



WHITE AND PARTNERS LLC

Comprehensive Educational Consulting

SULLIVAN COUNTY BOCES

Organizational Study & Operational Analysis

Prepared by White & Partners, LLC
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Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Purpose and Scope of the Study
3. Study Methodology
4. Organizational Overview
5. Stakeholder Feedback Summary
6. Fiscal & Financial Review
7. Cross-Contracting & Shared Services Review
8. Facilities & Space Utilization Analysis
9. Special Education & Program Capacity Review
10. Instructional Support Services & Model Schools Review
11. Strategic Recommendations

1. Executive Summary

Major Findings

The findings of this study reflect the convergence of multiple sources of information, including stakeholder interviews, survey responses, document analysis, and site observations. While individual perspectives varied, several consistent themes emerged across these data sources. These themes help explain both the strengths of Sullivan BOCES and the systemic challenges the organization currently faces.

Survey responses from Sullivan BOCES staff, component school district administrators, community members, and members of component district Boards of Education indicate continued recognition of the important role Sullivan BOCES plays in supporting educational programs across the region. Respondents across stakeholder groups identified Career and Technical Education programs and workforce preparation initiatives as significant strengths of the organization and expressed interest in continued growth in these areas. At the same time, several recurring concerns emerged through the survey responses, particularly regarding the availability of special education program placements, the perceived cost of services relative to neighboring BOCES regions, and the need for continued communication and engagement with component districts and their governing boards. These themes were consistent with observations raised during interviews with school district superintendents and other regional stakeholders and suggest that future planning efforts should focus on strengthening program capacity, addressing operational constraints, and reinforcing collaborative relationships with component districts.

Finding 1: CTE and Special Education Programs and Dedicated Staff Provide a Solid Operational Foundation to Build On

Across interviews and surveys, stakeholders consistently identified the commitment and professionalism of Sullivan BOCES staff as a major strength of the organization. Respondents frequently cited the expertise of teachers, related service providers, and administrative staff, as well as their dedication to supporting students with diverse needs.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs were widely viewed as a strength of the BOCES and an important regional asset. Several CTE programs were described as high-quality offerings that provide meaningful career pathways and valuable opportunities for students that individual districts may not be able to provide independently. This solid human capital foundation represents a critical asset for the organization moving forward

Implications

While program and staff quality are important strengths, these assets must be supported by organizational systems, facilities, and strategic planning that allow them to operate effectively and sustainably.

Finding 2: Program Capacity and Structural Constraints Exist

Sullivan BOCES is experiencing increasing pressure on program capacity driven by a combination of rising student needs, staffing challenges, and facility limitations. Demand for both Career and Technical Education and specialized special education programs has grown, while available space, staffing availability, and program configurations have not kept pace. As a result, the organization faces ongoing challenges in meeting all district requests for services, particularly in high-demand and high-need program areas. These constraints are not unique to Sullivan BOCES but reflect broader regional and statewide conditions; however, their impact is more pronounced in smaller BOCES systems where fluctuations in enrollment and staffing can significantly affect program availability.

Implications

Without strategic planning to expand or modernize facilities and program capacity, Sullivan BOCES may face increasing difficulty meeting the needs of component districts and students.

Finding 3: Cost and Value Alignment Are Critical to District Participation

Survey data and superintendent interviews consistently identified cost as a major factor influencing district decisions regarding BOCES participation.

While many stakeholders view the services provided by Sullivan BOCES as valuable, concerns were expressed regarding the relationship between cost and perceived value. In some cases, districts indicated they may explore alternative service delivery models if costs continue to rise without corresponding improvements in access or program availability.

A comparative review of Career and Technical Education and special education tuition rates across several BOCES regions indicates that Sullivan BOCES program costs generally fall within the range observed among similar BOCES organizations. Differences in tuition levels appear to reflect variations in program size, enrollment levels, and staffing requirements rather than significant differences in operational efficiency.

This dynamic is not unique to Sullivan BOCES but is particularly significant in smaller BOCES organizations where economies of scale may be more difficult to achieve.

Implications

Ensuring alignment between cost structures, service design, and district expectations will be critical to maintaining participation and sustaining the BOCES service model.

Finding 4: Special Education Services Represent Both a Core Strength and a Significant Systemic Challenge

Special education programming represents one of the most important services provided by Sullivan BOCES and serves as a cornerstone of the organization's mission.

At the same time, findings from this study suggest that the special education system is experiencing increasing pressure related to program capacity, staffing availability, and evolving student needs.

District leaders expressed concerns regarding:

- Access to program placements
- Program availability for students with complex needs
- The overall cost structure associated with special education services

These challenges are not unique to Sullivan BOCES and reflect broader statewide trends. However, the impact may be amplified in smaller regions where program options are limited.

Implications

A comprehensive review of special education program design, placement practices, and capacity planning will be necessary to ensure that the BOCES can continue to meet regional needs effectively.

Finding 5: Facilities and Infrastructure Are a Critical Strategic Issue

Facilities conditions and space limitations emerged as one of the most significant operational challenges facing Sullivan BOCES.

Several facilities currently used by the BOCES are aging and were not originally designed to support modern instructional programs or specialized student needs. In addition, reliance on leased space creates operational limitations and long-term financial uncertainty.

Facilities constraints directly impact the BOCES' ability to expand programs, modernize instructional environments, and respond to changing student needs.

Implications

Addressing facilities issues will require a coordinated regional strategy and a long-term planning approach that includes collaboration with component school districts.

Finding 6: Regional Alignment and Collaboration Can Be Strengthened

While Sullivan BOCES is widely recognized as an important regional partner, the degree of alignment among component districts varies. Some districts demonstrate strong engagement and participation in BOCES programs and services, while others utilize services more selectively. These differences reflect varying district needs, financial considerations, and historical participation patterns. At the same time, some stakeholders expressed interest in stronger regional collaboration, particularly in areas such as professional development, instructional support services, and shared programming.

The effectiveness of Sullivan BOCES as a regional service provider is influenced by varying levels of trust, communication, and engagement across component districts. A more clearly defined regional vision and strengthened relationships will be essential moving forward.

Implications

Strengthening regional communication structures and collaborative planning processes may help improve participation, alignment, and trust among component districts.

There appears to be a general lack of understanding regarding the role of educational service agencies regionally, and how educational service agencies should complement the role and mission of component school districts. In New York state specifically, despite recent jaded attitudes about the efficacy and good intentions of legislators and policymakers, the formation of BOCES by the New York state legislature in 1948, in the form of Education Law 1950, has been a very successful and robust network of support and capacity for school districts, especially in rural areas. 1950 is quite prescriptive and in many instances, how services ought to be provided, BOCES aid, RWADA, and other related issues are spelled out clearly. The 'C' in BOCES is Cooperative and the parties merely need to come together and use 1950 and the BOCES Handbooks provided by NYSED to determine what services need to be provided, and how they will be funded, administered and paid for. At the end of the day, it is everyone's BOCES. The component school districts could not achieve their mission without BOCES, and the BOCES could not exist without the component districts and their revenues for programs. The partnership is a symbiotic relationship and should be viewed as such moving forward.

Regional Collaboration Context

Discussions with regional BOCES leadership (JMT DS's) indicated that collaboration among neighboring BOCES regions has historically been limited in certain service areas, although cross-contracting and information sharing do occur in specific program areas such as special education and instructional services. Regional leaders also noted that opportunities may exist to strengthen coordination across BOCES regions in order to address shared challenges related to staffing shortages, specialized program capacity, and workforce development.

Special Education Capacity

Regional leaders also discussed challenges associated with operating specialized programs for students with significant behavioral or instructional needs. Several participants noted that the costs associated with operating highly specialized programs have increased significantly across the region, leading to ongoing discussions about whether certain programs might be more effectively operated through regional collaboration.

Workforce and Economic Pressures

Participants also highlighted broader regional factors affecting school districts throughout the Hudson Valley, including housing affordability, staffing shortages, and economic conditions that can make recruitment and retention of educational personnel increasingly difficult in certain communities.

Leadership and Regional Coordination

Regional stakeholders emphasized the importance of strong leadership and strategic planning in maintaining effective BOCES services and sustaining productive relationships with component districts. Several participants suggested that stronger regional coordination among BOCES could create opportunities to expand services and address shared challenges across the region.

Regional leaders (JMT DS's) also noted that many challenges facing Sullivan BOCES, particularly those related to specialized programming, staffing shortages, and workforce development, are shared across neighboring BOCES regions. Several participants suggested that stronger regional coordination among BOCES could create opportunities to expand specialized programs and improve access to services that are difficult for individual regions to sustain independently.

Finding 7: Structural Factors Influence the Organization's Strategic Flexibility

The size of the BOCES and the regional context in which it operates present unique structural considerations.

Regional Demographic and Economic Context

Sullivan County presents a unique and complex set of demographic and economic conditions that directly influence the educational landscape and the work of Sullivan BOCES. Located approximately 100 miles from New York City, the region experiences both the benefits and pressures of proximity to a major metropolitan area. Housing market dynamics, including the purchase of properties by individuals from outside the region, have contributed to rising costs that are not always aligned with local income levels. At the same time, the county continues to reflect the long-term effects of economic shifts following the decline of the Catskills resort industry, which historically served as a primary economic driver. While newer developments, including gaming and tourism-related enterprises, have contributed to the local economy, these have not fully offset broader structural challenges related to employment opportunities, income levels, and economic stability.

These conditions have important implications for school districts and for Sullivan BOCES. Stakeholders across multiple groups, including component district superintendents, community members, and regional leaders, consistently described a student population with significant and varied needs, often shaped by broader socioeconomic factors. These include challenges related to poverty, housing stability, workforce readiness, and access to services. Such conditions can increase demand for specialized instructional programs, student support services, and career-focused pathways, while also placing pressure on district and BOCES resources. As a result, Sullivan BOCES operates within a context where educational needs are often more intensive and complex, and where program capacity, staffing, and funding must be carefully aligned to meet those needs.

Compared to larger BOCES organizations with more component districts, Sullivan BOCES operates within a smaller system that may have fewer opportunities to achieve economies of scale. In addition, proximity to metropolitan New York City places the region within a higher-cost labor and service market. These structural realities influence staffing costs, service delivery models, and long-term financial planning.

