



Ohio's Educational Service Centers April 2021



What are ESCs?

Educational Service Centers (ESCs) are local political subdivisions designated as local education agencies (LEAs) and Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) in federal law and school districts in state law. Ohio's 51 ESCs are large-scale, regionally located educational support agencies that enhance the ability of schools and education professionals to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students regardless of where they live and attend school.

ESCs are the largest component of the state's Educational Regional Service System (ERSS), which has the statutory mandate to support state and regional education initiatives and efforts to improve school effectiveness and student achievement. The primary ESC service areas are centered around:

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| 1) curriculum and instruction, | 6) facilitation, networking, and coordination, |
| 2) school improvement, | and |
| 3) professional development, | 7) implementation of statewide initiatives |
| 4) special education and related services, | charged to the ESCs by the Ohio General |
| 5) preschool, | Assembly or department of education. |

These services are often done in partnership and coordination with other regional support agencies including State Support Team (SST) programs embedded within 16 ESCs and information technology centers (ITCs).

Whom do ESCs serve?

The primary audience for ESC services are schools and school districts and community-based organizations serving schools. All districts under 16,000 ADM are required to be aligned to an ESC, while those over 16,000 ADM can opt into aligning with an ESC. Ohio's ESCs provide both contracted and state required services to all **610** public school districts, **165** chartered non-public schools, **99** charter schools and STEM schools.

ESC services impact well over **1.5 million** students – inside of this, ESCs provide direct services to approximately **269,000** students many of whom are underserved and at-risk youth. For example, 43 ESCs operate 106 general education preschools and 456 integrated special education preschool classrooms; 43 operate ED/SBH classrooms; 41 operate MD classrooms; 37 operate alternative schools for at-risk youth; and 18 operate dropout recovery schools.

ESCs also directly support education professionals. In the 2018-2019 school year, Ohio's ESCs hosted **6,692** discrete professional development offerings attended by over **205,000** educators and education stakeholders. ESCs also lead over 90% of the state's Business Advisory Councils connecting schools and the business community to address issues related to job-readiness and workforce development.

What services do ESCs provide on behalf of the state and schools?

ESCs offer services to member districts which allow those districts to leverage economies of scale when purchasing services.

The Auditor of State has identified more than 350 unique services in 21 broad service categories across the statewide network of ESCs. These services range from curriculum and professional development for district educators to specialized student services including physical and occupational therapy, special education, and preschool. ESCs operate purchasing and health insurance consortia, foster community meetings, coordinate administrative employment searches, and provide technology support. These services, among the many others, provide support to Ohio's school districts in areas where they might struggle to develop or finance independently.

Under state law, every ESC is required to post a list of service offerings and the cost of those services on the ESC website. A list of ESCs and ESC websites is available at:

<https://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/ESCs>. Districts should consult directly with their respective ESCs.

ESCs are the central component of the Ohio Educational Regional Service System (ERSS) under Chapter 3312 of the Ohio Revised Code, which was created by the Ohio General Assembly to increase efficiency, reduce duplication and redundancy, provide school improvement and other technical assistance and support functions. Under this statute, ESCs are required to carry out *anything charged to them* by the General Assembly and/or the Ohio Department of Education in addition to other statutorily defined services, which includes:

- Coordination of cooperative special education programs
- Establishment of Business Advisory Councils
- Professional Development related to state standards, model curricula, and assessments
- Technical assistance and support related to value added and the state report card
- Regional Data Leads
- PBIS Training and Support
- OTES/OPES Training and Support
- State Support Teams

Additionally, O.R.C. §3312.01(C) provides that ESCs may enter contracts with school districts under O.R.C. §3313.843, O.R.C. §3313.844, and/or O.R.C. §3313.845 for the provision of services that may include:

“(1) [a]ssistance in improving student performance; (2) [s]ervices to enable a school district or school to operate more efficiently or economically; (3) [p]rofessional development for teachers or administrators; (4) [a]ssistance in the recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators; [and] (5) [a]ny other educational, administrative, or operational services.”

Equity of opportunity is central to the role of ESCs. As consortia-based service delivery models, ESCs pull together the collective resources of client school districts to ensure access to high quality opportunities for all students. This is a foundational design element of the ESC organization. Because of their geographic proximity and requirement that they serve all school districts, ESCs are well positioned to ensure equal access to high quality opportunities for all. Direct student services are often provided to vulnerable populations including preschoolers, students with disabilities, court-involved youth, migrant students, English language learners, drop-out students and those at risk of dropping out, and more.

