

Regional Collaboration

Why is Regional Collaboration Important?

A perfect storm is brewing for southeastern Wisconsin's schools and educators. School districts are working tirelessly to prepare students for a successful future, while at the same time they're faced with significant financial constraints, making success seem impossible.

Not only is success possible, it's a reality. The future is bright in our region, due in part to our highly collaborative nature. Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #1 has been bringing members from different organizations together to exchange insights, share knowledge, and create value in the education community for more than 40 years. Our approach to developing and nurturing a variety of action networks focuses on collaboration instead of competition, balancing virtual and real interaction, and enhancing learning opportunities at both the district and regional levels.

Why does this collaborative approach work? It **ensures continuity** as some members leave and others join and contribute new ideas. Having dedicated staff at the regional level to coordinate both short-term projects and ongoing initiatives reduces the burden on individual district personnel and increases the likelihood of sustainability. In addition, addressing educator training needs at the regional level promotes cost effectiveness and accelerates learning among multiple districts.

Regional networks also **engage professional educators** based on their interests and needs, which can be a powerful force for innovation and improvement. Connecting educators throughout the region, encouraging the cross-pollination of new ideas, and actively facilitating shared learning, enables promising practices to spread further and faster than they would in isolation.

Mission

CESA #1 provides high-quality, cost-effective programs and services that are responsive to the dynamic needs of our members, clients, and the students they serve. As a **regional cooperative, we leverage local, state, and national resources** to support schools in providing quality learning opportunities for *all* students.

"The linkage between education and our community's economic prosperity is profound. The collaborative nature of CESA #1 makes it the perfect player to harness the strengths of our educators, business community, and community leadership to develop a regional synergy to implement several forward-thinking initiatives."

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What Does Successful Regional Collaboration Look Like?

Regional collaboration is a powerful vehicle to help districts successfully steer through educational and economic storms. It creates and distributes a continual flow of ideas that become action plans and solutions. Here are some examples of how CESA #1 helps districts using regional collaboration:

- The school districts in our region are **members of CESA #1**, giving them a clear voice in how we operate. District School Board Members sit on our Board of Control, we seek feedback and guidance from superintendents through our Professional Advisory Committee, and in every encounter with our members, we ask questions and listen carefully to clearly understand their challenges and needs.
- We **capitalize on cooperation to provide outstanding services while keeping costs low**. Our staff includes educational experts who are published authors, state and national speakers, and professors. Due to the power of our regional cooperative, school districts have cost-effective access to expertise that may not be available otherwise.
- We provide **mechanisms for learning**. We facilitate over a dozen networks for Superintendents, Directors of Special Education, Directors of Curriculum and Instruction, teachers, and parents. Below are examples of just a few.
 - *Professional Advisory Committee (PAC)* – Superintendents from each public school district in the region meet regularly to share information and engage in relevant initiatives and activities. Recently, we've facilitated workshops with legal experts and consultants to help PAC participants prepare for the changes they'll face as a result of recent state legislative actions.
 - *Personalized Learning Initiative* – To assist in the transformation of education in their districts, district leaders have participated in symposiums featuring national and international educational experts and have mobilized a regional action network to support implementation of personalized learning projects.
 - *Wisconsin Regional Service Network (RSN)* – Special Education Directors work in cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction to improve the quality of educational services to students with disabilities. This network provides regular updates regarding state-level initiatives, legal briefings, and best practices in special education strategies.

Regional collaboration is powerful. It replaces barriers to progress with communication, collaboration and partnerships that transcend current practice. As shared knowledge is created and applied, the impossible becomes possible.