Implications

Future planning efforts should consider innovative service delivery approaches, regional partnerships, and strategic program design to ensure that the organization can operate effectively within these constraints.

While it is not the role of the Consultants to determine the viability of the Sullivan BOCES and its future composition, one thing we would be remiss in not mentioning is that, due to the demographics described above, some thought should be given to the relationships between the Sullivan BOCES and Sullivan County officials, and Sullivan county public agency and health partners in the region. If the BOCES were to be consolidated, the connections to these agency partners would need to be maintained to provide critical services to a challenging student population. Would other BOCES

maintain these relationships from a distance? The students are entitled to these life-altering relationships and services.

These conditions do not determine outcomes, but they significantly shape the context in which Sullivan BOCES and its component districts operate

Strategic Recommendation Areas

As a result of the above findings, the following strategic recommendations have been developed. A detailed discussion of each can be found in Section 11 of this report.

- Develop a long-term facilities master plan
- Conduct a comprehensive review of regional special education program capacity
- Review cost structures and service delivery models
- Strengthen regional collaboration and strategic communication
- Conduct a periodic review of organizational structure and leadership alignment
- Explore opportunities for innovative program delivery
- Maintain a focus on continuous strategic planning

2. Purpose and Scope of the Study

Background

Dr. Robert Dufour, District Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer of the Sullivan BOCES, retired on December 31, 2025. The New York State Education Department conducted its statutory obligation to survey the component school districts following Dr. Dufour's retirement and determined that several districts had indicated structural reorganization may be needed. Based on this and other feedback, the Commissioner determined that Sullivan BOCES would commission a study to assess the current organizational structure and service capacity, prior to commencing a search to fill the District Superintendent vacancy. This study is a result of that process and determination.

The role and mission of Educational Service Agencies in New York State began with the evolution of BOCES in NYS began with the establishment of Boards of Cooperative Educational Services with the passage of Education Law 1950 in 1948. There are currently 37 BOCES in NYS. While BOCES across the state have many similarities, each BOCES is also a unique reflection of its component school districts. In NYS, school districts were established first and BOCES, with its array of services, was added later in the post-war era to meet the ever-growing needs of students in school districts, especially in rural areas.

It should be noted, however, that 2/3 of the nation, primarily in the South and West of the U.S., have Educational Service Agencies neatly folded into their school structures in the form of county-wide school systems. This means that the ESA providers and school district staff all wear the "same uniform" and are part of the same team, the 'X' County school district. This reinforces the collaborative interplay between ESA providers and school district faculty that are at times viewed more as competitive in NYS due to the independent evolution of BOCES.

Ideally, school districts and BOCES have a symbiotic, "hand in glove" relationship; BOCES would not exist without their component school districts, and component school districts could not fulfill their primary mission serving all students without BOCES.

Further, this relationship should not be shrouded in mystery as Ed Law 1950 is quite specific, as are the NYSED BOCES handbooks, about how BOCES operate and are governed, including school district utilization of BOCES services. Ed Law 1950 is quite prescribed and leaves little to the imagination, which should be helpful to BOCES leadership and school district administrators when questions arise.

Scope of Work

- Review of organizational structure
- Review of cross-contracting practices
- Fiscal and financial analysis

- Facilities and space utilization review
- Review of shared services and COSER participation
- Stakeholder engagement and feedback
- Development of recommendations for improved efficiency and effectiveness

Intended Outcomes

- Clear understanding of organizational structure and alignment with state and local initiatives and planning
- Identification of strengths and improvement opportunities
- Practical recommendations for Board consideration

3. Study Methodology

Document Review

- Organization charts
- Budgets, fund balance and cost reports
- Enrollment reports
- Service Participation reports
- Comparative costs of services across BOCES region
- Cross contract reports
- Building Condition Surveys and facilities utilization
- Salary and staffing comparisons

Interviews Conducted

- Interim District Superintendents and District Superintendents of the JMT:

As part of the study process, the consulting team also met with members of the Hudson Valley Joint Management Team (JMT), including District Superintendents and Interim District Superintendents representing neighboring BOCES regions. The purpose of this discussion was to better understand the regional service landscape, cross-contracting practices, and collaborative structures that influence how BOCES services are delivered across the Hudson Valley region. Input from these regional leaders provided valuable context regarding opportunities and challenges associated with inter-BOCES collaboration.

- Senior Cabinet Members of Sullivan BOCES
- Component School District Superintendents
- Union/Association Representatives
- Student Group from the CTE Program

Surveys

- Stakeholder survey distribution:
 - Students
 - Parents
 - BOCES Staff
 - Component School District Superintendents and Administrative Leadership
 - Component District Board of Education Members
 - Community Leaders/Partners
- Participation rates

Site Visits

- Main campus

- Leased facilities
- Special education programs

4. Organizational Overview

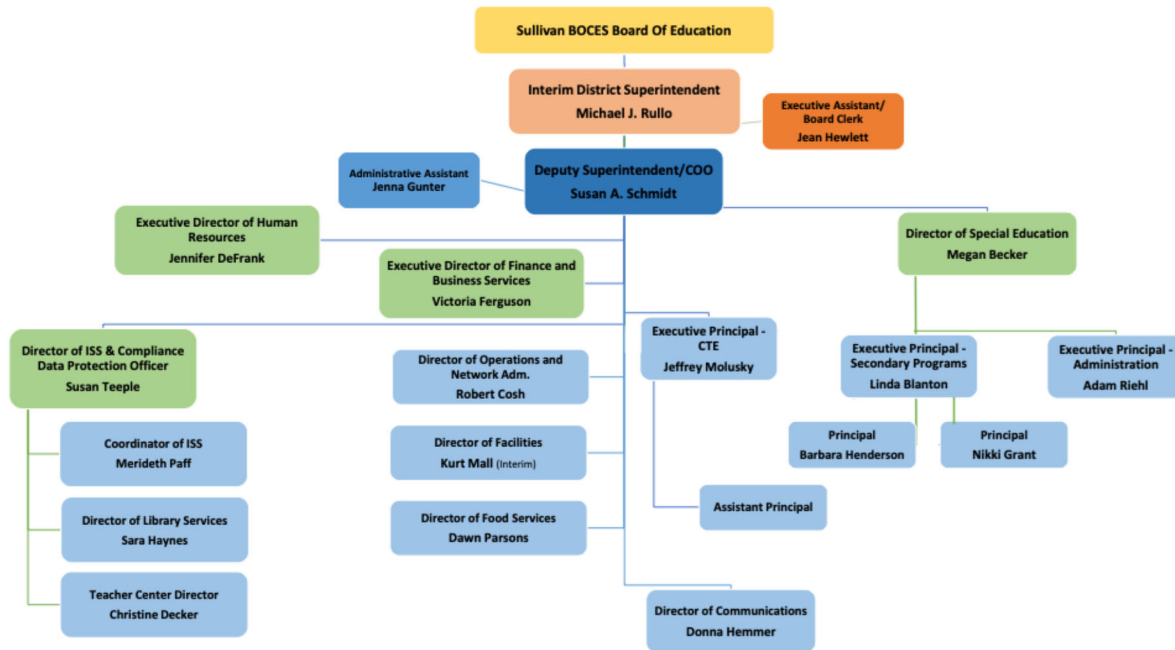
BOCES organizations typically operate with an entirely different administrative structure compared to component school districts, as they must balance program leadership, regional coordination, NYSED initiatives and operational oversight within a limited administrative framework. As a result, leadership roles within BOCES often encompass broad responsibilities that combine program management, compliance oversight, and service delivery. School district organization structures tend to be mostly vertical, with more specific roles and duties, while BOCES org charts are more spread out in horizontal branches with individuals serving shared responsibilities in different departments.

The organizational charts reviewed during this study indicate that Sullivan BOCES has maintained a structure that reflects this common model, including central leadership positions responsible for finance, human resources, operations, instructional support services, and program leadership in areas such as Career and Technical Education and special education.

While the overall structure remains broadly consistent with other BOCES organizations across the state, the charts also reflect adjustments made over time to respond to evolving program demands, staffing changes, and operational needs.

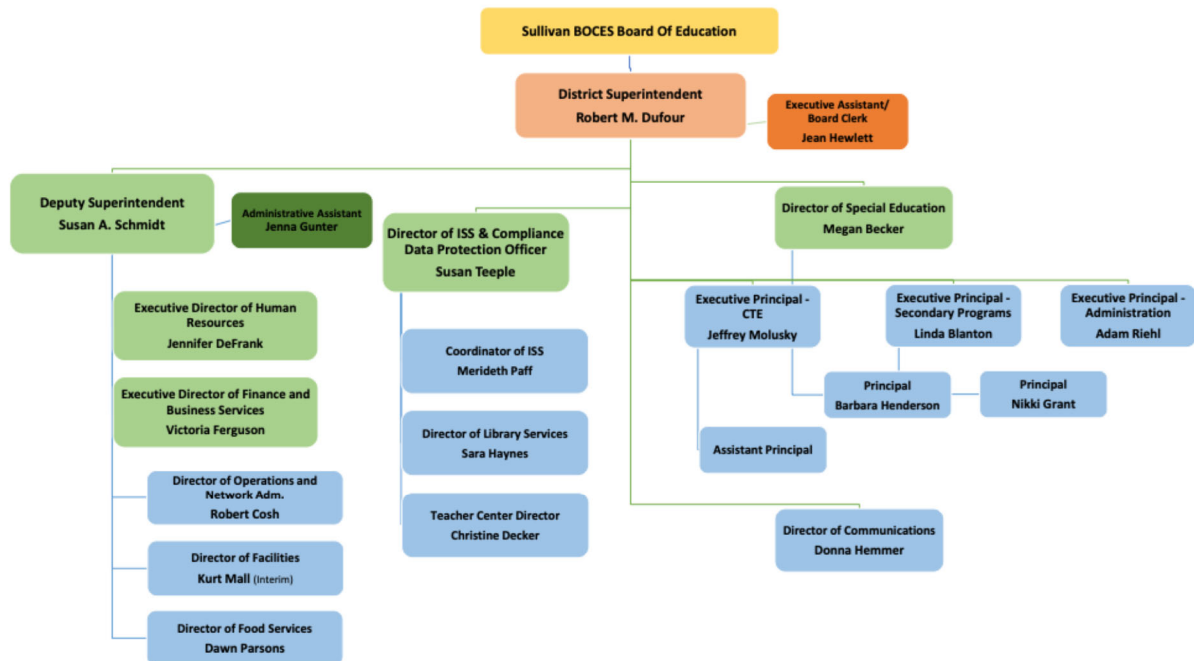
The following analysis considers both the structural design of the organization and several recent personnel and role adjustments that have influenced reporting relationships and operational alignment.