ESC Response to COVID-19

During these times of unprecedented uncertainty, Ohio's ESCs are dedicated to providing school districts with professional development, technology, support, planning, and administrative services that help improve student learning, enhance the quality of instruction, expand equitable access to resources and maximize operating and fiscal efficiencies. ESCs are working closely with district and school leadership to provide a continuity of service and support to students and families. They are doing this in partnership with other county-based agencies and non-profit community action organizations. For leading examples of how Ohio's ESCs are supporting students, educators, and schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic visit: <https://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/ESC%20Services%20%26%20School%20Closure>. ESCs are also working closely with the state of Ohio as outlined in the examples below.

Instructional Delivery Models. ESCs currently report weekly to the department of education on school district instructional delivery models to assist the department, Administration, and other policy makers in understanding where and how Ohio's students are being educated.

Mask Distribution. ESCs delivered nearly 12 million masks on behalf of the State of Ohio, in partnership with the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Management Agency, to students and teachers in public, charter, STEM, JVS/CTC, and chartered nonpublic schools across Ohio in 2020-2021. This included private donations from Ford Motor Company and the Ohio School Boards Association.

COVI-19 Rapid Test Kit Distribution. In partnership with the State of Ohio COVID Testing Team and Ohio Departments of Health, Insurance and Education, ESCs delivered nearly 230,000 COVID-19 rapid test kits to students and teachers in public, charter, STEM, JVS/CTC, and chartered nonpublic schools across Ohio. Test kits were delivered to 11 ESC "drop sites" then deployed to the remaining 40 ESCs who coordinated delivery at the local level. The Ohio Department of Health secured the self-administered test with the goal to make these tests available and accessible in Ohio schools. The state allocated the tests through ESCs, and each district will make the decision about whether and how to use these tests, as well as how they will be distributed. The 15-minute [BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card Home Test](#) has received FDA Emergency Use Authorization for at-home testing in collaboration with a telehealth session.

Vaccination Coordination. The State of Ohio designated Ohio's 51 ESCs as the primary working partners for districts and schools throughout the vaccination distribution process. ESCs worked with traditional public schools, community schools, STEM schools, career technical centers and JVSD, and chartered nonpublic schools to ensure proper plans and communication. To that end, ESCs have been tasked with communicating what public and retail partners are available in each school or district's respective areas, collecting and inputting provider data for each district, and submitting the data to the state for collection and aggregation to ensure that each school or district has an assigned provider for the provision of the COVID-19 vaccination. In the end, ESCs helped coordinated vaccinations for approximately 300,000 educators and essential school district employees.

Family and Community Partnership Liaisons. The CARES Act funded ESC Family and Community Partnership initiative is building the capacity of Ohio's ESCs to identify, engage, support, and meet the needs of Ohio's most vulnerable students and their families. 51 ESC Family and Community Partnership Liaisons will manage a regional process to identify gaps in services and link students and families to appropriate state and local community resources. Specific responsibilities include connecting schools, families, and youth to community resources and local systems of care and providing professional

development to enhance the capacity of local school districts to deliver effective family engagement.

Reframing Education Initiative. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in support of the work of the High School Redesign Taskforce and the statewide strategic plan for education, *Each Child, Our Future*, nearly 150 curriculum and instruction and school improvement staff, content area specialists and others from 31 ESCs have collaborated around a Reframing Education Initiative and workgroup. The vision of this Reframing Education collaborative effort is to create a decision-making framework to support districts as they consider best practices that have emerged as a result of school closures, have authentic conversations about instructional expectations and make plans to reframe and rethink the delivery of high quality educational opportunities for all students and schools. This collaborative approach also seeks to leverage ESC's direct relationships with the 16 State Support Teams (SSTs) and over 80 Regional Data Leads (RDLs) – all of which are ESC employees - and with Ohio's network of information technology centers (ITCs). The Reframing Education initiative also created the Remote Learning Plan template that many districts utilized in the Summer of 2020 to submit state-required remote learning plans. For more information about the reframing education initiative go to: <https://reframingeducation.org>.

