current laws and practices do not constitute a "system"**:

- Current state statutes allow BOCES to be formed by school districts and higher education institutions for any purpose they choose.
- There is little if any state funding.
- Every BOCES determines its own funding formula for members.
- BOCES access to federal funding is limited.
- There are no core functions required of BOCES.
- There is no state financial or other incentive to districts to provide services through BOCES (other than for small districts to use BOCES for special education).
- There seems to be no strategic planning by the CDE or Colorado State Board of Education regarding effective use of BOCES.
- BOCES have provided few resources to the CBA to enhance the capacity of BOCES to form a recognized, understandable, valuable network within the Colorado education system.

Some education leaders do not think the loosely knit network of BOCES best serves schools and students. As one superintendent responding to the survey stated, "I would much prefer to see six to eight strong comprehensive BOCES in the state than the present hit or miss, general/single purpose, weak or strong BOCES that we presently have."

Not only is there no BOCES system, there is currently a ***lack of shared vision*** regarding the purpose or future of a Colorado BOCES system, as illustrated by the following survey responses from two superintendents:

"I would like BOCES to provide those services that they were created for (i.e. special education). They do not need to be out searching for additional areas."

"I have the feeling that we are going nowhere in our BOCES. We are simply existing status quo. I would like to see us doing something else besides just supporting the special education department."

To further illustrate these divergent perspectives, Congress for the first time defined educational service agencies, like BOCES, as "local educational agencies" (NCLB section 9101(26) D), and the U.S. Secretary of Education urged states to use such agencies to implement the NCLB Act (April 18, 2003 letter to state education commissioners). Yet, recently, an influential Colorado state legislator said, "You could convince me otherwise, but if legislation was carried today to eliminate them (BOCES), I'd vote for it."

One cause of such divergent views seems to be a perceived *lack of leadership* in some BOCES and, perhaps, in other parts of the state education system. (In contrast, some BOCES executive directors were continually praised for their leadership, initiative, and exemplary work.) A CDE staff person described how although the environment has changed, many BOCES executives have not: "(BOCES) leadership now has to design programs and sell it to the district. 'Here's a program we think will benefit you.' And that's reverse thinking for them."

Discussion among BOCES executive directors pointed to the divergent views of their leadership roles. "I feel our role is one of a change agent," said one executive director. But another view was that executive directors need to follow their superintendents' lead or are simply a vehicle to pass information through to their districts. Another long-time executive director who wants to be a strong leader expressed frustration that it is increasingly difficult to remain an effective leader in our rapidly changing educational environment.

Other study participants, including BOCES executive directors themselves, shared the concern that some BOCES executive directors will not challenge district leaders' thinking because superintendents control the BOCES' funding and the director's job security. Yet, 89 percent of superintendents responding to the survey said that they want their BOCES to be proactive in developing new programs tailored to meet their district's needs.

Finally, Colorado's diverse, locally-driven BOCES agendas may have some negative repercussions for leadership. One BOCES executive director runs a charter school; another administers an insurance program, while others provide professional development, special education programs, and a variety of services to meet NCLB requirements. This challenge is not unique to Colorado, as evidenced by this finding from a 1995 study by the Washington Legislative Budget Committee: "In the course of this study, we observed that ESDs [educational services districts] do not always view themselves as part of a whole, or as we are referring to it in this report, a 'system.'" It is difficult for BOCES executive directors to develop shared leadership for a common purpose when their agencies have such different purposes. And, the skills and leadership needed to manage an insurance-only BOCES, for example, versus BOCES that provide a broad range of educational services, are very different.

It appears that there has been little leadership from or ***collaboration*** with the state education department related to BOCES in Colorado. The AESA executive director noted that the most effective cooperative educational systems have strong working relationships with the state education department. Yet, according to BOCES leaders, the education commissioner rarely meets with BOCES leaders, and one executive director believes that relations with the CDE are the worst they have been in over 30 years. Good working relationships exist between some CDE staff and individual BOCES staff, but it is based upon individual relationships rather than collaborative institutional relationships. According to BOCES leaders, when the CDE created and allocated staff to its regions, it

did not do so in coordination with BOCES, nor do the regional boundaries coincide with BOCES boundaries.

Similarly, there is not a partnership between BOCES and the Colorado State Board of Education, yet this is the leading statewide regulatory and policymaking body on K-12 issues. State board members noted that BOCES representatives do not regularly attend the state board meetings or otherwise contact them. Likewise, the board rarely invites BOCES representatives to meet with them and does not ensure they participate in key policy discussions, even when BOCES are directly impacted. For example, some BOCES leaders believe that the state would not have terminated funding for the Regional Centers if there had been a collaborative assessment of the program – with districts, BOCES, the state board, and state education department staff.

BOCES leaders and superintendents themselves also point to the lack of collaboration among districts, even those within a BOCES. They say that superintendents are very cordial but not necessarily collaborative. They are often reluctant to pool resources or give up control over, for example, their professional development program and staff to allow those services to be provided on a regional basis. In addition, districts often perceive their needs to be different from other districts when their needs may, in fact, be very similar.

Another barrier to inter-district collaboration is the lack of time to develop a shared understanding of commonalities and opportunities. Most BOCES have monthly meetings with their members, but some administrators pointed out that that time is not sufficient to develop strategic plans and shared vision. Strong BOCES leadership must be recruited and supported to help identify and implement new collaborative opportunities. That means that, in order to achieve high-quality, cost-effective, cooperatively-provided services in new areas, individual school districts must be willing to give up some turf and control and contribute time as team players.

There is a serious concern regarding a ***lack of resources*** available to BOCES. The AESA executive director listed continuous strong funding from local, state, and federal sources as a key factor found in effective BOCES systems. Colorado BOCES have little access to state and federal dollars, and local funding is dependent upon year-to-year school board decisions. The small $10,000 annual appropriation to BOCES was recently eliminated by the state legislature; the legislature never appropriated funds for the BOCES strategic planning process outlined in statute; and, unlike other states' agencies, BOCES are not treated as local educational agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of directly receiving federal NCLB dollars.

Although Colorado BOCES are largely locally funded, 65 percent of superintendents responding to the survey indicated that 3 percent or less of their district's budget goes to a BOCES.

Rural BOCES are finding it increasingly difficult to hire specialists to implement special education and other programs. As one teacher responding to the survey stated, "The

BOCES needs to be able to provide competitive salaries to attract school psychologists and speech/language therapists to our area. We are currently very understaffed because of the low salaries offered." A number of teachers also expressed frustration with the paperwork and delays in getting students with special needs into BOCES-provided programs.

One area that needs improvement and may be related to the lack of legislative support for BOCES is ***communication***. Many legislators involved in the study indicated that BOCES leaders have not contacted them in years – even during the debate regarding eliminating funding for BOCES. The legislator who is ready to eliminate BOCES said, "BOCES leaders never contact me. I never hear from them."

State school board members who said BOCES leaders rarely contact them or invite them to meet with BOCES individually or collectively voiced the same concern. It is important that BOCES' customers are familiar with BOCES, yet the survey responses showed that while 69 percent of superintendents are very familiar with Colorado's BOCES system, the same is true for only 22 percent of teachers, 29 percent of principals, and 45 percent of board members.

Local school board members stressed the importance of educating incoming board members about the value of BOCES' work and how this assistance provides cost savings to the district. Also, one superintendent noted that he never saw his BOCES director until it was time to determine the district's financial contribution to the BOCES. (That district has since left the BOCES.)

On their end, some BOCES executive directors expressed frustration that they have to rely on their superintendents to communicate with their local school boards and that they do not have the opportunity to meet with the local school boards themselves.

One CDE staff person indicated that teachers are the BOCES most important customers, but some teachers who have used BOCES services indicate there is confusion regarding the valuable services provided to them, as is evident in the survey comments below:

"I know I have taken workshops that have been provided by my BOCES … but I don't really understand who funds BOCES or how we access their services. For someone who's been in education for 25 years, that's pretty bad, isn't it?"

"Districts are not always wonderful about informing staff about your services. If you have a handout available which describes your services/you as resource, we would not have to wonder whether to turn to you or not for assistance. Those teachers who come in and are totally unaware of your role at all in education would be more likely to turn to you for assistance."

"Is this an organization that I, as a classroom teacher, contact if I need assistance with something?"

In addition, with the rapidly changing educational environment – new regulations, technology, best practices – individuals from teachers to superintendents and BOCES executive directors are finding it impossible to keep up with and manage information.

A final weakness in the current BOCES system is the ***lack of performance measures*** that makes it difficult for BOCES to communicate their successes. From a financial standpoint, BOCES are audited annually pursuant to the Uniform Government Audit Law, which the AESA says is a key factor in successful systems, but acknowledged measures of effectiveness are not regularly assessed. The fact that BOCES perform such different functions across the state certainly makes uniform measures difficult to use, but BOCES executive directors discussed the need to measure how their services benefit students.

Principals' survey responses emphasize that point. When asked whether BOCES services improved student achievement in their school, only 6 percent of principals strongly agreed they had. Similarly, only 17 percent strongly agreed that BOCES services improved professional development; only 20 percent strongly agreed the services improved special education programs; and 4 percent strongly agreed that BOCES had improved alternative education services.

In reviewing the broad range of services provided by BOCES-type agencies in other states, it appears that there are ***lost savings opportunities*** in shared administrative services, i.e. purchasing. The CBA is a member of the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies, but the products available for purchase are very limited and, according to the CBA executive director, very few districts use the service. For example, professional consulting services, which is an important need, are not available through the association.

VI. OTHER STATES' COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES SYSTEMS

Laws, Structures, and Funding

According to the executive director of the AESA, 41 states have some type of cooperative educational services system and four other states are considering creating such a system. The increased interest in cooperative educational services stems, at least in part, from the recognition and support of regional services by the federal government.