This is the current organizational chart since the retirement of District Superintendent Robert Dufour:

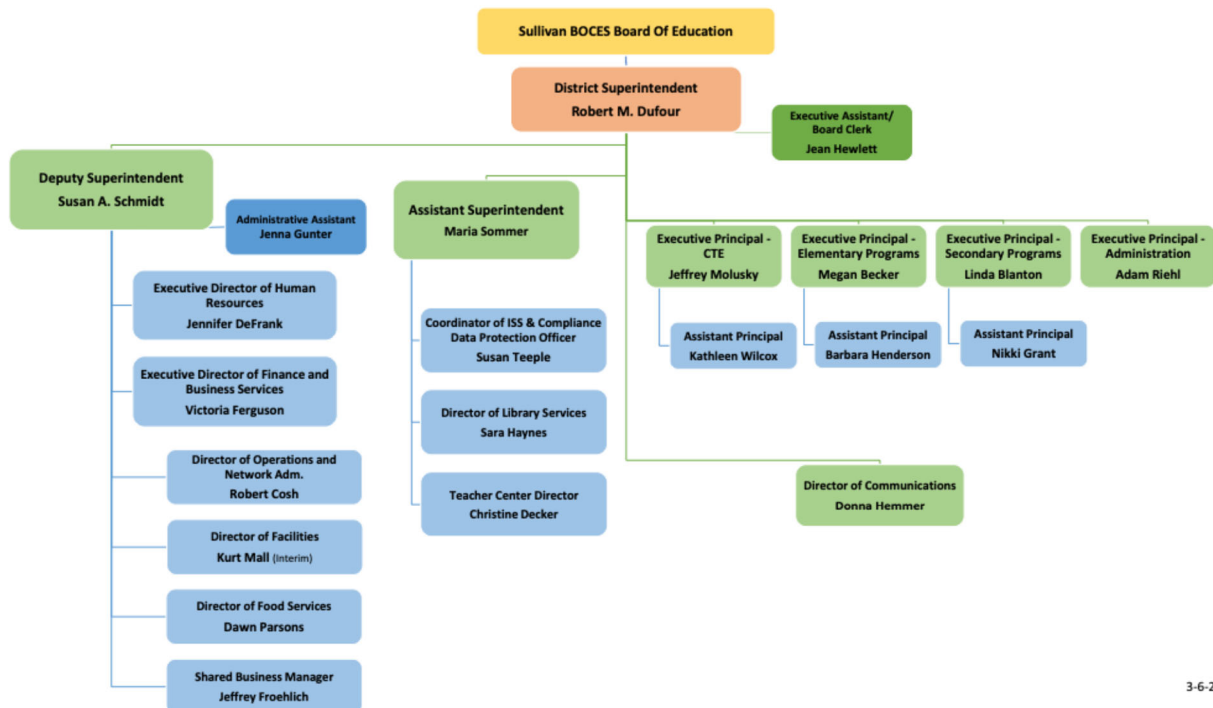


2-25-26

There were two iterations of the organizational chart in the years just prior to Dr. Dufour's retirement:



12-1-2025



3-6-23

Over time, organizational structures within BOCES systems frequently evolve in response to leadership transitions, program expansion, fiscal pressures, and emerging service needs. As a result, adjustments to titles, reporting relationships, and program leadership responsibilities are not uncommon.

The changes observed in the Sullivan BOCES organizational charts appear to reflect efforts to maintain operational continuity and manage program responsibilities within existing staffing resources. While such adjustments can provide short-term flexibility, they also highlight the importance of clearly defined roles, reporting relationships, and long-term organizational alignment.

Observations on Organizational Structure and Leadership

The evolution of reporting relationships and role responsibilities observed in recent organizational charts suggests that the structure has adapted incrementally in response to staffing transitions and operational demands. As people come and go within the organization, Sullivan BOCES has shifted positions and titles to match the skillsets of remaining and incoming staff.

Such adjustments are common within BOCES organizations; however, over time they can also create ambiguity regarding role clarity, program oversight, and cross-department coordination if not periodically reviewed and aligned with the organization's long-term strategic direction. Over time, adjustments made to accommodate individual roles and responsibilities may create ambiguity if not periodically reviewed and aligned with long-term organizational priorities.

For this reason, it may be beneficial for the Board and future leadership to periodically review the organizational structure to ensure that administrative responsibilities, program leadership, and decision-making authority remain clearly defined and aligned with the strategic priorities of the BOCES and the needs of its component districts.

Sullivan BOCES benefits from an experienced leadership team committed to the BOCES mission and focused on student outcomes. The current administrative structure also supports day-to-day operational needs and provides a stable foundation for continued service delivery.

As reporting relationships and responsibilities continue to evolve, it would be beneficial to clarify roles across leadership and program areas, confirm reporting lines and decision-making authority, and strengthen cross-department coordination. Greater clarity in these areas can help reduce gaps and duplication while supporting efficient operations.

5. Stakeholder Feedback Summary

Survey Feedback

As part of the study process, surveys were initially conducted with several stakeholder groups including Sullivan BOCES staff, component school district administrators, community members, and members of component district Boards of Education. Surveys were later added for parents and students. These surveys were intended to gather perspectives regarding BOCES services, communication, program needs, and future priorities for the organization.

Observation 1: Continued Support for the Role of BOCES

Across stakeholder groups, survey responses indicate continued recognition of the important role Sullivan BOCES plays in providing regional educational services. Board of Education members generally indicated that BOCES programs align with regional needs and continue to serve as an important resource for component school districts.

Observation 2: Strong Interest in Expanding Career and Technical Education

Multiple stakeholder groups, including community members and Board of Education representatives, identified Career and Technical Education programs as a principal strength of Sullivan BOCES and expressed interest in expanding opportunities for students to participate in workforce preparation programs.

Observation 3: Concerns Regarding Special Education Program Capacity

Survey responses across several stakeholder groups highlighted concerns related to special education programming, particularly regarding the availability of placements for students requiring specialized instructional settings. Board of Education members specifically identified the ability of Sullivan BOCES to provide sufficient special education programming as a key priority moving forward.

Observation 4: Fiscal Value and Cost Considerations

Several respondents noted concerns regarding the cost of BOCES services and the need to ensure that programs provide strong value to component districts. These concerns were most frequently expressed in open-ended responses and reflect broader regional discussions regarding the financial sustainability of services.

Observation 5: Communication and Engagement Opportunities

Survey responses also suggest opportunities to strengthen communication between Sullivan BOCES and component district Boards of Education. Several respondents

expressed interest in receiving more direct updates regarding BOCES programs and services through presentations, board-level briefings, and other forms of engagement.

Interview Feedback

Component District Superintendents

Interviews with component district superintendents revealed several consistent themes across districts, as well as some variation in experience based on district size, location, and program utilization.

Observations

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are viewed as a relative strength, with several programs demonstrating strong enrollment and positive outcomes
- Certain operational services (e.g., food service, health and safety, communications) are viewed positively
- Individual leaders within the organization are highly regarded and seen as responsive and effective
- Concern was expressed over access, consistency and capacity of Special education programs
- There were articulated perceptions expressed of high administrative and program costs relative to other BOCES
- The component district superintendents expressed concern that facilities may be outdated and not aligned with current program needs
- There were questions raised about Inconsistent quality across programs and services
- A common theme was that staffing challenges were continuing to impact program continuity

Opportunities for Improvement

- Greater clarity and consistency in special education program placement criteria
- Enhanced communication and relationship-building with component districts
- More cohesive regional planning and service alignment
- Strategic investment in facilities and high-demand program areas

Staff and Labor Perspective

As part of the study process, the consulting team met with representatives of employee groups to better understand organizational conditions, staffing trends, and workforce-related considerations at Sullivan BOCES.

Observations

- Union leadership indicated that staffing stability has improved in recent years and that the organization continues to serve as an important employer within Sullivan County. Participants noted that efforts have been made to strengthen workforce pipelines, including partnerships with local higher education institutions to support paraprofessionals and other staff in pursuing teaching credentials.
- At the same time, representatives noted that staffing challenges continue to affect program operations, particularly in specialized instructional areas. Compensation structures and regional labor market conditions were identified as ongoing factors influencing recruitment and retention.
- Union representatives also emphasized the importance of maintaining strong communication between BOCES leadership, staff, and component districts. While efforts have been made to support open dialogue and collaboration, participants suggested that continued attention to communication practices may help address concerns regarding program expectations and service delivery.
- In addition, participants noted the challenges associated with operating specialized programs in a smaller region, including the need to balance program capacity with fluctuating student enrollment and the increasing complexity of student needs. These factors were identified as contributing to the difficulty of consistently meeting all district requests for services.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Overall, the perspectives shared by staff representatives reinforce broader themes identified throughout the study, including the importance of staffing capacity, program scale, and effective communication in supporting the delivery of BOCES services.

Community Forum Input

As part of the study process, the consulting team conducted a community forum to gather input from parents, community members, workforce representatives, and other local stakeholders regarding Sullivan BOCES programs and services. Participants represented a cross-section of the Sullivan County community and provided perspectives on program strengths, challenges, and future priorities.

Community participants consistently identified Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and workforce development initiatives as central to the value of Sullivan BOCES. Participants emphasized the importance of preparing students for both careers and post-secondary education and noted that BOCES plays a critical role in supporting regional economic development. Several participants also highlighted opportunities to expand adult education and workforce training programs and to strengthen connections with local employers and community partners.