Remote Learning Alliance. Other innovative ESC networks include the Remote Learning Alliance (RLA). The RLA is a group of educational organizations committed to the collective impact of helping districts make a smooth and impactful transition to remote learning. The Educational Service Centers of Central Ohio, Montgomery County, Northeast Ohio, and Hamilton County serve as founding partners. Membership is open to all districts and ESCs, especially districts who serve the state's most marginalized populations. To learn more about the remote learning alliance, visit: <https://www.escoco.org/RemoteLearningAlliance.aspx>.

ESCs are also actively engaged in efforts to enhance remote learning in their own organizations and with their client school districts. According to survey data from the Ohio ESC Association:

- **100%** of ESCS indicated they are providing professional development related to educational technology and remote learning.
- **89%** provide teletherapy services for students with disabilities utilizing ESC-based therapy staff.
- **57%** provide online instruction specially designed for students with disabilities using a combination of ESC staff and external providers like Vizzle.
- **52%** of Ohio's ESCs identify, review, and approve content providers and other curriculum and instruction resources on behalf of school districts.
- **47%** provide a full online curriculum option for client school districts.
- **30%** provide online instruction using synchronous two-way interactive video distance learning.

The professional development offered by ESCs related to educational technology and remote learning include technology integration (77%), remote learning (77%), Google for Education (77%), Future Ready Framework (30%), digital literacy (46%), instructional strategies (84%), digital citizenship (23%), and other including SEL, assessment practices, Project Based Learning, Modern Teacher.

ESCs often coordinate with other partners to maximize remote learning/service without creating duplication - this mandate is engrained in 3312.01 of the Ohio Revised Code.

RemoteEDx. The expertise and capacity of ESCs is further leveraged throughout a new statewide remote learning initiative, RemotEDx. ESCs function as the *Support Squad*, leveraging existing experts to provide solutions-focused educational support and high-quality job-embedded professional development for remote, hybrid and blended education approaches. Other organizations working together to make each component of RemotEDx a reality include the Ohio Department of Education, Philanthropy Ohio, Ohio Distance Learning Association, INFOhio, and Ohio's Information Technology Centers.

Extended Learning Plans. Following the Governor’s announcement requesting schools and districts to develop extended learning plans, the ESC network collaborated to create a planning template to assist districts in preparing for a return to learning including attendance recovery, assessing student needs, designing interventions, and planning for extended learning opportunities. This template was designed to assist districts in meeting and exceeding this requirement and in supporting their long-term instructional planning efforts. The template is available for download at the Reframing Education website at <https://reframingeducation.org/>.

Next Steps

Under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I) funds in the CARES Act, ODE partnered with ESCs around a number of initiatives outlined above including: RemotEDx, Industry Credential and Innovative Workforce Incentive Program Start-Up, Supports for Extended Learning and Recovery Plans, Family and Community Engagement and School Improvement Supports. The goal of statewide activity under ESSER II (as with ESSER I) is to extend the above programs and supports as the Department, ESCs, and school districts continue to face the challenges of the ongoing pandemic as quickly and efficiently as possible and address other issues including: Attendance Recovery and Family Engagement, Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Connectivity Support and Extended Preschool Learning Opportunities.

The key components of this ODE / ESC partnership are the following:

- Supporting districts and schools in each designing and developing a plan for extended learning and learning recovery for students most significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on the following five key components:
 - Identification of impacted students including attendance recovery,
 - Conducting needs assessments,
 - Defining approaches and implementation strategies,
 - Leveraging partnerships, and
 - Ensuring alignment to state and local priorities and key initiatives.
- Supporting districts and schools in identifying financial resources, principally those allocated to them as part of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.
- Preparing a plan for each ESC to support the implementation of extended learning and learning recovery plans by schools and districts through direct services.
- Coordinating the work with other key initiatives.
- Integrating, coordinating and aligning with relevant partners.
- Sharing information about activities being pursued, including the impact of those activities.
- Measuring the impact of extended learning and learning recovery activities and providing feedback regarding effective practices.

Accessing ESC Services

- For more information about Ohio’s ESCs go to <https://www.oesca.org>
- To locate an ESC, go to: <https://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/ESCs>
- For information on ESC services during the COVID-19 related school closures go to: <https://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/ESC%20Services%20%26%20School%20Closure>.

- To learn more about the remote learning alliance, visit: <https://www.escco.org/RemoteLearningAlliance.aspx>.
- To participate in the Reframing Education Initiative, go to: <http://reframingeducation.org/>
- Access RemotEDx Support Squad information here: <https://remotedx.infohio.org/professional-learning/support-squad>