Cooperative services agencies in other states perform a wide variety of functions and are part of a wide variety of legal structures. These agencies are often called educational service agencies (ESAs), educational service districts (ESDs), or intermediate units, among other names. According to CBA's executive director, a majority of those agencies are extensions of state government, providing specific regional services between the centralized state education department and local school districts.

Colorado's BOCES system is at the other end of the spectrum, with the existence and purpose of BOCES being driven totally by local school districts (or participating institutions of higher education).

The majority of states with cooperative educational services systems recognize those agencies as local education agencies (LEAs). This designation allows them direct access to federal NCLB funds. This recognition occurs through state statutes, regulations, or in practice. As previously noted, Colorado does not recognize BOCES as LEAs.

Trends in Providing New Services

AESA's executive director highlighted the following types of services as areas where cooperative educational services agencies across the country are emerging as increasingly important providers:

- NCLB-related support, including alternative education programs, teacher development, paraprofessional training, accountability system implementation, and data-driven decision-making;
- Product recommendations – from textbooks to computer software;
- Early childhood education programs;
- Vocational education programs;
- Data-driven decision-making; and
- Assisting teachers in understanding and implementing higher academic standards for students.

Factors in Successful Systems

AESA has identified several factors, which it has determined are related to stronger and more effective cooperative educational services systems:

- Non-regulatory functions;
- Continuous strong funding from local, state, and federal sources;

- Able to leverage local, state, and federal dollars;
- Strong working relationship between BOCES and their state education department;
- Assists state in implementing specific, state-funded state functions;
- Strong local control – boards are elected by local school boards or superintendents and provide locally-identified services;
- Audited by independent private auditors; and
- Not overburdened by state regulations once agency is established.

Models in Other States

Iowa, Michigan, New York, and Texas are states mentioned in survey responses and interviews as having model systems in place.

Iowa has an unusual funding structure that includes state and federal funds, as well as local property taxes. At least some Iowa educational services agencies contract with districts to provide services, i.e. payroll, statewide. With respect to state funds, when it appropriates dollars for increased student enrollment in districts, a matching percentage increase goes to its educational services agency – and all Iowa school districts must be members of one of the 12 agencies. Nearly all federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act dollars go to these cooperative services agencies.

One cooperative educational agency director said that the agencies have a very close working relationship with the state department of education. He said, "We are joined at the hip."

Not only do all districts have to be members of cooperative services agencies, but there are nine core services that all such agencies must provide. And, the state education department ensures that they are accredited in those core areas through annual reports and a comprehensive on-site visit every five years. The agency director interviewed believes this accountability component is a key reason that they have credibility with legislators.

Iowa's association of cooperative service agencies has recently hired a former speaker of the house as its lobbyist and also has a full-time executive director. It manages a very large statewide cooperative purchasing program involving a wide range of products, such as food, supplies, audio-visual equipment, and licensing agreements that provide discounts of 40 to 60 percent.

One of the educational services agencies in Iowa has created a unique staffing structure, which it has found to be very effective in meeting districts' needs and allowing the agency to be more proactive. They have three to four regional facilitators who each work with four to five districts. The facilitator is a district's main point of contact for all services. The facilitator and each superintendent develop a two to three year district services plan that describes how the agency will meet the district's needs.

Michigan has had regional educational services agencies (also known as intermediate units) since the early 1960s. However, they are able to levy local property taxes to help

pay for their services. Like Colorado BOCES, they provide a broad range of services to local school districts.

For example, the Wayne Regional Educational Services Agency, which has 34 member districts and provides services to over 60 school districts, provides services ranging from curriculum consulting, staff development, technology use in classroom activities, and business operations. It provides special education programs, bus driver training, software and related training, coordinated countywide purchasing, streamlined teacher recruiting, identification of grant opportunities, authorization of charter schools, coordinated Medicaid reimbursement claims, and more.

New York has had BOCES since 1948. Most funding for New York BOCES is from local sources but with a significant state reimbursement to districts. Participation in a BOCES is voluntary, but districts cannot withdraw once they join. Districts pay for BOCES administrative costs based upon either a per pupil charge or property valuation, plus additional payments based upon services used.

State funding acts as an incentive for districts to receive services through BOCES. The state reimbursement is paid directly to BOCES for its member districts and has three components: 36 percent flat reimbursement; a payment based upon the local mill levy in excess of eight mills; and a per pupil cost for administrative services (varied from $19 to $110 per pupil in 2001-02). The state also reimburses districts through BOCES for their costs related to BOCES facilities based upon a per pupil ratio. Other state and federal grants are available to BOCES.

According to the New York State Education Department:
"A BOCES board appoints its own chief executive officer, contingent upon approval of the commissioner of education. As a BOCES executive, the district superintendent serves local districts and is responsible to the board of education representing the component districts of the BOCES.

"The district superintendent also serves as a representative of the commissioner of education, providing educational leadership to local school districts in matter of law, policy, and practice … The district superintendent has at least three important roles: educational change agent, regional planner and coordinator, and field representative for the State Education Department, a consultative capacity designed to improve two-way communication between state and local levels."

The state education department also states:

"Programs and services … vary, reflecting the local needs of each area. All the BOCES operate programs in six service categories: occupational education; special education; itinerant services; general education; instructional support; and non-instructional support. The array of programs in each category differs, however, reflecting the services requested by the local districts.

"Generally, certain BOCES serve districts in other BOCES, as well as their own. In a few instances, a BOCES has developed a service to which districts in many BOCES subscribe. The Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene BOCES operates a State Aid Planning Service to which hundreds of districts subscribe. The Erie I BOCES operates a policy development service which also serves many districts in other BOCES. While many states now also have regional service agencies, few provide the breadth and variety of services which are the norm in the BOCES of New York State."

The Nassau BOCES serving 56 school districts exemplifies the broad range of services provided by some cooperative educational services agencies, including bid coordination services to a growing number of member school districts, other BOCES, and municipalities. The Nassau BOCES staff includes approximately 3,000 full- and part-time employees, including educational planners, naturalists, public relations professionals, printers, bus drivers, computer network technicians, pioneers in the art of data mining, experts in risk management, Web designers, and classroom teachers and teacher aides.

One BOCES director identified technology as an area in which New York BOCES provide a model. Twenty-two of the 38 BOCES are part of a consortium which has developed a software program allowing teachers and administrators to view results of state assessments broken down by test item. Every test item shows linkages to the state standards that can be linked to performance at the school, classroom, and student level. Then once this information identifies weaknesses of a classroom or student, professionals can click to model lesson plans to address the areas identified. Experts from the 22 members of the consortium have developed the model lesson plans.

Texas cooperative educational services agencies are called educational service centers (ESCs). According to a center executive director, centers across the state have a common base of services plus other locally-determined services.

Most of the centers' funding is local. The state provides a small percentage of their revenue, and centers have access to state, federal, and private grants funds. According to the financial director of a Texas ESC, state general fund support varied from 2.25 to 14.2 percent of ESCs' budgets. The Texas formula is not a model recommended by that ESC as a fair and equitable approach, and the total support to ESCs is considered to be inadequate. Payments are based upon a formula that includes a base amount that is the same for all ESCs, a geographic funding component, and a small schools' funding component

In 1995, the legislature amended Texas state statutes to authorize school districts to buy services from any center. Since then, districts have purchased services from around the state. One area of excellence developed by the Houston Education Services Center is the managing of a large purchasing cooperative used by 600 school districts, private entities (such as Rice University), and even school districts in Arizona. The center's director stated that the cooperative has saved districts $25 million in electricity costs.

V. OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Changing Educational Environment

The NCLB and other federal and state regulatory changes are putting an increased administrative burden on schools, school districts, and staff. Although some CDE units continue to provide technical assistance and training, CDE has shifted toward becoming a compliance agency, given the vast array of school accountability standards and mandates that have been added in recent years, along with the budget cuts it has received. The federal government is increasing its emphasis on and funding for regionally-provided services. Improvements in technology, including educational software, are providing more tools to meet these administrative challenges and assist staff in making data-driven decisions. The number of autistic students is increasing statewide and student enrollment in many rural areas of the state continues to decline, yet schools must provide special education services to all students in need.

These trends and others are creating huge challenges for Colorado's educational system. They also create tremendous opportunities to better utilize cooperative educational services to provide high-quality, cost-effective services to students across the state.

Areas of Opportunity

This section outlines a number of opportunities for improving Colorado's BOCES system. A crosscutting theme is the need and opportunity to assist districts and schools in meeting the requirements of the NCLB Act. In addition, other states provide good models in various areas; BOCES leaders should consider bringing key contacts from other states to help them evaluate whether their approaches could and should be implemented in Colorado. A group of Colorado stakeholders, including representatives of BOCES, districts, and the state education department, as well as legislators, could also travel to one or more model states to examine their systems.

Key areas of opportunity identified through the study include the following:

- Statutory changes affecting funding and the authority of BOCES;
- Improved collaboration among BOCES, the CDE, and other education organizations and agencies;
- Strengthened BOCES leadership;
- Enhanced BOCES advocacy and communications;
- Utilizing technology from the district to classroom level;
- Conducting district needs assessments and identifying specific service needs to be provided cooperatively;
- Identifying areas of excellence of individual BOCES, which could provide those services statewide;
- Improving performance measurement and accountability of BOCES; and
- Better utilization of the CBA as an educational and leadership resource, and as a means to achieve further economies of scale in areas such as purchasing.