At the same time, participants noted that public understanding of the full scope of BOCES services may be limited, with some members of the community primarily associating BOCES with special education services. Participants suggested that increased outreach and communication could help raise awareness of the breadth of programs available to students and the community.

Community members also identified several structural challenges affecting student access to programs, including transportation barriers, workforce readiness skills, and broader socioeconomic factors such as housing availability. While these challenges extend beyond the direct control of BOCES, participants emphasized the importance of continued collaboration among schools, community organizations, and regional partners to address these issues.

In addition, participants highlighted the importance of strong and consistent collaboration between Sullivan BOCES, component school districts, and community partners. While past efforts were often driven by individual relationships, participants suggested that more formalized structures and systems could help sustain collaboration over time and ensure continuity as leadership changes occur.

Overall, the community forum reinforced themes identified through surveys and stakeholder interviews, including the importance of program capacity, communication, regional collaboration, and maintaining strong connections between Sullivan BOCES and the communities it serves.

The perspectives shared during the community forum suggest that many of the challenges facing Sullivan BOCES are influenced by broader regional conditions and community factors, reinforcing the importance of collaborative, system-wide approaches to addressing student and program needs.

6. Fiscal & Financial Review

The financial review of Sullivan BOCES indicates that the organization is fiscally stable and operates within expected parameters for a BOCES of its size and structure. No evidence of financial distress or mismanagement was identified. Instead, financial conditions appear to reflect broader operational realities, including program demand, enrollment fluctuations, and staffing dynamics.

The table below summarizes the yearly audited financial statements for the past two years, illustrating key revenue and expenditure information. This information offers important context for understanding the organization's fiscal position and how resources are aligned to support program delivery. The information was taken from the most recent financial statements in the 2024-25 independent audit.

Summary of Revenues to Expenditures - 2024 and 2025

	2025	2024	% Change
Total Revenues	\$67,906,000	\$57,545,000	18.01%
Total Expenditures	\$52,361,000	\$50,488,000	3.71%
Revenues/Expenditures	\$15,545,000	\$7,057,000	120.289%

	Governmental Activities		
	2025	2024	% Change
<i>Revenues</i>			
Program Revenues:			
Charges for Services	15	21	-28.57%
Charges to Components	60,572	49,899	21.39%
Charges to Other BOCES	4,594	4,245	8.22%
Interest & Earnings	441	559	-21.11%
Miscellaneous	1,323	1,837	-27.98%
State Sources	411	422	-2.61%
Federal Sources	547	558	-1.97%
Sales-School Lunch	3	4	-25.00%

Total Revenues	67,906	57,545	18.01%
<i>Expenses</i>			
Administration	3,375	2,891	16.74%
Career and Tech	6,412	6,869	-6.65%
Students with Disabilities	22,206	20,869	6.41%
Itinerant Services	980	872	12.39%
General Instruction	3,520	3,152	11.68%
Instructional Support	8,147	6,327	28.77%
Other Services	6,576	5,541	18.68%
Cost of Sales	199	158	25.95%
Other Expenses	247	232	6.47%
Capital Outlay	699	3,577	-80.46%
Total Expenses	52,361	50,488	3.71%
Revenues over Expenditures	15,545 \$	7,057 \$	120.28%
<i>Note: Totals may not add due to rounding</i>			

The table above illustrates that Sullivan BOCES had a 120% increase in Revenues over Expenditures for the 2024-25 School Year. This was largely due to a 21.39% increase in charges to component districts and modest increase in Total Expenses.

Table Net Cost of Sullivan BOCES Programs and Services – 2024 and 2025

	Total Cost of Services		% Change	Net Cost of Services		% Change
	2025	2024		2025	2024	
Administration	3,207,000	2,777,000	15.48%	1,733,000	2,004,000	-13.52%

Career and Tech	5,663,000	5,605,000	1.03%	3,086,000	1,544,000	99.87%
Students with Disabilities	21,454,000	20,922,000	2.54%	8,603,000	4,540,000	89.49%
Itinerant Services	895,000	899,000	-0.44%	291,000	21,000	1285.71%
General Instruction	3,321,000	3,215,000	3.30%	2,818,000	1,524,000	84.91%
Instruction Support	8,062,000	6,378,000	26.40%	629,000	540,000	16.48%
Other Services	5,983,000	5,574,000	7.34%	1,293,000	477,000	171.07%
Debt Proceeds	37,000	18,000	100.00%	-37,000	-18,000	-100.00%
School Lunch Program	452,000	401,000	12.72%	-25,000	-34,000	26.47%
Unallocated Depreciation	719,000	525,000	36.95%	-719,000	-525,000	-36.95%
Return of Surplus	14,586,000	8,529,000	71.02%	-14,586,000	-8,529,000	-71.02%
Total	64,379,000	54,843,000	17.39%	3,086,000	1,544,000	-99.87%

The table above illustrates the Total Cost and the Net Cost of Programs and Services for the BOCES, and the return of surplus to the districts. The BOCES had a surplus of \$14,586,000 for the 24-25 School Year that is largely due to increases in enrollment across the instructional programs and a decrease in costs. The information was taken from the most recent financial statements in the 2024-25 independent audit. The explanation from the BOCES is below.

Explanations: Sullivan BOCES experienced fluctuations in program expenditures from fiscal year 2024 to 2025, largely influenced by changes in enrollment and service subscription levels. Certain Co-Ser expenditures declined due to various factors, including staff vacancies, changes in participation levels, and an additional DEHIC health insurance premium holiday. Conversely, the increases in expenditures in other services and instructional support services was driven by higher demand for ISS utilization-based services and technology support. The significant rise in surplus is primarily attributed to increased enrollment across all instructional programs with a significant increase in special education programs and Career & Tech, combined with reduced salary and benefits

costs due to several open positions and savings from the health insurance premium holiday.

Staffing & Salary Competitiveness

Statewide, BOCES special educators have always been a sought-after commodity due to the high level of training that is provided to BOCES staff who are often placed and have experience with students with complex needs in intensive settings. In the highly competitive labor market that has existed since the COVID pandemic, Sullivan BOCES staff are in the low to middle tier of salary schedules across the region. Discussion with the component school districts as to the programs and classes that are needed should also include what the necessary staffing would look like and the compensation required to attract and retain quality educators in those areas. This will be necessary so that BOCES can initiate and reach agreement with collective bargaining groups on agreements that place them in a competitive position in the region.

Fiscal Pressures Identified

After reviewing BOCES budgets and financial documents, it does not appear that the BOCES is in financial distress or experiencing any extraordinary financial pressures, but rather, that BOCES lacks capacity in certain areas to offer all of the programs that component school districts have expressed interest in.

Inevitably, this will lead to a discussion with the component school districts about their own school budgets and financial outlook in the coming years when state funding appears to be limited. The fact that the Sullivan BOCES is down to 7 component school districts, the majority of whom are quite small in terms of enrollment, means that careful planning and conversation will need to take place regionally as to what programs the districts want and development of the necessary COSER budgets based on RWADA. It also means that the decisions of the Monticello, Liberty and Fallsburg school districts, being larger than the other component districts, will have an outsized effect on the program offerings and costs for the remaining component school districts.

As an example, the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES and its component school districts have embarked on a process that considers their district enrollments, long-term state aid and financial conditions, that is aligned to their Regionalization plan and the most important academic needs of their students in the coming years to align their regional resources and capacity to those needs. They also plan to include and provide training to school board members as well as school leaders to accomplish this goal.

Feedback from component districts indicates a consistent concern regarding the cost of services, particularly administrative costs and special education program costs, when compared to neighboring BOCES. While some variation in cost structure is expected due to scale and regional factors, the perception of higher costs when compared to other regional BOCES has influenced district decision-making, including the use of alternative service providers and the development of in-district programs. This dynamic

represents both a fiscal and strategic consideration, as long-term participation in BOCES services is directly tied to district confidence in value and effectiveness.

Regional Cost Structure Considerations

Sullivan BOCES operates within a regional context that presents unique cost challenges. Compared to larger BOCES organizations with more component districts, Sullivan BOCES may have fewer opportunities to achieve economies of scale in program delivery and administrative services. In addition, the geographic proximity to the New York City metropolitan region contributes to a higher-cost labor and service market, impacting staffing, contracts, and operational expenses. These structural factors do not fully explain cost differentials but provide important context for understanding district perceptions regarding cost and value.

Comparative Analysis of Career and Technical Education and Special Education Tuition

Purpose of the Analysis

As part of the organizational review, tuition rates for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and selected special education programs were compared across several BOCES regions within the broader Hudson Valley and Central New York areas. The purpose of this comparison was to provide context for stakeholder perceptions regarding the cost of Sullivan BOCES services and to determine whether tuition levels fall within the range observed among comparable BOCES organizations.

The analysis included tuition information from Sullivan BOCES as well as several neighboring or similarly structured BOCES regions, including Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Oneida (DCMO) BOCES, Ulster BOCES, Orange-Ulster BOCES, and Otsego Northern Catskills (ONC) BOCES.

Career and Technical Education Tuition Comparison`

Across the BOCES regions reviewed, CTE tuition rates generally fall within a relatively narrow range.

BOCES	CTE Tuition (2025-26)
Sullivan BOCES	\$15,066
Dutchess BOCES	\$13,800
DCMO BOCES	\$13,965
ONC BOCES	\$14,600
Orange-Ulster BOCES	\$13,263
Ulster BOCES	\$13,235

Although Sullivan BOCES tuition is higher than neighboring BOCES, the differences may be influenced by factors such as:

- program enrollment levels
- number of instructional centers and program offerings
- staffing configurations
- regional labor costs
- Note: Sullivan BOCES CTE tuition includes an allocation for capital program renovations

For example, ONC BOCES operates two vocational centers serving approximately 400–440 students across 11 programs, while other BOCES regions serve significantly larger numbers of students. Differences in enrollment scale can influence per-student tuition rates, as fixed staffing and facility costs are distributed across a smaller student population in smaller BOCES regions.