Major Recommendations

This section of the report describes a number of options that should be considered by local and state policymakers, including the following highlighted recommendations. The following list of recommendations addresses the most critical options needed to improve the current system and maximize the benefit of cooperative educational services to our schools and students:

Improved Collaboration

- BOCES leaders should work with the State Board of Education (SBE), the Commissioner of Education, and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to develop a formal, collaborative relationship that recognizes their unique, complementary roles and addresses issues, such as ongoing communications and funding.

- BOCES and CBA should maintain a strong partnership with appropriate state and national organizations including Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), CDE, Colorado Education Association (CEA), Association of Education Service Agencies (AESA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and Colorado Community College System (CCCS) to provide quality educational services for all children.

Funding

- The SBE should define BOCES as Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) for the purpose of leveraging federal funds on behalf of member districts in order to increase student achievement.

- The SBE, CDE, and BOCES should work together to develop a long-range plan for providing funding for appropriate, high-quality BOCES services to accomplish such goals as closing the achievement gap and addressing geographic isolation.

- The Legislature and the CDE should offer financial incentives for districts to provide services cooperatively through BOCES and for BOCES to work together.

- The SBE should utilize BOCES in a leadership role for the regional delivery of services and technical assistance to schools and districts across Colorado.

- Individual BOCES should review their current funding formula(s) for member districts and services, reaffirm or revise as needed, and share their analysis with other BOCES.

Conduct Needs Assessments and Planning

- In order to provide new and cost-effective services, BOCES should formalize their needs assessment process with the member districts and the CBA.

Improved Communications

- Both the CBA and individual BOCES should immediately develop a comprehensive communications plan educating core constituencies about the services they provide and the cost-effective ways they add value to the work of school districts and improve student achievement.

Strengthening BOCES Leadership

- The CBA, in partnership with BOCES boards, superintendents, and other professional organizations, should take a leadership role in recruiting and retaining effective BOCES leaders, and providing assistance in the recruiting process.

- The CBA should develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen BOCES leadership by further enhancing the leaders' skills and knowledge of educational trends and research.

Capitalize on Areas of Expertise within BOCES

- BOCES, in collaboration with the CBA, should capitalize on areas of expertise regarding services provided by a BOCES and share those services with other BOCES.

Role and Funding for Colorado BOCES Association

- The CBA should annually assess the priority needs of BOCES, provide technical assistance and other services addressing those needs, continue its networking functions, and increase its advocacy and visibility.

- Funding for the CBA must be commensurate with the broader role and services it needs to provide to ensure BOCES and its leaders are effective.

Related Areas Impacting BOCES

- The CDE, in partnership with the CBA, should evaluate the efficiency of special education administrative units.

Rationale for Recommendations

Improved Collaboration:

1) As stated previously, AESA has found that cooperative educational agencies in all successful systems have a good working relationship with their state education department. No one who participated in this study suggested that there is a good working relationship in Colorado. Improved communications between BOCES, the CBA, the state education department, and the state board, as discussed below, would be a good first step.

In addition, the Colorado State Board of Education and the CDE should look for ways to support funding for BOCES, as well as how BOCES might carry out specific state functions – another factor for successful systems identified by AESA. The CDE should

also re-evaluate its current regional boundaries to see if they should be realigned to coincide with BOCES boundaries. Finally, both BOCES and the state must view each other as critical educational partners and include each other in key planning and policy-making processes.

The partners need to recognize the different complementary roles each plays and develop a system that uses the strengths of each. As noted previously, the CDE has shifted toward becoming a compliance agency, given the vast array of school accountability standards and mandates that have been added in recent years, along with the budget cuts it has received. On the other hand, BOCES are largely service providers. Formal agreements, including funding, need to be in place to allow each entity to focus on their respective roles in a collaborative way. For example, BOCES should be included in the communications loop regarding accreditation reports, so they can provide targeted technical assistance to member school districts.

2) Increased collaboration among BOCES is also needed. BOCES executive directors indicated that BOCES and districts that had success in developing regional centers to provide professional development services in the late 1990s were successful, in large part because the BOCES and district leaders took a very cooperative, collaborative approach and were willing to focus resources on districts most in need. BOCES across the state will need to collaborate in order to implement the recommendations of this study.

3) BOCES and district staff must be increasingly collaborative, put aside turf issues, and view each other as equal partners and peers. As one superintendent stated, "You have a great opportunity to touch many lives with your study if you can help spark the belief in both junior and senior superintendents that BOCES is what WE make of it." But some superintendents pointed to the tension between willingness to cooperate and desire to control. Some BOCES executive directors believe that the lack of collaboration among some of their superintendents is a far greater challenge than the funding difficulties they face.

Funding:

AESA believes a continuous funding stream that includes local, state, and federal dollars is a key factor for success in cooperative educational systems. Colorado BOCES and other stakeholders should reassess the current package of local, state, and federal funding.

1) As was noted previously, most states treat their cooperative educational service agencies as local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide direct access to federal NCLB funds. The Colorado State Board of Education should designate BOCES as LEAs for funding purposes. This designation would be a more efficient way of funneling NCLB funds to BOCES and would encourage local districts to identify more cost-effective, cooperative ways to implement NCLB provisions. Over half of both local school board members and superintendents who responded to the survey support giving BOCES direct access to federal NCLB funds.

2) As discussed in this report, few state dollars go to BOCES in Colorado. In Texas, the agencies largely depend on marketing their services to districts, while Iowa and New York provide significant state resources.

The state should consider various funding options. For example, as mentioned previously, with CDE's shift away from technical assistance to compliance, the state should look for opportunities to shift CDE technical assistance and other funds to BOCES.

The state also needs to provide financial incentives to encourage districts to utilize BOCES. As described in the section on other states' systems, New York has an innovative funding model that provides incentives for districts to provide services cooperatively through BOCES and uses a funding formula that considers factors deemed important in that state. (Seventy-one percent of superintendents and 69 percent of board members responding to the survey support state funds for BOCES. Both groups believe that the two most important factors to consider in any state funding formula are student enrollment and geographic isolation of schools in member districts.)

Just as the federal government has increased its recognition and support of cooperative services agencies, in providing federally-funded services, the state needs to reward districts for maximizing the use of these cost-effective service providers. (There is also federal recognition of the special needs of small school districts through its rural educational achievement programs [REAP] funding.) BOCES need to be able to directly apply for all state services grants, and selection criteria need to favor grant applicants providing services on a collaborative basis.

3) As consideration is given to revamping district member fee structures, BOCES should consider overhead costs as well as the cost of specific services. Both board members and superintendents responding to surveys identified total student enrollment as the most important factor to consider in determining fees charged to member districts. Several respondents said that charges should be based upon services received. In New York, member districts are charged fees based upon student enrollment to cover administrative costs, plus they pay for the specific services they choose for their district. Some study participants expressed concern that small district members may have needs that larger districts do not, yet the small districts cannot afford to pay the full cost of services not used by larger districts. BOCES could help pay for all services by developing areas of excellence and marketing those services statewide as discussed below.

Conduct District Needs Assessments and Planning:

Eighty-nine percent of superintendents responding to the survey said they want their BOCES to be proactive in developing new programs tailored to meet their district's needs. But other study participants identified a need to first conduct district needs assessments so they could identify where needs could be better addressed through BOCES. They also said that BOCES could play a key role in assisting with the assessments. BOCES should help assess what districts are doing well, where improvement is needed, and how to address areas of need most cost effectively. BOCES

should be a source of information regarding best practices. These assessments should also establish a foundation for developing a broader, shared vision of using cooperative educational services beyond individual districts and, hopefully, be the basis for a strategic plan for the entire BOCES.

Improved Communications:

The CBA and individual BOCES must strengthen their communication and marketing efforts *immediately* if they wish to be successful and credible among core constituencies. Too often, focus group participants and survey respondents were unclear about what services BOCES provide or what their value-add is to districts – both critical components to BOCES' sustainability. Raising awareness about the BOCES and successfully implementing the recommendations in this report will require a strategic communications plan that includes desired outcomes, strategies for success, targeted audiences, messages, timelines, and roles/responsibilities.

Both the CBA and individual BOCES need to develop a comprehensive communications plan that identifies marketing and communication strategies designed to update education leaders, policymakers, and other decision makers about how BOCES have made a direct impact on improving student achievement through professional development, data analysis, grantwriting, and other services. CBA and BOCES should communicate regularly to core constituencies (legislators, school board members, policymakers, superintendents, foundation leaders, and others) about the cost savings and value-add they offer districts. They should also share specific examples of how they are helping districts meet or exceed their strategic goals and develop a monitoring system to keep track of this work with the help of qualitative and quantitative data.

Strengthening BOCES Leadership:

There is clearly a perceived and sometimes real lack of leadership in some BOCES. This report identifies some of the challenges facing BOCES administrators individually and collectively. Meeting these challenges is imperative in order for BOCES to get the support needed from the state legislature, state education department, local districts, and other stakeholders, including taxpayers. Likewise, the need to strengthen BOCES leadership must be acknowledged and supported by all those stakeholders, as well as the BOCES administrators themselves.

Based upon our interviews, survey responses, and focus groups, we believe an effective BOCES leader is viewed as an individual who is visionary, possesses strong interpersonal skills, has good instincts, is entrepreneurial, is proactive, is not afraid to challenge the status quo, and, as a good communicator, listens to BOCES members and is responsive to their needs.

The CBA should ask BOCES leaders what they need from CBA and other sources to be effective leaders, and develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen BOCES leadership by further enhancing the leaders' skills and knowledge of educational trends and research, so they can better serve their districts and communities. The CBA, in partnership with

BOCES boards, superintendents, and other professional organizations, should lead an examination of how to recruit and retain effective BOCES leaders, and assist in the recruiting process. Many study participants stated that BOCES executive directors are generally underpaid, with salaries and benefits well below those of district superintendents. Yet, BOCES executive directors may have much more complex jobs, requiring the skills and knowledge of superintendents, as well as other leadership abilities.