Overall, the comparison suggests that Sullivan BOCES CTE tuition falls within the range observed among similar BOCES organizations of comparable size, particularly when considering differences in program size and regional characteristics.

Special Education Tuition Comparison

A similar pattern is evident when comparing tuition rates for selected special education programs across BOCES regions.

Tuition levels for intensive special education programs vary widely depending on:

- staffing ratios
- related services requirements
- program enrollment
- transportation and facility costs

2025-26 Special Education Tuition Comparison

BOCES	6:1:1	8:1:1	8:1:3	12:1:1	6:1:2
Sullivan BOCES	NA	\$80,450	\$85,105	\$67,584*	NA
Dutchess BOCES	\$79,500	\$64,167	\$67,000	\$52,833	\$84,500
DCMO BOCES	\$56,380	\$56,380	NA	\$42,285	NA
ONC BOCES	\$63,762	\$62,223	NA	\$61,189	NA
Orange Ulster BOCES	\$62,976	\$53,189	\$76,483 (8:1:2)	NA	\$78,744 (6:1:3) \$82,515

					(6:1:3.5)
Ulster BOCES	\$97,192	\$70,993	NA	\$29,002*	NA

*Small, single class programs

General comparisons of BOCES Special Education tuitions are difficult. While classroom configurations may be similar, the services embedded in the tuitions often differ from BOCES to BOCES. Additionally, some BOCES regions indicated that certain specialized programs are not operated in every school year due to enrollment levels or staffing constraints.

Observations

Observation 1: Sullivan BOCES Special Education tuition levels are somewhat comparable to other BOCES in the region, although Sullivan BOCES tuitions do tend to run at the top of range .

Sullivan BOCES CTE tuition is somewhat comparable to other BOCES in the region, although again falls at the top of the range. The Sullivan BOCES CTE tuition is like ONC BOCES, a BOCES of comparable size to Sullivan BOCES.

Observation 2: Program scale significantly affects tuition.

BOCES regions with larger student enrollments are often able to distribute fixed program costs across more students, resulting in somewhat lower per-student tuition.

Observation 3: Smaller BOCES experience greater tuition variability.

Regions with smaller program enrollments may experience greater year-to-year changes in tuition rates depending on staffing requirements and student enrollment.

Observation 4: Special education program costs are high across all BOCES.

Intensive special education programs represent one of the most significant cost drivers for BOCES organizations statewide.

Analysis

The comparative tuition analysis indicates that Sullivan BOCES program costs generally fall at the top of the range observed among BOCES in the region, partially due to their smaller size and challenges with economies of scale. Component districts frequently access additional programs and services through cross-contracting arrangements with neighboring BOCES. Cross-contracting is a common feature of the New York State BOCES system and allows districts to access specialized instructional programs, technology services, and operational supports that may not be available within a single

BOCES region. An examination of cross-contracting activity among Sullivan BOCES component districts therefore provides additional insight into how districts supplement locally available services and participate in the broader regional BOCES network.

7. Cross-Contracting & Shared Services with Other BOCES

Cross contracting among BOCES regions is an established feature of the New York State BOCES system and serves as an important mechanism for providing districts with access to specialized programs, instructional services, and operational supports that may not be available within a single region. Through these arrangements, districts and BOCES can share expertise, expand service offerings, and benefit from economies of scale that would otherwise be difficult to achieve in smaller regions. An analysis of the 2024–2025 cross-contract summaries for Sullivan BOCES component districts indicates that cross-contracted services fall primarily into several categories, including specialized special education placements and related services, technology and Regional Information Center (RIC) infrastructure, instructional and curriculum supports, and certain administrative or consortium-based services. While participation in cross-contracting is common throughout the state, the patterns observed within Sullivan BOCES provide useful insight into both the strengths of existing BOCES services and the areas in which districts currently rely on neighboring BOCES regions for additional program capacity or specialized expertise. As a result, cross-contracting patterns can provide valuable context for understanding the current service capacity of a BOCES region and the extent to which districts rely on external partnerships to supplement locally provided services.

Observations

Observation 1: Specialized Special Education Programs and Related Services

A significant portion of cross-contracting activity involves specialized special education placements and related services. These include programs designed to support students with intensive instructional or behavioral needs, such as 12:1:4, 8:1:1, and 6:1:1 classroom settings, as well as related services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, and behavioral support programs.

Several component districts utilize cross-contracted placements to access specialized instructional environments and related services that may not currently be available locally or that require highly specialized staffing and facilities. For example, districts including Monticello and Fallsburg access a range of specialized placements and related services through cross-contracting arrangements with other BOCES regions.

While cross contracting for specialized placements is common throughout New York State, particularly for highly specialized programs, the volume of such placements can also reflect the level of program capacity available within a BOCES region.

Observation 2: Technology Infrastructure and Regional Information Center Services

A second major category of cross-contracted services involves technology infrastructure and Regional Information Center (RIC) services. Many Sullivan BOCES districts

participate in regional systems that provide data management platforms, network infrastructure, software licensing, Medicaid claiming systems, and other shared technology services.

These services are typically operated through larger regional BOCES that host RIC operations serving multiple BOCES regions. District participation in these systems allows schools to access complex data and technology infrastructure that would be difficult to maintain independently. Examples include data warehouse services, RTI data platforms, Medicaid billing systems, and network connectivity services accessed through regional technology partnerships.

These patterns are consistent with statewide practice but provide important insight into local capacity.

Observation 3. Instructional, Professional Development, and Consortium Services

Cross-contracting also occurs in a range of instructional and administrative services that are frequently organized through regional consortia. These services include curriculum initiatives, instructional resource programs, professional development workshops, and administrative coordination activities. Examples include participation in regional principal centers, curriculum support services, instructional kit programs, and professional development initiatives offered through neighboring BOCES regions.

Observation 4: Relationship Between Cross-Contracting and Program Capacity

A review of cross-contracting activity also suggests that several high-cost placements obtained by component districts involve specialized special education programs requiring highly structured environments, specialized staffing, and appropriate physical facilities.

Many of these programs—including 6:1:1 behavioral placements, severe developmental disability programs, and other intensive support settings—typically require dedicated instructional space and specialized classroom configurations in order to operate effectively.

During interviews conducted as part of this study, several stakeholders also noted that existing BOCES facilities may limit the ability to expand or add additional specialized programs. When considered together, the cross-contracting data and facility conditions suggest that some districts may access specialized placements through neighboring BOCES regions when appropriate space or program capacity is not available locally.

Observation 5: Cross-Contracting and Regional Service Utilization

While Sullivan BOCES component districts access a variety of services through cross-contracting arrangements with neighboring BOCES, the available data also demonstrates that districts continue to rely extensively on Sullivan BOCES for a broad

range of instructional and operational services. In many cases, cross-contracted services appear to supplement rather than replace local BOCES programs. District participation in Sullivan BOCES services remains substantial across several major service categories.

Taken together, cross-contracting patterns suggest that districts are supplementing local BOCES services in response to capacity constraints and program availability, rather than replacing Sullivan BOCES services entirely.

Observation 6: Sullivan BOCES Serves Districts Beyond Its Component Region

While much of the discussion regarding cross-contracting focuses on services accessed by Sullivan BOCES component districts, the review also identified examples of Sullivan BOCES providing services to districts outside its own component region. These arrangements demonstrate that Sullivan BOCES possesses specialized expertise and program offerings that are valued by neighboring districts and BOCES regions.

Examples include:

- Arts in Education COSER services provided to districts in Orange County;
- Instructional Support Services and professional development offerings utilized by districts outside the Sullivan region;
- Career and Technical Education programs serving approximately thirty students from Ellenville Central School District whose desired programs are not available through Ulster BOCES;
- Special education services provided to students from Ellenville, Port Jervis, Middletown, and Margaretville Central School Districts, as well as students from Downsville, Pine Bush, and Goshen in previous years;
- Central Business Office services provided to districts including Rondout Valley, Marlboro, North Rockland, and Rensselaer City.

Analysis

Overall, the cross-contracting patterns observed in Sullivan BOCES reflect a combination of locally provided BOCES services and participation in broader regional service networks. While component districts continue to rely extensively on Sullivan BOCES for a range of core services, cross-contracting arrangements allow districts to access specialized programs, technology infrastructure, and regional initiatives that benefit from economies of scale beyond a single BOCES region. These patterns are consistent with practices observed across New York State, particularly in smaller BOCES regions where collaboration with neighboring BOCES allows districts to access specialized expertise and program offerings that might otherwise be difficult to sustain locally.

Discussions with regional BOCES leadership (JMT DS's) indicated that collaboration among neighboring BOCES regions occurs primarily through cross-contracting

arrangements and limited program coordination. Regional leaders noted that these collaborations are often most active in specialized service areas such as special education programs and technology infrastructure where economies of scale benefit multiple BOCES regions.

In conversations with BOCES Instructional Support Service leadership, there is at times underutilization of certain COSERS. There are school districts who are paying the base fee for certain COSERS, then underutilizing these same COSERS, not taking delivery of all the services included in the COSER, or not sending staff to BOCES training. This is not uncommon in other BOCES regions. Component school districts occasionally tell BOCES that they want/need certain training and then do not send enough staff for the BOCES to break even on the training. A comprehensive audit of COSERS and Cross-contracts beyond this study might be advisable in the near term.

In addition to underutilization of certain COSERS, interviews with component district leaders suggest that cross-contracting decisions are at times influenced by cost comparisons and program availability across neighboring BOCES. In some cases, districts are accessing services outside of Sullivan BOCES or developing internal capacity where BOCES services are perceived as unavailable or not cost-effective. This trend might portend a shift from a coordinated regional service model toward a more fragmented, district-by-district approach to service delivery, which might be detrimental in terms of uneven program availability for the students of the region.

During follow-up discussions, BOCES leadership noted that some cross-contracted services utilized by component districts involve third-party vendors rather than services provided directly by another BOCES. While districts are fully authorized to procure services through such arrangements, there may be instances in which similar services are available through Sullivan BOCES. In those situations, districts may incur additional administrative fees, surcharges, or contractual costs that could potentially be avoided through local BOCES participation. This observation highlights the importance of ongoing communication between Sullivan BOCES and component districts regarding available services and comparative costs before external arrangements are pursued.