The CBA should also urge BOCES leaders to create individualized, professional development plans that identify their leadership challenges, how they will address them, and what help they need from the CBA and other sources to succeed.

More Effective Use of Technology:

Study participants identified increasing needs for using technology to improve the educational system through BOCES. The CBA and leaders from districts and BOCES should determine when information technology services and products would best be provided by a local BOCES or a BOCES marketing technology service as a service area of excellence, or through the CBA, if it becomes a service broker or purchase cooperative. Some examples include distance learning, mandated analyses for NCLB, school accountability reports, Colorado Student Assessment Program reports, other data-driven decision making (including real-time, student-level analysis), and improved communications as discussed previously. Districts and schools need assistance in analyzing data – both conducting the analyses and training to build their staff's capacity to collect and analyze data.

Focus group participants indicated that districts need help determining what niche BOCES fill to help them address data collection and analysis: "We're hiring more staff to address School Accountability Reports (SARs), accreditation, and the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Is there a role for BOCES in terms of helping us manage this work, such as crunching the numbers or analyzing the data? This would free us up to focus on what do we do with this information." They need a data tool districts can use to address assessment data, and technical support for data mining.

Metropolitan area administrators discussed the opportunity to establish a resource center for BOCES customers which could, for example, make exemplary standards-based curricula for various courses and student populations available online or provide cooperatively-funded experts available by telephone. As one administrator stated, they are all operating under the same statewide standards and the curricula have already been developed, so it wastes resources to continually reinvent the wheel. One metro area district had hoped to create such a center through its BOCES, but was not able to get other districts to move forward. The superintendent has taken the initiative to create one within the district.

Identify and Capitalize on Areas of Excellence within BOCES:

As discussed in the "other states" section of this report, a number of cooperative educational services agencies in Iowa, New York, and Texas have developed particular areas of expertise that allow them to contract with agencies across the state, including state and federal agencies. Colorado BOCES could consider whether similar opportunities exist here.

One superintendent from a non-member district suggested:

"It may be appropriate for efficiency purposes for a certain BOCES to focus on a more specific target, such as staff development, and another focus on programs, such as special education. It might be appropriate for a district to purchase services from a variety of BOCES rather than be forced to join a BOCES for membership."

For example, perhaps the Front Range BOCES could contract with experts around the state to provide professional development services, or Centennial could provide computer support to districts outside its boundaries, or the new resource center described as an improved technology opportunity could be marketed statewide.

It should be noted, however, that limited analysis as part of a 1995 study by the Washington Legislative Budget Committee found that increased savings for services provided regionally might not result from increasing the area served, because the opportunities for savings might be minimal (e.g., relatively low program overhead), and services requiring regular personal contact may not be conducive to a more centralized service provision.

Role and Funding for Colorado BOCES Association:

The AESA executive director stated that states with the most successful associations have, at least, a full-time executive director and, in some cases, other lobbying assistance. He believes that the current CBA director has done an excellent job given his less than half-time status and limited resources, but that a full-time position is needed to move Colorado's BOCES forward. A full-time director would allow the CBA to become more of a leader in state education policy discussions at the legislature and with other key education organizations. Individual BOCES executive directors focus their time on their own region and cannot regularly assume a statewide advocacy function. Funding for the CBA should be commensurate with the broader role and services it needs to provide to ensure BOCES and their leaders are effective.

In Michigan, the cooperative services agencies have affiliated with their state's equivalent of the Colorado Association of School Executives. In Iowa, the association hired the former speaker of the house as its director to significantly enhance its presence at the state capitol.

In addition to its ongoing networking activities, its advocacy, and engaging other organizations on behalf of Colorado's BOCES, the CBA has the opportunity to provide leadership development for its members, as described previously; monitor and communicate information on regulatory changes, best practices, and more; manage a

cooperative purchasing program for its members and their districts (Iowa's equivalent has a model program in place); and refer high-quality consultants with various areas of expertise to BOCES to work with their member districts. With respect to the latter function, the CBA could screen, select, and negotiate favorable contracts with various experts who would then enter into contracts with individual districts as needed. The CBA should also undertake an annual assessment to identify the priority needs of BOCES and provide technical assistance addressing those needs, as part of a CBA strategic plan.

Increased Accountability:

Although most policymakers and customers believe that BOCES save money, studies have not been done to provide hard data across all Colorado BOCES. The lack of analysis and information regarding actual and potential savings from regional provision of various services hampers good decision making by BOCES' boards and districts, and makes it harder for BOCES to communicate their effectiveness to stakeholders. Several studies have been done in other states, including Massachusetts and Oregon, which could provide useful information to Colorado BOCES.[2] BOCES and school districts need to undertake continual performance measurement regarding existing services, as well as assess what new services should be provided regionally.

Other Opportunities:

1) Legislators and state school board representatives discussed the possibility of BOCES being empowered to be charter school authorizers on behalf of member districts. Authorizing and monitoring charter schools is one of the new administrative burdens facing districts. The legislators and board members thought that BOCES could take on these responsibilities in a more cost-effective way, especially for small school districts. The downside of BOCES assuming this regulatory role is that a number of study participants, including national experts, felt that cooperative service agencies are more effective if they act as service providers, not regulators.

2) State statutes require school districts with less than 4,000 students to join or contract with a BOCES for special education services. According to a BOCES staff person, the 4,000-student limit has been in statute since the early 1970s, based upon a study examining economies of scale in providing those services. The CDE, in collaboration with BOCES, should re-evaluate whether that is still the appropriate cutoff for special education administrative units, as well as what might be the relevant size to achieve economies of scale for other types of services that could be provided by BOCES. For example, the Centennial BOCES is able to save money even for large districts by providing shared computer services. In addition, the current state waiver criteria and

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[2] See "Proving the Worth of ESAs: A Cost Efficiency Study for an ESD in Oregon," Volume 7, September 2001, pages 25-28, and "Educational Collaboratives: Saving Tax Dollars for Massachusetts Schools, Volume 9, September 2003, pages 45-56 in *Perspectives: A Journal of Research and Opinion about Educational Service Agencies, AESA*.

process allowing smaller districts to act as special education administrative units should be evaluated.

3) There are many crosscutting areas of opportunity for BOCES to assist districts in meeting NCLB challenges. Focus group participants provided the following list of NCLB-related needs and opportunities for BOCES assistance:

- Provide a checklist of timelines and activities the districts must address to meet NCLB mandates.
- Help broker services to meet NCLB provisions.
- Offer data collection and analysis on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Highly Qualified Teachers.
- Offer additional credit hours to help teachers meet the required 24 hour credits in key content areas.
- Assist districts in identifying what a highly qualified teacher is.
- Provide intervention strategies for districts (especially rural) that do not meet AYP requirements and that struggle in other areas tied to NCLB.
- Assist districts in identifying effective teaching strategies to help meet NCLB requirements.
- Identify ways that districts can share NCLB-related resources.
- Help deepen understanding about what NCLB means for superintendents as educational leaders.
- Develop intervention strategies to help districts tackle special education populations under AYP.
- Offer paraprofessional training.

APPENDIX A

COLORADO BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES SYSTEM PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose

The Colorado BOCES Association (CBA), in conjunction with the Donnell-Kay Foundation, is conducting a study of the BOCES system. The goal is to find out how the BOCES service delivery system can better serve districts and schools across Colorado. It will examine both BOCES' functions and the structure of our current system. It will evaluate what BOCES are doing well, where improvement is needed, and what new services districts and schools need. It will also examine options for funding BOCES, as well as identify effective educational services models in other states.

Study Process and Timeline

The BOCES study will incorporate research of related reports and laws, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and guidance from the Cooperative Educational Services Advisory Council (CESAC). The Adams Group, along with Schoolhouse Communications, is leading the study on behalf of the study sponsors. Work began in November 2003 and will result in recommendations and an implementation strategy developed by CBA by May 2004. Survey results and reports on the study's findings and options will be posted on the Donnell-Kay Foundation Web site (www.dkfoundation.org).

CESAC – An advisory council comprised of approximately 20 stakeholders and education leaders from across the state will provide advice and support for the study and implementation of its recommendations.

Document Research – The project team will review key documents, including past evaluations, relevant white papers, and information on model programs and laws in other states.

Interviews – Representatives of key state and national education organizations and several elected officials will be interviewed to gauge their attitudes and perspectives about Colorado's current BOCES system and models from other states.

Focus Groups – Five focus groups will provide a more in-depth understanding of issues. State legislators and education officials, district superintendents and board members, BOCES executive directors, and representatives of statewide education organizations will be included.

Surveys – District superintendents, district board members, principals, and teachers will be surveyed regarding BOCES' performance, the current structure, new opportunities, and related policy issues.

BOCES Executive Directors Retreat – The BOCES executive directors will develop recommendations for policy improvements needed, along with a strategy to implement the recommendations. The recommendations and strategy will be based upon the study's research, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and the CESAC's advice.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AESA – Association of Educational Service Agencies

BOCES – Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

CBA – Colorado BOCES Association

CDE – Colorado Department of Education

CESAC - Cooperative Educational Services Advisory Council

ESA – educational services agency

ESC - educational service center

ESD – educational services district

ESEA – Colorado's Exceptional Children's Educational Act

IDEA - federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

LEA – local education agency

NCLB - federal No Child Left Behind Act

APPENDIX C

CO BOCES PROJECT

Focus Group Report
Schoolhouse Communications
March 3, 2004

In January and February of 2004, Schoolhouse Communications conducted five focus groups to identify what BOCES' strengths and challenges are, how BOCES can better provide services to schools and districts, and what potential policy changes will strengthen the overall system. Prior to the focus groups, survey data collected from superintendents, teachers and school board members had been tallied. Survey findings were tested further in the focus groups for clarity and understanding.