8. Facilities & Space Utilization

Condition of Facilities

Facilities and infrastructure emerged as one of the most significant structural challenges affecting the long-term operational capacity of Sullivan BOCES.

Facilities and space constraints are a clear operational stress point for the Sullivan BOCES. Here are some of the key issues as we listened to BOCES staff, component school partners and reviewed the Sullivan BOCES Building Condition Survey:

There is some reliance on leased space. The prime examples are the college and hospital.

Similar to many BOCES, there is an aging infrastructure. Because BOCES was created by the NYS legislature in 1948, many BOCES began to spring up in rural areas across the state and establish CTE and special education sites during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Unlike school district facilities, where capital projects are initiated often and approved by school district voters, resulting in more continuous upgrades and renovations, the mechanisms for BOCES capital improvements are more complex and leave BOCES at the whim of school districts' feasts or famines based on their own annual budgets. Consequently, it has been difficult for some BOCES that did not initiate capital improvement projects prior to the Great Recession (2008) or before the pandemic. Such BOCES have at times suffered from a failure to launch when it comes to facilities improvement as there is seemingly no good time to come to school districts with tin cup in hand.

One option would be the lease-build model that has been used with great success at the Capital Region BOCES, spearheaded by Joseph Dragone. The Champlain BOCES has also utilized the lease-build approach in a more rural and less populated area like the Sullivan BOCES.

Another option would be co-location of programs at component school district sites, especially given the relatively small and decreasing enrollment sizes of the districts. This approach has been utilized in the past, and according to Special Education Director Megan Becker, this approach has been again discussed for potential space in the Liberty CSD but could not be utilized until at least 2027-28.

The Sullivan BOCES has an aging infrastructure that includes 50+-year old wings for CTE and modular buildings containing special education classrooms that are nearing end of life. Parking lots in these areas will also need repaving, and site work is not cheap. Drainage, boiler and roof projects have been completed but more will need to be done. As one can see, these facility needs are structural and not cosmetic. They will require a region-wide strategy and commitment for the students of the region.

Facilities and Program Capacity Interdependency

As noted in Theme 2, facilities limitations directly impact program availability, enrollment capacity, and long-term financial sustainability.

Current facility constraints, particularly aging instructional spaces and reliance on smaller or temporary structures, limit the ability of Sullivan BOCES to:

- Expand high-demand programs such as Career and Technical Education
- Increase enrollment in existing programs
- Modernize instructional environments

At the same time, stakeholder feedback indicates that dissatisfaction with program access, cost, and service delivery may reduce the likelihood of component district support for capital investment. Addressing facilities will therefore require both a

technical plan and a coordinated regional strategy to build understanding and support among component districts.

Building Condition Survey Findings

Sullivan BOCES completed a comprehensive Building Condition Survey (BCS) in 2024, providing an updated assessment of the condition, capacity, and remaining useful life of its facilities. The review included instructional buildings, modular classroom spaces, administrative offices, and support facilities.

The 2024 BCS indicates that while many building systems are currently rated as satisfactory, several facilities reflect aging infrastructure and limited remaining useful life for key systems, particularly within older instructional buildings.

For example, the Rubin Pollack Education Center, originally constructed in 1976, remains a primary instructional facility serving approximately 348 students. The building requires an estimated \$12.3 million in capital improvements, with several core infrastructure systems—such as water, sanitary, and gas services—identified as having approximately seven years of remaining useful life.

Similarly, portions of the BOCES Center Annex (F Building), constructed in the early 1990s, include infrastructure components dating back to the 1970s with comparable remaining useful life estimates. Newer modular facilities, such as the 2018 Modular (G Building), reflect more modern construction and significantly longer remaining useful life for building systems, with some systems projected to remain viable for several decades.

The overall facilities portfolio reflects a mix of older core buildings and newer modular structures, with a reliance on modular classroom space to support instructional programs. Several modular facilities, including the VOTEC Modular (D Wing), continue to support instructional programming; however, these structures vary in age and long-term viability.

Administrative operations are currently housed in leased space at the Liberty Mall, which provides adequate space for administrative functions but does not contribute to long-term facility ownership or capital investment by the BOCES.

Observations

The 2024 BCS and related facility data suggest several important considerations:

Observation 1: Sullivan BOCES Has an Aging Core Infrastructure

Several primary instructional and support facilities include building systems approaching the end of their useful life, particularly those originally constructed in the 1970s. These conditions will require significant capital investment in the near to medium term.

Observation 2: Sullivan BOCES Maintains Some Reliance on Modular Facilities

The use of modular buildings provides flexibility but also reflects capacity constraints within permanent instructional space. Over time, continued reliance on modular structures may present challenges related to program expansion, long-term planning, and overall facility coherence.

Observation 3: Sullivan BOCES Operates a Mixed Facility Portfolio

The BOCES operates a combination of:

- older permanent instructional buildings
- mid-life modular and annex structures
- newer modular facilities

This mixed portfolio creates variability in:

- facility condition
- program delivery environments
- long-term capital planning needs

Observation 4: Facilities are a Constraint on Program Growth

Consistent with stakeholder feedback, facility limitations appear to impact the ability of Sullivan BOCES to expand programs, particularly in high-demand areas such as Career and Technical Education and specialized special education programming. CTE courses are quite full, which is a positive sign, however, wait lists for certain programs do exist. Other BOCES have found that when they renovate or build new facilities, student enrollment and interest grows often greater than the rate prior to building or renovation.

Analysis

The data suggests the need for a comprehensive, long-term facilities strategy that addresses:

- replacement or renovation of aging infrastructure
- consolidation or reconfiguration of program space
- alignment of facilities with future program demand

Overall, the 2024 Building Condition Survey reinforces the conclusion that facilities represent both a critical asset and a significant challenge for Sullivan BOCES. While current facilities continue to support program operations, the age and condition of key infrastructure, combined with reliance on modular space, may limit the organization's ability to expand programs and respond to increasing demand. Addressing these facility-related challenges will be an important component of any long-term strategic planning effort.

Facilities nearing the end of their useful life present several operational challenges for BOCES organizations, particularly when those facilities house instructional programs that require specialized space, equipment, or safety considerations. For Sullivan BOCES, aging facilities and limited instructional space were consistently identified during interviews and site visits as factors that may affect:

- Program enrollment capacity
- Future Expansion of high-demand programs such as Career and Technical Education
- The ability to modernize instructional environments
- Long-term maintenance and operational costs

These challenges are particularly significant in specialized programs such as Career and Technical Education and special education, where facilities must accommodate equipment, safety requirements, and specialized student supports.

Facilities conditions also intersect with broader regional dynamics. Feedback from component district leaders indicated that concerns regarding cost, program access, and service availability may influence district willingness to support large capital investments.

This dynamic creates a potential cyclical challenge:

1. Aging facilities limit program growth and modernization
2. Limited program capacity affects district satisfaction and participation
3. Reduced participation may make it more difficult to build regional support for capital investment

Breaking this cycle will likely require a clear regional facilities strategy and a collaborative planning process involving component school districts.

9. Special Education & Program Capacity

Special education services represent one of the most significant and complex program areas provided by Sullivan BOCES. BOCES programs play a critical role in supporting component districts by providing specialized placements, instructional programs, and related services for students whose needs cannot be effectively met within district-based programs.

When BOCES provide special education services, even when things are going well, there is system tension. School districts often want more, or as much access to these programs as possible. BOCES try to maintain program integrity. Adding more students to programs who might fall outside the similarity of needs in certain classes can dilute the program's effectiveness. This system tension and the related dialogue can feel like things are contentious, however these conversations are necessary and the ensuing push-pull is a recognition that both school districts and BOCES are doing their due diligence and advocating for their students and programs. Getting more students into appropriate programs helps the school districts; maintaining program integrity is also best for all the students within those programs. It is merely how the system works and it is seldom a perfect fit for both parties.

As part of this study, the consulting team reviewed multiple sources of information related to special education services, including stakeholder interviews, survey responses, enrollment data, and classification trends across the component school districts.

Together, these data sources indicate that while Sullivan BOCES continues to play an essential role in supporting students with disabilities across the region, the system is experiencing increasing pressure related to program capacity, student needs, and regional enrollment dynamics.

Regional Special Education Classification Trends

Across Sullivan BOCES component districts, approximately 15.47 percent of students are classified as students with disabilities during the 2025–2026 school year, a rate that has remained relatively stable over the past several years.

Although the overall classification rate has remained consistent, there is considerable variation among component districts. Some districts report significantly higher classification rates than others. For example, Monticello Central School District reports a classification rate exceeding 20 percent, while other districts in the region report rates closer to 11–13 percent. Because Monticello is the largest district in the county, trends within that district have a disproportionate influence on regional demand for special education services.

The data also indicates that only a portion of students with disabilities are served through BOCES programs. Most students with disabilities remain in district-based

programs, while BOCES programs typically serve students with more specialized or intensive needs.

This model is consistent with the traditional role of BOCES across New York State as a provider of specialized programs that districts may not have the capacity or resources to operate independently.

Variation in District Reliance on BOCES Programs

The data also shows that the proportion of students with disabilities placed in BOCES programs varies widely across districts.

Some districts rely heavily on BOCES programs to serve students with more complex needs, while others operate a larger number of district-based programs. This variation reflects differences in district size, staffing capacity, available facilities, and historical program development.

For Sullivan BOCES, this uneven reliance presents an ongoing planning challenge. Program demand may fluctuate significantly depending on district needs, changes in student populations, and the availability of district-based programming. As a result, the BOCES must maintain the ability to respond to changing placement needs while managing program staffing, facilities, and operational costs.

Enrollment Size and Program Planning

Enrollment data also highlights the unique challenges faced by smaller school districts in the region. Several component districts operate with relatively small total student populations. In these districts, small changes in student enrollment or classification status can significantly affect program demand.

For example, enrollment data from smaller districts such as Rockland Central School District demonstrate that relatively small numbers of students with disabilities can represent a significant percentage of total enrollment within those districts.

When individual districts experience even modest increases in students requiring specialized placements, the impact on BOCES program demand can be significant.