The focus group discussions were conducted from a common set of questions with some slight variation. For example, elected officials were asked to characterize the BOCES' relationship with the Colorado State Legislature and the Colorado State Board of Education because of their unique perspective on these issues. Superintendents were asked to speak in more depth about districts' needs that they had identified in the survey. School board members characterized their relationship with their local BOCES.

Schoolhouse Communications conducted focus groups with BOCES leaders, metro and rural area superintendents, elected officials, and school board members. For a complete list of participants, see page 8. All focus groups were recorded with the agreement that quotes would remain anonymous, except for the listing of a profession or title.

The methodology of focus group research is to ask many people the same questions and capture their answers. Findings are based on the repetition in their answers and the conclusions we draw as communications professionals. The research is qualitative. Our goal was to focus on issues of importance to the CO BOCES Project and to gauge the opinions and reactions of key constituencies to these issues.

Major Findings

- BOCES are viewed among many as offering a valuable service, especially in small and rural districts. BOCES offer expertise and technical assistance to smaller districts at a fraction of the cost those districts would pay individually for the same assistance. Although there are also cost savings for larger districts, these districts are more likely to hire staff to address high-need areas such as special education, assessments, and staff development.

- Because BOCES are situated in the communities they serve, they understand local issues, cultures, and values. This knowledge has helped BOCES build trust with local education leaders and act as a conduit between outside consultants who offer content expertise and district leaders who have unique needs locally.

- While district leaders encourage more collaboration, they acknowledge that time constraints, turf issues, and other demands hamper efforts to work more regularly with their colleagues in other districts. They see BOCES playing a critical role in convening districts to help identify and address common needs and challenges.

- Successful BOCES are entrepreneurial in their approach. They understand the needs of the districts they serve and are proactive in helping districts address those needs. They are successful at building relationships with district leaders and can demonstrate how they add value to the district.

- While several BOCES leaders were recognized repeatedly for their exemplary leadership, there is a perception that BOCES leadership is not effective or credible. Some criticized leadership for failing to be more proactive and visionary and for seemingly serving more at the whim of the superintendent than as an equal partner.

- There is a lack of understanding, especially among metro area districts, about what BOCES do and what services they provide. A result is that BOCES are facing stiff competition from other providers. These providers appear to be more successful in marketing their services, responding to the shifting educational landscape, providing more cost-effective assistance, and meeting districts' needs. Another result is that new opportunities to build stronger relationships with legislators, state board of education members, superintendents, and others have been missed because some BOCES have failed to communicate about their role in improving public education.

- BOCES leaders discussed in detail their frustration with and the importance of mending relations with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Many agreed the relationship between BOCES and the state agency is at an all-time low. Some of the frustration lies in the perception that the CDE applies an urban-centered focus to rural problems. One executive director put it this way: "There should be a book called, *Urban People Live on Venus — Rural People Live on Mars*. They are not a part of us." BOCES leaders believe they are not viewed as equal partners with their CDE colleagues and are not invited to meetings or asked for opinions on major education policy issues that affect their customers.

- Districts and local school boards offered a different perspective on the CDE, although they shared some of the BOCES' frustration. They say that CDE's role has shifted from one of technical support to one of compliance and regulation. They added that this shift opens up an opportunity for BOCES to step into an even greater support role. Superintendents, especially, reinforced that they did not want to see BOCES become a regulatory and compliance agency like the CDE.

BOCES' Strengths

- Provide cost-effective services for districts: Repeatedly, BOCES were commended for their ability to pool services for multiple districts at more reasonable costs than individual districts could acquire on their own. This was highlighted especially in small and rural areas. Services mentioned most often included insurance, outside expertise in special education and grantwriting, technology, and professional development. BOCES are viewed as a valuable and needed broker of services. The expertise BOCES attract to districts also has the added benefit of helping build the capacity of district staff members, especially in technology and professional development. "We can't always afford specialists on the Western Slope, but the BOCES can bring them in. BOCES are a lifeline for the rural areas."

- Offer flexibility: Participants applauded the BOCES' flexibility in serving districts' many needs, and they acknowledged that it is a challenge meeting the diverse needs of large, small, urban, and rural districts. "BOCES bring different things to different districts, which honors local control," said one local school board member. "Doing a template for all BOCES is not the answer." "Your needs aren't our needs," added another board member. "One size doesn't fit all." Interestingly, some superintendents had a different take on this. They suggested that districts — large and small — have more in common than they may think. Examples include the need to meet federal mandates under No Child Left Behind or improving CSAP scores.

- Understand local context: Because BOCES leaders and staff live and work in their communities, participants believe they are knowledgeable about the community's cultures, values, and norms. This knowledge is viewed as a key element in fostering relationships within the community and among districts. It also has a direct impact on academic programs. In one district, for example, the school board approved adding the new position of transition coordinator, housed at the local BOCES. This coordinator helps students transition from high school to the workforce. "The BOCES brought this issue to our attention because they understood the local context and saw this was a challenge," said a local school board member.

- Convene district leaders: While many district leaders would like to see more collaboration among districts, they acknowledge that it does not happen often enough because of demands on time and, on occasion, turf-related issues. BOCES fill a much needed role in convening districts to discuss common challenges and solutions. "They help build camaraderie in small, rural districts," said one superintendent. "It's important to see what we can share with other districts." Interestingly, BOCES leaders cited collaboration as a strength *and* a challenge. (More on the challenges in the next section.)

School board members added that BOCES are effective in convening local community groups and nonprofits to help advance districts' work, build partnerships, problem solve, and identify solutions.

BOCES' Challenges

- Leadership issues: The issue of leadership came up repeatedly in focus groups. There is a perceived lack of leadership among BOCES executive directors. Participants identified these leadership concerns most often: poor initiative, lack of vision, a failure to attract the best and the brightest, and little interaction with BOCES representatives. "The BOCES director used to pop into my office. Now the only time I see him is when we are looking at the district budget." Several superintendents, legislators, and state education board members urged BOCES leaders to meet with them more often: "You've got to get out and build these relationships."

  Many participants agreed that effective leadership dictated whether a BOCES was respected, successful, and of value to districts and schools. Several BOCES executive directors were singled out for their strong leadership. When asked to identify the qualities of an effective BOCES leader, participants cited these attributes: has vision, strong interpersonal skills, good instincts, cares for children, and is proactive. "When you look at successful BOCES, they have an entrepreneurial spirit," said one superintendent.

  Elected officials offered another take on leadership, which focused on how some executive directors of BOCES are selected. One elected official said superintendents have great influence on who is chosen, which can have negative implications. "It's a good-old-boy network. When an executive director leaves a BOCES position, the superintendent goes to the district (staff) to fill it. It means more control for larger districts." It is unclear whether this practice is widespread or if this anecdote is an isolated example. School board members added that an ineffective BOCES board and a poor working relationship with area superintendents can hurt a leader's success.

  Some questioned whether the BOCES system was attracting the strongest candidates. One of the biggest reasons some participants thought it may be failing has to do with the position itself. A number of participants acknowledged that serving as a BOCES executive director is challenging and requires a unique leader: "When you have 19 superintendents (in your region), you need a strong BOCES executive director who can provide real leadership." "It's like herding cats," added another superintendent. Still, one superintendent said he and others share the responsibility to help BOCES succeed: "We *are* BOCES."

A focus group of BOCES executive directors revealed that they had different views of their leadership roles. Some backed a more proactive, customer-driven approach, while others saw themselves following the superintendent's lead or as a conduit for information. "I feel our role is one of a change agent," said one executive director. "The superintendents are instructional leaders. My role is to get them together so I can recommend something. Hopefully, they'll listen to me." Although opinions varied, BOCES leaders shared ideas on what would help them be more effective leaders, including help from the CO BOCES Association in communicating to the legislature and other important constituencies about the value of BOCES' work. They also wanted more information about education policy issues and trends at the state and federal levels to help their districts make better decisions. "Times have changed so much," said one leader. "In what ways can we improve our leadership and build our knowledge to meet the demands of NCLB, data-driven decision making, and other issues?"

- Consumers are turning elsewhere for services: Several district leaders said they were tapping other sources for help with data collection and analysis, staff development, special education, and other services. The reasons vary. In some cases, larger districts believe it is more cost effective to hire staff in certain high-demand areas such as special education. Others contract the work to consultants and private firms who can respond more quickly and offer expertise in specific areas that the local BOCES may not. In some cases, participants said they are not aware of services BOCES offer districts. They urged BOCES not only to better market their services but also to show districts why their services are a good investment. "People see BOCES as an expense, not a value-add. I represent a small district, and we don't have a staff development person. BOCES could help, but how can I show a correlation between investing in the BOCES and getting a return on my investment?" "BOCES have to illustrate to districts how much they'll save when they run a program through a BOCES as opposed to not doing that," said a local school board member. One elected official put it another way: "Times have changed. If BOCES don't stop and look at their services, I don't know how much longer they can exist."