This dynamic reinforces the importance of regional programming capacity and highlights the role that BOCES plays in supporting smaller districts that may not have the ability to operate specialized programs independently.

Increasing Complexity of Student Needs

Interviews with component district superintendents and BOCES leadership consistently indicated that the complexity of student needs has increased in recent years. In particular the districts referenced growing demand for programs serving students with:

- Behavioral and emotional support needs
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Intensive instructional and therapeutic services

These trends mirror statewide patterns across New York State, where districts and BOCES are increasingly serving students with complex academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. Programs designed to support these students require specialized staffing, appropriate facilities, and access to related services, all of which can increase operational costs and program planning complexity.

In addition to increasing student complexity, BOCES leaders noted that staffing shortages in special education have become a significant statewide challenge. Across New York State, districts and BOCES report ongoing shortages of certified special education teachers, related service providers, and specialized program staff. These workforce constraints can limit the ability of BOCES organizations to open additional classrooms or expand program offerings even when student demand exists. As a result, capacity limitations are influenced not only by facilities and enrollment factors, but also by the availability of qualified personnel to staff specialized programs.

Program Access and Capacity

Placement decisions for secondary-level special education programs are often among the most complex responsibilities within BOCES service systems. Unlike elementary programs, where students are earlier in their educational trajectory and typically have shorter educational histories, secondary placements frequently involve students with longer records of interventions, behavioral supports, academic challenges, and prior program placements.

As a result, secondary special education programs must carefully consider whether the structure of an existing classroom program, staffing configuration, and available supports can appropriately meet a student's needs while also maintaining the integrity of the instructional environment for other students in the program.

During interviews conducted as part of this study, several component district leaders expressed concerns regarding access to certain BOCES secondary programs, including instances in which students were not admitted or were returned to district placements. Follow-up discussions with BOCES leadership indicated that such decisions are typically influenced by multiple factors, including program design, available staffing, behavioral support capacity, and the need to ensure that placements remain appropriate for both the individual student and the overall classroom environment.

Differences in perspective between districts seeking placements and program administrators responsible for maintaining program structure can occasionally create frustration for both parties. Strengthening communication regarding program expectations, placement criteria, and available supports may help improve mutual understanding and support more consistent regional decision-making.

Facilities and Special Education Program Delivery

Facilities limitations are particularly significant for special education programs, which require specialized classroom environments, therapeutic spaces, and appropriate student support areas. Programs serving students with complex needs must often meet specific safety, accessibility, and staffing requirements that cannot easily be accommodated within standard classroom space. This relationship between facilities and program capacity was consistently identified by stakeholders as an important factor affecting both program availability and district satisfaction.

Collaboration and Communication

Effective coordination of special education services across the region relies on regular communication and collaboration among district leaders, CSE chairpersons, and BOCES program administrators. Sullivan BOCES has historically convened meetings of district CSE leadership to discuss program availability, student needs, and placement considerations.

Continued participation in these collaborative forums is an important component of maintaining strong regional coordination. When districts and BOCES leadership engage consistently in these discussions, the region is better positioned to respond to emerging student needs, clarify program expectations, and identify opportunities for expanded services.

Strengthening these collaborative structures may help ensure that placement decisions, program capacity considerations, and district expectations remain aligned across the region.

Observation

Observation 1: The data reviewed as part of this study suggest that Sullivan BOCES is operating within a special education environment characterized by:

- Stable but relatively high regional classification rates
- Significant variation in district reliance on BOCES programs
- Increasing complexity of student needs
- Capacity constraints related to facilities and program space

Future planning efforts may benefit from a comprehensive review of regional program capacity, facilities needs, and regional demand to ensure that Sullivan BOCES and the component districts can continue to meet the evolving needs of students.

Observation 2: Feedback from component district superintendents consistently identified concerns related to access to special education programs.

Districts reported instances in which students were not accepted into BOCES programs or were subsequently removed from programs, creating operational and instructional challenges at the district level.

Observation 3: There appears to be limited consistency in the understanding and application of criteria for program placement, at least on the school district side.

This has contributed to uncertainty among component districts and, in some cases, has resulted in districts developing or expanding their own programs to meet student needs.

Analysis

The impact of these three observations has created tension between maintaining program integrity and meeting regional demand. While the need to preserve high-quality programming is well understood, the absence of clearly defined and consistently applied criteria has impacted trust and predictability in service delivery.

If these issues remain unresolved, they may contribute to increased fragmentation of special education services across the region, potential duplication of services at the district level, added strain on district resources and staffing, and erosion of confidence in BOCES as a primary service provider.

10. Instructional Support Services

Observation 1: Instructional COSER Utilization

Several districts underutilize instructional COSERS, for example, they pay the COSER base fee but do not fully access the services included in that fee (including training).

Observation 2: Regional Literacy / Science of Reading

- Science of Reading implementation appears uneven across the region; ELA performance suggests that a more cohesive, coordinated literacy effort could improve outcomes.
- Sullivan BOCES has offered support in this area, including literacy modules developed by SUNY New Paltz.
- Cross-contracting data indicates that several districts are also receiving Science of Reading training or materials through neighboring BOCES.

With some districts using Sullivan BOCES, others using neighboring BOCES, and others pursuing district-led initiatives, the region currently has a patchwork approach to literacy that may limit broad, sustained gains.

Observation 3: Technology & RIC Relationship

- There seems to be a lack of involvement by Mid-Hudson RIC of Sullivan BOCES and/or the component districts on the Mid-Hudson RIC Regional Advisory Council (RAC), which will need to be addressed with Mid-Hudson to encourage representation and input. It is reported by Sullivan BOCES that the RIC RAC has not been meeting.
- The relationship with the Mid-Hudson RIC is unclear and worth clarifying and strengthening to improve coordination, visibility of local expertise, and shared planning.
- Sullivan BOCES has WAN/internet expertise; however, the Mid-Hudson RIC and component districts do not appear to be fully aware of this capacity.
- Cybersecurity costs are increasing, including RIC services (e.g., a recent \$10,000 add-on for a phishing service).

Observation 4: Regional Principal Collaboration

Sullivan BOCES principals currently meet virtually once per month in a single all-level session. Regular, structured collaboration among building-level leaders helps the region develop a shared instructional language and align priorities. In communities facing higher levels of need, a lack of shared understanding around instruction can hinder academic growth, particularly in the elementary and middle grades.

Analysis

To build the instructional capacity in the BOCES and region, it is recommended that the BOCES follow an approach utilized commonly in other BOCES regions:

- Establish a regional instruction and professional development steering committee comprised of selected superintendents, component district instructional leadership and BOCES leadership.
- Hold separate monthly meetings for elementary and secondary principals.
- Meet in person whenever feasible.
- Have meetings co-chaired by component district personnel, with participation from BOCES administration and instructional support staff.
- BOCES and component districts should jointly commit to a consistent meeting schedule.
- Superintendents should set participation as an expectation.
- These groups should co-develop a regional vision, instructional priorities, and a shared professional learning and data framework.

Reinvigorating the principals' groups and establishing a regional instruction and professional development steering committee should be the first steps in establishing a shared instructional vision and common values across the region. These groups can become the mechanism for co-planning regional professional development days. The BOCES can then align its professional learning offerings throughout the year to the priorities identified through this collaboration.

The Mid-Hudson RIC RAC should be meeting on a regular basis. The region should also clarify the roles of the representatives on the Mid-Hudson RIC RAC in terms of expectations for gathering regional input and communication of important items to the component districts and the BOCES. This should result in clearer regional communication with the Mid-Hudson RIC regarding the needs of the Sullivan BOCES component districts, and role of Sullivan BOCES in providing other needed services.

11. Strategic Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that Sullivan BOCES has a strong foundation of dedicated staff and valuable programs that serve an important role within the region. At the same time, several structural challenges, including facilities limitations, program capacity constraints, cost concerns, and evolving district needs, require thoughtful strategic planning.

The following recommendations are designed to address the systemic themes identified in this study and are intended to support both near-term operational improvements and long-term strategic planning.

Recommendation 1. Develop a Long-Term Facilities Master Plan

Facilities limitations emerged as one of the most significant structural challenges affecting Sullivan BOCES operations. Several instructional spaces are aging, and existing facilities limit the ability to expand high-demand programs such as Career and Technical Education and specialized special education placements.

The Board of Education should consider initiating a comprehensive facilities master planning process that evaluates:

- current building conditions and projected capital needs
- program space requirements for CTE and special education
- opportunities to modernize instructional environments
- potential partnerships with component districts for shared program space

The Facilities Planning committee should be comprised of both Sullivan BOCES staff and component school district staff, including at least two superintendents.

A long-term facilities strategy will be essential to ensure that Sullivan BOCES can support future program growth and modern instructional delivery.

The findings from the 2024 Building Condition Survey, combined with stakeholder input and program analysis, indicate that Sullivan BOCES facilities are operational but increasingly constrained by age, configuration, and capacity limitations. Addressing these challenges will require a phased and strategic approach that balances immediate needs with long-term planning.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Stabilize Critical Infrastructure

Prioritize maintenance and repair of building systems identified in the 2024 BCS as having limited remaining useful life, particularly in older instructional facilities and temporary classroom spaces.

Rationale:

This will ensure continued safe and reliable operation of existing facilities while longer-term plans are developed.

2. Maximize Use of Existing Space

Conduct an internal review of current space utilization across all facilities to identify opportunities to:

- reconfigure underutilized spaces
- improve scheduling efficiency
- better align program locations with demand

Rationale:

Given current capacity constraints, optimizing existing space is a necessary near-term strategy.

3. Improve Program Access Through Flexible Models

Where facility limitations restrict program expansion, explore opportunities to expand:

- satellite or in-district program delivery
- shared program models with component districts
- targeted use of available space in partner districts

Rationale:

This approach addresses immediate access concerns without requiring large capital investments.

Medium-Term Recommendations

4. Develop a Comprehensive Facilities Master Plan

Initiate a formal facilities planning process that includes:

- condition and capacity analysis
- program alignment with facility use
- long-term enrollment projections

- capital investment prioritization

Rationale:

A comprehensive plan will provide the Board and component districts with a clear roadmap for future decision-making.