- Lack of a reliable, long-term funding stream: During the 2003 session, the legislature cut state funding for BOCES, and it is not expected to reinstate those dollars any time soon. "We have cut so many things. Anything not essential is up for grabs — that's unless we get some help from the voters," said one legislator. Currently, BOCES are dependent on districts for funding. District funding has lessened because of declining student enrollment. "Yet the needs are greater than ever before," observed a BOCES executive director. Further complicating this scenario in the opinion of some BOCES leaders is that only districts receive No Child Left Behind funding — BOCES do not. Interestingly, superintendents continually cited NCLB as one of the biggest areas with which they needed assistance. Participants shared different views on how BOCES should be funded. Some argued in favor of a common funding mechanism, while others suggested an à la carte menu — districts only pay for what they use. One elected official suggested BOCES consider becoming nonprofits so they can more aggressively

pursue grants and other funding sources. A local school board member said the CDE should consider allocating more state dollars to BOCES, but noted that there is a "disconnect" at the state level: "The state doesn't realize that BOCES are more efficiently meeting districts' needs than the state. BOCES actually save dollars." (The board member pointed to the regional assistance centers as an example of an effective model that was state-funded but locally driven.) Others encouraged BOCES to look at other state and local funding models around the country.

- Factors inhibiting collaboration: While many district leaders stressed the need for collaboration, some participants pointed to several factors hurting BOCES' efforts in this area. One superintendent said some district leaders may be threatened by the services BOCES offer, in part, because BOCES could replace some district services altogether. Another superintendent who valued BOCES' help said he wanted control over areas such as assessments and professional development because ultimately he was accountable for results. Another superintendent said, "It's difficult. We (districts) may not want to share because we want to be the first ones out of the gate with the new idea." Other factors getting in the way of collaboration include the different needs of larger and smaller districts, the skill set to help districts arrive at a common mission, and competition over funding. "Collaboration works well until we want each other's money," said a BOCES executive director. BOCES leaders are aware of the concerns: "We are here to serve our districts, not compete with them."

Services in Demand

Participants in all five focus groups were asked to identify areas where BOCES could provide targeted services and technical assistance. Focus group questions on these issues were designed to test survey results in more depth. The survey data showed a strong need in the following areas: No Child Left Behind (NCLB), professional development, data collection and analysis, and special education.

We asked participants in four of the five focus groups to tell us more specifically what type of assistance they would like in these four categories from BOCES. Here is what they said:

NCLB

- Provide a checklist of timelines and activities the districts must address to meet NCLB mandates.
- Help broker services to meet NCLB provisions.
- Offer data collection and analysis on Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Highly Qualified Teachers.
- Offer additional credit hours to help teachers meet the required 24 hour credits in key content areas.
- Assist districts in identifying what a highly qualified teacher is.

- Help districts shape solutions to the challenges of meeting NCLB's Highly Qualified Teacher provision.
- Provide intervention strategies for districts (especially rural) that do not meet AYP requirements and that struggle in other areas tied to NCLB.
- Assist districts in identifying effective teaching strategies to help meet NCLB requirements.
- Identify ways that districts can share NCLB-related resources.
- Help deepen understanding about what NCLB means for superintendents as educational leaders.
- Develop intervention strategies to help districts tackle special education populations under AYP.
- Offer paraprofessional training.

Professional Development

- Broker experts who can provide professional development in math.
- Provide grantwriting assistance to help secure funds for professional development.
- Convene districts to learn more about what common challenges they face and how they might move forward to address them together.
- Offer leadership training for all superintendents, teachers, principals, etc.
- Convene and facilitate cross-district conversations with individuals preparing to become principals.
- Help design effective strategies that will improve teaching in schools by identifying the common elements of successful staff development and new trends.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Help districts determine what niche BOCES fill to help them address data collection and analysis.
  "We're hiring more staff to address School Accountability Reports (SARs), accreditation, and the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Is there a role for BOCES in terms of helping us manage this work, such as crunching the numbers or analyzing the data? This would free us up to focus on what do we do with this information."
- Develop a data tool districts can use to address assessment data.
- Provide technical support for data mining.

Special Education

- Help meet the needs of smaller districts by providing equipment, expertise, psychologists, speech therapists, and other services.
  "These services are expensive and it's hard to find folks with this expertise. Most of us didn't make AYP because of special education (populations)."
- Offer professional development for teachers and other staff focused on special education issues.

Participants agreed that BOCES could play a major role in helping ease the burden of new federal and state mandates. As the above bullet points illustrate, there were areas of commonality among large and small districts. The key, say focus group participants, is for BOCES to conduct a needs assessment of what specific help their districts require.

Related to this issue is a call among those surveyed for BOCES to be more proactive. In the survey, most superintendents "strongly agreed" that they wanted BOCES to be more proactive. In focus groups, we asked superintendents (and school board members) what proactive meant to them. Responses included conducting a needs assessment to better understand where districts are doing well, where they need to improve, and what role the BOCES could play to further enhance district services; remembering that superintendents and senior staff need to lead the way; and providing districts with a succinct, regular update of education research on what works in the classroom, in instructional leadership, and in other areas affecting student learning. One superintendent said: "We're inundated with so much information — studies, journals, e-mail messages. I just delete it. It's too much. Help us manage this information." BOCES leaders also asked for help here as well, but from the CO BOCES Association.

We also asked school board members to define the term "proactive." One board member summed it up this way: "If proactive means selling districts, that's a negative. If proactive means asking us or helping us clarify what our needs are, that's a positive." Board members urged BOCES to be more customer driven and to work as a partner with them. "We meet once every year to discuss progress on our strategic plan," offered a board member. "We examine outcomes and progress. BOCES could play a role there."

Focus Group Participants

BOCES Executive Directors

Dan Mass, Centennial BOCES
Allen Coryell, Southeastern BOCES
Tim Sanger, Northeast BOCES
Bill Vincze, South Platte Valley BOCES
Kay Coleman, San Juan BOCS
Sharon Davarn, Uncompahgre BOCS
Vic Bruce, Southwest BOCS
John Tillman, San Luis Valley BOCS
David Van Sant, East Central BOCES
Ed Vandertook, Mountain BOCES
Jon Mann, Expeditionary BOCES
Nancy Degurse, South Central BOCES
Jane Toothaker, Northwest BOCES

Rural Area Superintendents

Harlan Else, Cheyenne Mt.
Robert Rael, Sierra Grande
Mark Maksimowicz, Fountain
Michael Clough, Stratton
Bill Powell, Strasberg
George Sauter, Bennett
Stan Scheer, Littleton

Invited: Jeff Durbin, Pat Bentley, Tina Goar, Randy Miller

Metro Area Superintendents and Senior Staff

Rod Blunck, Elizabeth
George Straface, Westminster
Jackie Kapushion, Mapleton
Linda Damon, Aurora
Lynn Rhodes, University of CO
Mike Bergstedt, Adams 12
John Lange, Adams 14
Tonda Potts, Brighton

Invited: Mike Greek, Mary Vedra, Ken Landouceur

Elected Officials

Norma Anderson
Randy DeHoff
Peggy Reeves
Pam Suckla

Invited: John Salazar, Gayle Berry, Carl Miller, Val Vigil, Suzanne Williams, Keith King

School Board Members

Gene Nelson, Pawnee
Frances Moore, Loveland
Jerry Westbrook, Loveland
Scott Webermeier, Estes Park
Pat Chase, Loveland
Linda Long, Oak Creek
Mark Bujanovich, East Grand
Ann McGraw, Bayfield

Becky Jay, Loveland
Brian Hoza, Hayden

Invited: Mike Freeman, Christine Pacheco

The Adams Group

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BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES STUDY: SURVEY RESULTS

This report provides a numerical summary of survey responses from the four surveys completed by Colorado teachers, superintendents, principals, and school board members in January 2004. The surveys were Web-based and generally distributed via email. The purpose of the surveys was to gather qualitative information and identify key areas of support, concern, and opportunities for improvement.

Approximately 800 teachers who have used BOCES services were surveyed, eliciting 372 responses. All 80 district superintendents were surveyed with 59 (33 percent) responding. There were 1,479 principals surveyed -- all Colorado Association of School Executives members, plus an unduplicated sample provided by the Front Range BOCES. Of that number, 272 principals (18 percent) responded. In addition, over 75 local school board members with some knowledge of BOCES were surveyed, with 31 completing the survey.

Note on survey sample: Although care was taken to obtain a high quality sample, this was not a scientific survey. The Colorado Association of School Executives provided its entire list of both superintendents and principals. The following BOCES provided teacher and board samples (samples were requested from all):

Teachers
Northeast
Centennial
Front Range
Northwest Colorado
San Juan
East Central
San Luis Valley (self-administered)
Uncompahgre
South Central

Board
Larimer County
Northeast
Centennial
Front Range
Mountain
Northwest Colorado
San Juan
East Central (self-administered)
Mt. Evans (one name provided)
San Luis Valley
Uncompahgre

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TEACHERS' SURVEY

1. **In which of the following three service areas are you most in need of assistance?**
   (Leave blank if assistance not needed):
   (Please check only 3 service areas)
   83 (9%)New product (e.g., textbooks, software) assessment
   124 (14%)Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
   163 (18%)Professional development
   93 (10%)Standards and assessment technical training
   143 (16%)At-risk student programs
   18 (2%)Early childhood programs
   52 (6%)Vocational education programs
   92 (10%)Special education programs
   103 (11%)English Language Learner programs
   29 (3%) Other

2. **Overall, how familiar are you with Colorado's BOCES system?**
   83 (22%)Very Familiar
   207 (56%) Somewhat Familiar
   34 (9%)Neither Familiar nor Unfamiliar
   37 (10%)Somewhat Unfamiliar
   9 (2%)Not at all Familiar

3. **Please check all areas in which you have used services provided by a BOCES:**
   61 (8%) Don't know if the services I used were provided by BOCES
   26 (3%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
   239 (31%) Professional development
   84 (11%) Standards and assessment technical training
   68 (9%) At-risk student programs
   32 (4%) Early childhood programs
   29 (4%) Vocational education programs
   147 (19%) Special education programs
   39 (5%) English Language Learner programs
   38 (5%) Other

4. **Please check your district's Colorado Department of Education region:**
   70 (19%) Metro
   14 (4%) North Central
   26 (7%) Northeast
   54 (15%) Northwest
   12 (3%) Pikes Peak
   28 (8%) Southeast
   81 (22%) Southwest
   3 (1%) West Central
   79 (22%) Don't Know

5. **Approximately how many students are in your school?**
   18 (5%) Less than 100

130 (36%) Between 100 and 300
212 (59%) 300 or more

6. **Level of your school** (Please check all that apply):
   177 (38%) Elementary school
   137 (29%) Middle school
   152 (33%) High school

7. **Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided by your BOCES?**
   113 (31%) Very Satisfied
   118 (33%) Somewhat Satisfied
   101 (28%) Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
   25 (7%) Somewhat Dissatisfied
   6 (2%)Very Dissatisfied

7b**. If you are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided by your BOCES, why?** (Please check all that apply)
2 (4%) Cost
11 (21%) Quality
27 (52%) Don't meet my needs
12 (23%) Other

8. Any other comments regarding how your district's BOCES could be more helpful to you?

SUPERINTENDENTS' SURVEY

1. **Overall, how familiar are you with Colorado's BOCES system?**
   41 (69%) Very Familiar
   15 (25%) Somewhat Familiar
   2 (3%) Neither Familiar nor Unfamiliar
   1 (2%) Somewhat Unfamiliar
   0 (0%) Not at all Familiar

2. **Is your district a member of a BOCES?**
   52 (90%) Yes (If yes, skip to question 3)
   6 (10%) No

   2b. **If no to question 2, does your district contract with a BOCES for services?**
   4 (44%) Yes
   5 (56%) No

   2c. **If no to question 2, why isn't your district a member of a BOCES?**
   (Check all that apply)
   0 (0%) Not a good value
   3 (33%) Can provide services directly at lower cost
   2 (22%) Can provide higher quality services directly
   1 (11%) Do not need services provided by BOCES
   2 (22%) Need more control over services
   1 (11%) Other
   Skip to question 6

3. **Check all of the following services provided to your district by a BOCES:**

   Administrative Support
   19 (5%) Non-instructional support services (e.g. purchasing, transportation, etc.)
   11 (3%) Data processing
   33 (10%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds
   23 (7%) Communications (e.g. technology, distance learning, etc.)
   9 (3%) Accreditation assistance

   Planning/Assessment
   9 (3%) Research and development
   6 (2%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

   NCLB
   17 (5%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
   8 (2 %) Development of Adequate Yearly Progress plans

Training
47 (14%) Professional development
21 (6%) Standards and assessment technical training
12 (3%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
29 (8%) At-risk student programs
22 (6%) Early childhood programs
11 (3%) Vocational education programs
44 (13%) Special education programs
20 (6%) English Language Learner programs

Other
5 (1%) Other

4. **Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided by your BOCES?**
25 (46%) Very Satisfied
16 (30%) Somewhat Satisfied
2 (4%) Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
9 (17%) Somewhat Dissatisfied
2 (4%)Very Dissatisfied

4b. **If you are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided by your BOCES, why?** (Check all that apply)
9 (29%) Cost
10 (32%) Quality
9 (29%) Don't meet our needs
3 (10%) Other

5. **Rate the accuracy of the following statements:**

a. "I want my BOCES to be proactive in developing new programs tailored to meet our district's greatest needs."
29 (55%)Strongly Agree 18 (34%)Agree 5 (9%)Disagree
1 (2%)Strongly Disagree

b. "Our BOCES staff understands the needs of our district."
17(33%)Strongly Agree 25(49%)Agree 8(16%)Disagree
1(2%)Strongly Disagree

c. "The services provided by our BOCES are a good value for the money."
21(41%)Strongly Agree 22(43%)Agree 7(14%)Disagree
1(2%)Strongly Disagree

d. "BOCES can play a role helping districts meet the provisions of the No Child Left Behind act by providing needed services."
17(32%)Strongly Agree 32(60%)Agree 3(6%)Disagree
1(2%)Strongly Disagree

6. **In which of the following three service areas is your district most in need of additional assistance?** (Leave blank if additional services not needed):
(Please check only 3 service areas)

Administrative Support
1 (1%) Non-instructional support services (e.g., purchasing, transportation, etc.)
12 (7%) Data processing
6 (4%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds
6 (4%) Communications (e.g., technology, distance learning, etc.)
7 (4%) Accreditation assistance

Planning/Assessment
12 (7%) Research and development
3 (2%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

NCLB
18 (11%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
9 (6%) Development of Adequate Yearly Progress plans

Training
23 (14%) Professional development
9 (6%) Standards and assessment technical training
14 (9%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
8 (5%) At-risk student programs
3 (2%) Early childhood programs
3 (2%) Vocational education programs
16(10%) Special education programs
10(6%) English Language Learner programs

Other
2 (1%) Other

7. **What, if any, services should BOCES start to provide in your district?**

8. **What are the two most important criteria to consider in strengthening a state system of cooperative educational services?** (Please check only two items below)
   8 (7%) Efficiency
   26 (22%) Quality of services
   8 (7%) Equitable service delivery across districts
   20 (17%) Maintain local control
   28 (24%) Effect on student performance
   27 (23%) Impact on school budgets

9. **Approximately how much of your district's budget goes to the BOCES with which you contract or belong?**
   11 (20%) Less than 1%
   25 (45%) 1% to 3%
   12 (21%) Between 3% and 5%
   5 (9%) 5% or More
   3 (5%) Not Applicable

10. **Should the state provide funding for BOCES?**
    42 (71%) Yes
    11 (19%) No
    6 (10%) Don't Know

    10b. If yes, what percentage of BOCES' funding should come from the state?
    16 (40%) Less than 25%
    13 (33%) 26% to 50%
    5 (13%) Between 50% and 75%
    6 (15%) 75% or more

11. **If the state provided funding for BOCES, what factors should be included in determining the amount given to individual BOCES?** (Please check all that apply)
    18 (12%) Equal base payment to all BOCES
    40 (27%) Student enrollment in member districts
    18 (12%) Number of low performing schools in member districts
    40 (27%) Geographic isolation of schools in member districts
    29 (19%) Operating costs of schools in member districts
    4 (3%)

12. **Should BOCES be able to apply directly to the federal government for No Child Left Behind funds?**
    30 (52%) Yes
    16 (28%) No
    12 (21%) Don't Know

13. **If BOCES continue to charge a fee to their member districts, which of the following factors should be included in determining any fee charged by BOCES to member districts?** (Please check all that apply)

15 (12%) Equal fee per district
48 (39%) Total student enrollment in district
7 (6%) Number of low performing schools in district
22 (18%) Geographic isolation of schools in district
24 (19%) Operating costs of schools in district
8 (6%) Other

14. Check your district's Colorado Department of Education region:

8 (14%) Metro
8 (14%) North Central
8 (14%) Northeast
6 (10%) Northwest
9 (15%) Pikes Peak
10 (17%) Southeast
7 (12%) Southwest
3 (5%) West Central

15. Approximately how many students are in your school district?

20 (34%) Less than 500
13 (22%) 500 to 999
14 (24%) 1000 to 3999
12 (20%) 4000 or More

16. Is there anything else we need to know about the BOCES system in Colorado?

PRINCIPALS' SURVEY

1. **Overall, how familiar are you with Colorado's BOCES system?**
   78 (29%) Very Familiar
   157 (58%) Somewhat Familiar
   10 (4%) Neither Familiar nor Unfamiliar
   21 (8%) Somewhat Unfamiliar
   6 (2%) Not at all Familiar

2. **Is your school district a member of a BOCES?**
   194 (73%) Yes
   34 (13%) No
   36 (14%) Don't Know

(If no or don't know, skip to question 6)

3. **Check all of the following services provided to your district by a BOCES** (Please check all that apply):

Administrative Support
34 (4%) Non-instructional support services (e.g., purchasing, transportation, etc.)
41 (4%) Data processing
62 (7%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds
65 (7%) Communications (e.g., technology, distance learning, etc.)
41 (4%) Accreditation assistance

Planning/Assessment
32 (3%) Research and development
21 (2%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

NCLB
61 (7%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions

Training
161 (17%) Professional development
74 (8%) Standards and assessment technical training
64 (7%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
52 (6%) At-risk student programs
41 (4%) Early childhood programs
19 (2%) Vocational education programs
99 (11%) Special education programs
43 (5%) English Language Learner programs

Other
13 (1%)

4. **Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided by your BOCES?**
   60 (30%) Very Satisfied
   75 (37%) Somewhat Satisfied
   42 (21%) Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
   22 (11%) Somewhat Dissatisfied
   3 (1%) Very Dissatisfied

4b. If you are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided by your BOCES, why? (Check all that apply)
15 (23%) Cost
21 (33%) Quality
17 (27%) Don't meet our needs
11 (17%) Other

5. **Rate the accuracy of the following statements:**

   a. "BOCES services have improved student achievement in my school."
   11(6%)Strongly agree 93(51%)Agree 65(36%)Disagree
   12(7%)Strongly Disagree

   b. "BOCES services have improved professional development in my school."
   32(17%)Strongly agree 96(50%)Agree 56(29%)Disagree
   9(5%)Strongly Disagree

   c. "BOCES services have improved special education programs in my school."
   35(20%)Strongly agree 86(49%)Agree 41(24%)Disagree
   12(7%)Strongly Disagree

   d. "BOCES services have improved alternative education services in my school."
   7(4%)Strongly agree 53(32%)Agree 83(50%)Disagree
   22(13%)Strongly Disagree

6. **In which of the following three service areas is your school most in need of assistance?** (Leave blank if additional services not needed.)
   (Please check only 3 service areas)