5. Evaluate the Role of Modular Facilities

Conduct a targeted review of the current reliance on modular buildings, including:

- remaining useful life of structures
- cost of continued maintenance vs. replacement
- suitability for long-term instructional use

Rationale:

While modular facilities provide flexibility, long-term reliance may not be sustainable for program growth.

6. Align Facilities with Program Priorities

Ensure that future facilities planning is directly tied to:

- expansion of Career and Technical Education programs
- growth or reconfiguration of special education programs
- workforce development initiatives

Rationale:

Facilities decisions should support the programs most valued by component districts and the community.

Long-Term Considerations

7. Evaluate Capital Investment Options

Based on the facilities master plan, consider long-term capital strategies such as:

- renovation of existing instructional facilities
- construction of new program space
- consolidation of programs into fewer, more efficient locations

Rationale:

Significant capital investment will likely be required to address aging infrastructure and support future program needs.

8. Strengthen Regional Support for Facilities Planning

Engage component districts and stakeholders early in discussions regarding long-term facilities needs, including:

- communication regarding facility conditions and constraints
- alignment of program priorities with facility investments
- exploration of shared or regional solutions

Rationale:

Given the relationship between BOCES and its component districts, successful long-term facilities planning will depend on regional understanding and support.

Addressing facilities-related challenges will be essential to supporting the long-term effectiveness of Sullivan BOCES programs and services. While current facilities continue to support operations, a proactive and strategic approach to facilities planning will be necessary to ensure that the organization can meet future program demands and maintain strong partnerships with component school districts. The establishment of a Management Steering Committee by the BOCES could be a vehicle for long-term planning.

Recommendation 2. Conduct a Comprehensive Review of Regional Special Education Program Capacity

Special education services represent a central component of the BOCES mission and are among the most complex and resource-intensive programs provided by the organization. Feedback from component district superintendents and enrollment data indicates that demand for specialized placements may exceed current program capacity in certain areas.

The Board should consider initiating a regional review of special education services that examines:

- current regional program capacity and placement availability
- emerging student needs and program demand
- opportunities for program redesign or expansion
- strategies to support districts in serving students locally when appropriate

A strategic approach to special education program planning will help ensure that services remain responsive to the evolving needs of students and component districts. It would be even more helpful if all the component school districts would be willing participants in the regional review, thus all of the special education classes and programs across the county could be put on the table to determine the best and most appropriate settings for students, distances for transportation, and costs. Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES went through a similar process a few years ago.

Recommendation 3. Review Cost Structures and Service Delivery Models

Cost considerations were consistently identified by component districts as an important factor influencing participation in BOCES services.

While the BOCES model provides important economies through shared services, districts also expressed interest in exploring additional opportunities for cost efficiency and service flexibility.

The Board and leadership team may wish to review current cost structures and service delivery models to identify opportunities for:

- improved cost transparency
- expanded shared services
- innovative program delivery approaches
- increased participation among component districts

Aligning service delivery with district needs and financial realities will be important to maintaining strong regional participation.

Recommendation 4. Strengthen Regional Collaboration and Strategic Communication

Sullivan BOCES serves as an important regional partner for component school districts. However, feedback from district leaders suggests that opportunities exist to strengthen communication, collaboration, and shared planning. The study also found evidence that Sullivan BOCES serves as a regional provider of specialized educational, business, and instructional services to districts outside its component region, reflecting areas of recognized expertise and capacity.

These are the existing BOCES and Component School District planning groups and committees as provided by Sullivan BOCES:

BOE Committees

Audit Committee

Policy Committee

Facilities Committee

Strategic Planning Committee

Stakeholder/Monthly Group Meetings

Facilities Directors Meetings

Business Officials Meetings

Special Education Leaders Meetings

Building Leader's Meetings

Superintendent Meetings
Curriculum and Leadership Meetings
CSE Chairperson Meetings
CSEA Labor Management Meetings
SCBTA Labor Management Meetings
Team Leader Meetings
Technology Directors Meetings
Data Privacy Officers DPOs Meetings (every other month)
Data Managers Meetings (reconvene in progress)
High School Guidance Counselors Meetings (quarterly)
CTE Advisory Committee Meetings (annually/quarterly in clusters)

BOCES Internal Meetings

Untenured Staff Meetings
Elementary and Secondary Staff & ERT Meetings
District-Wide Safety Meetings Admin Cabinet Meetings Professional Development Team Meetings

The Board of Education and Sullivan BOCES leadership team should strongly consider expanding opportunities for regional dialogue through:

- regular strategic planning discussions with component district superintendents
- enhanced use of existing shared decision-making structures
- collaborative exploration of new services and regional initiatives

Strengthening these partnerships will help ensure that BOCES services continue to align with district needs and priorities. For example, the CSO meetings may have more relevancy if there is more co-planning between the District Superintendent and CSO chairperson.

BOCES Steering Committees should be established if they do not exist. The committees should be chaired by a component district superintendent and allocated time to report at the CSO meetings. Common BOCES Steering Committees would be a Management Steering Committee (Finance, Operations and Facilities), CTE Committee, Special Education Committee, Instruction and Professional Development Committee and the Regional Information Center (RIC) RAC. Steering Committees are different from the monthly stakeholder group meetings, and would focus on strategic planning of BOCES programs, services, and operations. Steering Committees would likely meet on a quarterly basis. Steering Committees should be comprised of component superintendent(s), BOCES leadership and other key BOCES and component district personnel.

To help the Steering Committees function more effectively, the following template may be helpful:

- BOCES Steering Committees are advisory (not directive) to the BOCES District Superintendent regarding BOCES operations, programs and services.
- BOCES Steering Committees should be co-chaired by a CSO and a BOCES Cabinet member.
- Scheduling of and agenda-setting for meetings should be done by Co-Chairs.
- Agendas and meeting minutes should be provided to CSO's and key BOCES personnel to ensure broad dissemination. It is recommended that key items and action items should be reported at CSO meetings.
- Committees may, at times, make recommendations to the BOCES and CSO's for a particular action item under their committee purview.
- Committees should establish yearly work plans at the beginning of each school year. These plans should be provided to CSOs, the District Superintendent, and key BOCES personnel.
- Strong consideration should be given to committee co-chairs and committee membership serving for two-year terms to allow for consistency.
- Consideration for new/revised BOCES program or service should go to the relevant BOCES Steering Committee for analysis.

Recommendation 5. Conduct a Periodic Review of Organizational Structure and Leadership Alignment

Organizational structures within BOCES systems evolve over time in response to leadership transitions, program growth, and operational needs. The organizational charts reviewed as part of this study indicate that Sullivan BOCES has made several adjustments in response to staffing changes and program responsibilities.

The Board may wish to periodically review the administrative structure to ensure that:

- reporting relationships are clearly defined
- program leadership responsibilities are aligned with strategic priorities
- operational oversight supports efficient service delivery

Regular review of organizational alignment can help ensure that the leadership structure continues to support the long-term goals of the BOCES.

Recommendation 6. Explore Opportunities for Innovative Program Delivery

Several stakeholders expressed interest in exploring additional ways to expand services across the region. These opportunities may include new program offerings, expanded partnerships, or alternative service delivery models.

Examples could include:

- shared instructional programs hosted within component districts
- expanded regional professional development initiatives

- new CTE pathways aligned with workforce needs
- collaborative programs serving multiple districts

Encouraging innovation in program design may help Sullivan BOCES respond more effectively to changing educational needs while strengthening its role as a regional service provider.

Recommendation 7. Maintain a Focus on Continuous Strategic Planning

The education landscape continues to evolve in response to changing student needs, workforce demands, and fiscal pressures. For this reason, the Board of Education may wish to view this study not as a final determination but as part of an ongoing strategic planning process that supports continuous improvement and regional collaboration. Through thoughtful planning, open communication, and strong leadership, Sullivan BOCES can continue to serve as an important resource for students, families, and school districts across the region.

Why This Matters for the Future of Sullivan BOCES

Boards of Cooperative Educational Services play a unique and important role in New York State's educational system. By providing shared instructional programs, specialized services, and operational support, BOCES organizations allow school districts to offer opportunities to students that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to sustain independently.

Sullivan BOCES continues to serve as an important regional resource for the component school districts and communities of Sullivan County. Throughout the course of this study, stakeholders consistently recognized the dedication of BOCES staff, the value of key instructional programs, and the important role the organization plays in supporting students with diverse educational needs.

At the same time, the findings of this study suggest that Sullivan BOCES is operating within a set of structural conditions that will require thoughtful strategic planning in the years ahead.

Facilities limitations, evolving special education needs, and financial pressures faced by component school districts all influence how BOCES programs are utilized and how services can grow in the future. These conditions are not unique to Sullivan BOCES, but they do present important decisions for the Board of Education and leadership team moving forward.

Several themes emerged consistently across interviews, survey responses, and data analysis. First, Sullivan BOCES possesses a strong foundation of experienced educators and staff who are committed to supporting students and districts throughout

the region. This professional capacity represents one of the organization's most important strengths.

Second, the demand for specialized programs, particularly Career and Technical Education and special education services, remains significant. As student needs evolve and districts continue to seek collaborative service models, BOCES programs will likely remain an essential part of the regional educational system.

Third, the long-term sustainability of these programs will depend in part on the organization's ability to address structural challenges related to facilities, program capacity, and regional alignment. Addressing these issues will require coordinated planning, open communication with component districts, and a willingness to explore new approaches to service delivery.

BOCES organizations have historically succeeded when they have remained responsive to the changing needs of the districts they serve. In many cases, this responsiveness has involved innovation, collaboration, and a willingness to rethink traditional program structures to better support students and communities.

The opportunity facing Sullivan BOCES today is similar. With thoughtful planning, continued collaboration among component districts, and a shared commitment to regional solutions, the organization can continue to play a vital role in supporting educational opportunity across Sullivan County.

This study is intended to support that work. The findings and recommendations offered in this report are designed to assist the Board of Education and future leadership in strengthening the programs, partnerships, and systems that will shape the next chapter of Sullivan BOCES.