Administrative Support
4 (1%) Non-instructional support services (e.g. purchasing, transportation, etc.)
17 (2%) Data processing
15 (2%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds

37 (5%) Communications (e.g., technology, distance learning, etc.)
17 (2%) Accreditation assistance

Planning/Assessment
47 (7%) Research and development
30 (4%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

NCLB
79 (11%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions

Training
107 (15%) Professional development
46 (6%) Standards and assessment technical training
57 (8%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
87 (12%) At-risk student programs
23 (3%) Early childhood programs
28 (4%) Vocational education programs
59 (8%) Special education programs
61 (8%) English Language Learner programs

Other
9 (1%)

7. Check your district's Colorado Department of Education region:

66 (25%) Metro
44 (17%) North Central
27 (10%) Northeast
19 (7%) Northwest
30 (11%) Pikes Peak
20 (8%) Southeast
13 (5%) Southwest
13 (5%) West Central
34 (13%) Don't Know

8. Approximately how many students are in your school?

9 (3%) Less than 100
83 (31%) Between 100 and 300
178 (66%) 300 or More

9. Level of your school (Please check all that apply):

161 (49%) Elementary school
84 (26%) Middle school
82 (25%) High school

10. Please write any other comments regarding how BOCES could be more helpful to your school

LOCAL BOARD MEMBERS' SURVEY

1. Overall, how familiar are you with Colorado's BOCES system?

14 (45%) Very Familiar
11 (35%) Somewhat Familiar
1 (3%) Neither Familiar nor Unfamiliar
3 (10%) Somewhat Unfamiliar
2 (6%) Not at all Familiar

2. Check all of the following services provided to your district by a BOCES:

Administrative Support
10 (5%) Non-instructional support services (e.g., purchasing, transportation, etc.)
5 (2%) Data processing
17 (8%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds
15 (7%) Communications (e.g., technology, distance learning, etc.)
6 (3%) Accreditation assistance

Planning/Assessment
5 (2%) Research and development
2 (1%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

NCLB
12 (6%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
6 (3%) Development of Adequate Yearly Progress plans

Training
25 (12%) Professional development
14 (7%) Standards and assessment technical training
14 (7%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
15 (7%) At-risk student programs
15 (7%) Early childhood programs
6 (3%) Vocational education programs
21 (10%)Special education programs
8 (4%) English Language Learner programs

Other
5 (2%) Other

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided by your BOCES?

15 (52%) Very Satisfied
10 (34%) Somewhat Satisfied
3 (10%) Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
1 (3%) Somewhat Dissatisfied

1 (3%) Very Dissatisfied

3b. If you are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided by your BOCES, why? (Check all that apply)

1 (33%) Cost
1 (33%) Quality
0 (0%) Don't meet our needs
1 (33%) Other

4. **Rate the accuracy of the following statements:**

   a. "I want our BOCES to be proactive in developing new programs tailored to meet our district's greatest needs."
   13(45%)Strongly agree 16(55%)Agree 0(0%)Disagree
   0(0%)Strongly Disagree

   b. "Our school board supports our BOCES."
   14(48%)Strongly agree 15(52%)Agree 0(0%)Disagree
   0(0%)Strongly Disagree

   c. "The services provided by our BOCES are a good value for the money."
   13(45%)Strongly agree 13(45%)Agree 3(10%)Disagree
   0 Strongly Disagree

   d. "BOCES can play a role helping districts meet the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act by providing needed services."
   10(37%)Strongly agree 16(59%) Agree 1(4%)Disagree
   0(0%)Strongly Disagree

5. **In which of the following three service areas is your district most in need of additional assistance?** (Leave blank if additional services not needed.)
   (Please check only 3 service areas)

<u>Administrative Support</u>
2 (2%) Non-instructional support services (e.g., purchasing, transportation, etc.)
1 (1%) Data processing
2 (2%) Distribution and delivery of federal or state categorical funds
10 (12%) Communications (e.g., technology, distance learning, etc.)
3 (4%) Accreditation assistance

<u>Planning/Assessment</u>
3 (4%) Research and development
0 (0%) New product (e.g., textbooks, software, etc.) assessment

NCLB
12 (14%) Assistance meeting No Child Left Behind provisions
5 (6%) Development of Adequate Yearly Progress plans

Training
11 (13%) Professional development
8 (9%) Standards and assessment technical training
4 (5%) Data collection and analysis

Providing Programs
7 (8%) At-risk student programs
2 (2%) Early childhood programs
1 (1%) Vocational education programs
5 (6%) Special education programs
5 (6%) English Language Learner programs

Other
4 (5%)

6. What, if any, services should BOCES start to provide to your district?

7. What are the two most important criteria to consider in strengthening a state system of cooperative educational services? (Please check only two items below)
7 (12%) Efficiency
15 (25%) Quality of services
2 (3%) Equitable service delivery across districts
16 (27%) Maintain local control
14 (23%) Effect on student performance
6 (10%) Impact on school budgets

8. Should the state provide funding for BOCES?
20 (69%) Yes
4 (14%) No
5 (17%) Don't Know

8b. If yes, what percentage of BOCES' funding should come from the state?
4 (19%) Less than 25%
7 (33%) 26% to 50%
7 (33%) Between 50% and 75%
3 (14%) 75% or more

9. If the state provided funding for BOCES, what factors should be included in determining the amount given to individual BOCES? (Please check all that apply)

10 (18%) Equal base payment to all BOCES
20 (36%) Student enrollment in member districts
4 (7%) Number of low performing schools in member districts
13 (24%)Geographic isolation of schools in member districts
5 (9%) Operating costs of schools in member districts
3 (5%) Other

10. **Should BOCES be able to apply directly to the federal government for No Child Left Behind funds?**
19 (66%) Yes
2 (7%) No
8 (28%)Don't Know

11. **If BOCES continue to charge a fee to their member districts, which of the following factors should be included in determining any fee charged by BOCES to a member district?** (Please check all that apply)
2 (4%) Equal fee per district
28 (57%)Total student enrollment in district
2 (4%) Number of low performing schools in district
8 (16%) Geographic isolation of schools in district
5 (10%) Operating costs of schools in district
4 (8%) Other

12. **Check your district's Colorado Department of Education region:**
5 (17%) Metro
1 (3%) North Central
11 (37%) Northeast
2 (7%) Northwest
0 (0%) Pikes Peak
2 (7%) Southeast
7 (23%) Southwest
1 (3%) West Central
1 (3%) Don't Know

13. **Approximately how many students are in your school district?**
15 (54%) Less than 500
4 (14%) 500 to 999
3 (11%) 1000 to 3999
6 (21%) 4000 or More

14. Is there anything else we need to know about the BOCES system in Colorado?

APPENDIX E

Cooperative Educational Services Advisory Council (CESAC) Members

- Dave Van Sant – CESAC Co-Chair and Executive Director, East Central BOCES
- Jane Toothaker - CESAC Co-Chair and Executive Director, Northwest BOCES
- Ron Brady – President, Colorado Education Association
- Randy DeHoff – Vice-Chairman, State Board of Education
- Ken Delay – Executive Director, Colorado Association of School Boards
- Senator Lewis Entz
- Cal Frazier – Education Consultant
- Senator Mark Hillman
- Gerald Keefe – Superintendent, Kit Carson
- Senator Ken Kester
- Dan Morris – Education Consultant
- Jared Polis – Chairman, State Board of Education
- Peg Portscheller - Adams State Representative
- Robert Reichardt – Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Teaching
- Lynn Rhodes – Dean, University of Colorado at Denver, College of Education
- Wes Smith – Interim Director, Rural Schools Caucus
- Gary Sibigtroth – Assistant Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education, Educational Services
- Representative Nancy Spence
- George Straface – Superintendent, Westminster
- Brian Talbott – Executive Director, Association of Educational Service Agencies
- Bob Tschirki – Executive Director, Colorado Association of School Executives
- Representative Al White
- Senator Sue Windels

APPENDIX F

PERSONS INTERVIEWED FOR STUDY

- Roy Brubacher, author of BOCES legislation, former Colorado BOCES Association executive director, and former school board member
- Kathy Christie, vice-president (Information Clearinghouse), Education Commission of the States
- Harlan Else, Superintendent, Cheyenne Mountain
- Ron Fielder, Chief Administrator, Grant Wood Area Education Agency 10, Iowa
- Lorrie Harkness, Colorado Department of Education, Director of Special Education Ray Kilmer, Executive Director, Colorado BOCES Association
- Representative Keith King
- Kim Knous, Deputy Director, Donnell-Kay Foundation
- Brian Lessman, Superintendent, Windsor
- Tony Lewis, Executive Director, Donnell-Kay Foundation
- Laddie Livingston, Superintendent, Delta Joseph J. Marinelli, District Superintendent, Wayne/Finger Lakes BOCES, New York
- Dale McCall, Executive Director, Centennial BOCES
- Bill McKinney, CEO, Education Service Center, Region IV, Texas
- Roger Neppl, , Colorado Department of Education, Regional Service Team Director and BOCES Liaison
- Clair Orr, Colorado State Board of Education
- Andy Pechacek, Managing Director, Financial Services, Education Service Center, Region IV, Texas
- Gary Sibigtroth, Colorado Department of Education, Regional Managers Unit
- Susan Sparks, Executive Director, Front Range BOCES
- Bob Stephens, education consultant
- Brian Talbott, Executive Director, Association of Educational Service Agencies
- Jane Toothaker, Executive Director, Northwest BOCES
- Ed Vander Took, Executive Director, Mountain BOCES
- Dave Van Sant, Executive Director, East Central BOCES
- Bill Windler, Colorado Department of Education, Special Services
- Representative Brad Young