



Embracing
Excellence in
Special Education

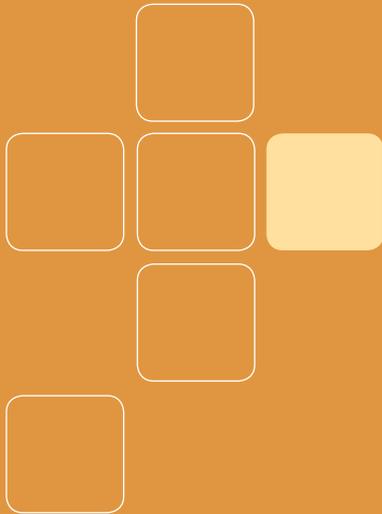
Massachusetts Organization of
Educational Collaboratives

2020 - 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

www.moecnet.org

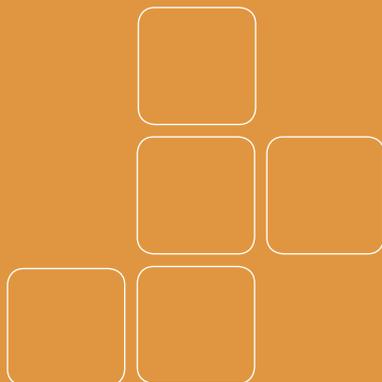
The 2020 - 2021 MOEC Executive Board Invites Your Inquiries

Executive Board



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Educational Collaboratives in Massachusetts

Massachusetts collaboratives are educational services agencies that bring school districts together to form partnerships to create regional educational capacity and resources. Collaboratives benefit school districts, students, families, educators and taxpayers by maximizing efficiency through shared costs and expertise. They play a leadership role in developing a broad range of innovative programming to meet emerging needs by providing training, enabling the sharing of exemplary educational practices, and serving and educating many of our most vulnerable students across the Commonwealth.

In 1974, Massachusetts enacted the legislation that encouraged school districts to come together to address demands for special education services through collaboratives. Further legislation in 2012 clearly delineated the authority under which educational collaboratives now operate. The resulting partnerships have grown to encompass many diverse educational services and programs.

Today, educational collaboratives offer a wide range of programs and services ranging from:

- Special education programs and services
- Career Technical Education and school-to-career programs
- Early childhood services
- Supplemental educational and therapeutic services
- Virtual learning and the Commonwealth Virtual School
- Recovery High Schools
- Health and safety initiatives (including mental health and family support)
- Professional development programs
- Cooperative purchasing programs
- Transportation services for both regular and special education students
- School-Based Medicaid Program reimbursement services
- Services designed for individuals with disabilities post 22 years old

The Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC)

The Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC) is the professional organization representing the Commonwealth's educational collaboratives. MOEC serves as the voice of our members and works to develop a full appreciation for and understanding of educational collaboratives at the state, regional, and local levels. As an influential facilitator and highly visible proponent of regional thinking in service delivery, MOEC is the Commonwealth's primary advocate for collaboratives and the critical role they play in the Massachusetts educational system.

MOEC provides a forum to enhance the ability of collaboratives to promote leadership and direction to their organizations through professional development, information exchange, and advocacy for collaborative programming so that Massachusetts collaboratives may better serve their constituents.



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Executive Director's Letter

Throughout the school year, collaboratives established and sustained a level of rigor and highly personalized learning recognized by families and districts unique to the challenges that COVID-19 brought to the learning environment.



The 2020 - 2021 school year was unlike any other for educational collaboratives and their districts. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged educators across the state to provide equitable high quality services to their students at a time the entire world was in crisis. The 25 educational collaboratives rose to the challenge!

Collaboratives' commitment to students struggling at home was so high that they led the way across the state in meeting their needs. Collaborative programs supported over 8000 diverse learners with some of the most challenging academic, medical, social, emotional and economic needs in the Commonwealth. Collaboratives' responses to the Pandemic were immediate to address the needs of our students, and we developed innovative programs and partnerships to support them. Throughout the year, collaboratives established and sustained a level of rigor and highly personalized learning recognized by families and districts. Individualized learning plans were developed for students and were unique to the changes that COVID-19 brought to the learning environment.

With all of the challenges the year presented, 2020-21 was also a period of considerable progress for MOEC and its member Educational Collaboratives. Our organization continues to advance the interests of our members and our member school districts to ensure that every child in the Commonwealth receives a high quality education. We accomplish this by providing quality, cost-effective programs through economies of scale. Since our beginning in the 1970s, and through subsequent legislative action over the years, our reputation for providing student and district support continues to flourish. MOEC's impact across the Commonwealth is realized in the important areas of advocacy, partnership and professional development.

It is my honor to submit this annual report of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joanne Haley Sullivan".

Joanne Haley Sullivan
Executive Director
Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives

Response to COVID-19 by Educational Collaboratives

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed our schools and business in March of 2020, educators did not know what to expect, how long our schools would be closed to face-to-face instruction, or what protocols would be needed to continue to educate our students. Collaboratives were quick to mobilize, capitalizing on our experience. The state was “shut down” on Friday, March 13th and many Collaboratives began providing remote learning as soon as Monday, March 16th.

Collaboratives were nimbly responsive to changing needs and complex challenges.

- We mobilized to reach out to parents, provide materials and supports to address students’ and families’ basic needs. Staff did not hesitate to:
 - telephone frequently, sometimes daily,
 - drop off supplies at homes,
 - meet students and families in driveways and provide services in backyards,
 - flex schedules to provide family support or interpreting during non-school hours.
- When Governor Baker allowed face-to-face schooling for the summer, collaboratives returned to on-site teaching and learning immediately and were ready to safely provide robust programs in the Fall.



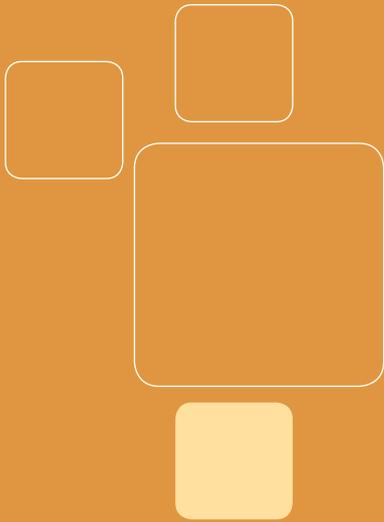
Collaboratives used creative problem solving.

- We quickly pivoted to remote instruction and services that were meaningful and rigorous and then back to in-person as allowed.
- We immediately provided our students with equitable access to learning.
- Our Remote Learning Plans were shared as models by DESE.
- We established a solid foundation with families for connections and communication about the appropriate educational services for their sons and daughters.
- We ensured that students had access to the specialized equipment, therapeutic interventions, instruction, accommodations, and modifications in complete alignment with or closely mirroring the student’s IEP in a model that was remote, hybrid or in-person given the reality of COVID-19.

Collaboratives attended to the needs of high risk students, families, and situations.

- We serve many students who are considered to be at higher risk than most due to their disabilities related to learning needs, behaviors, mental health, and medical fragility.
- Some of the pandemic-related challenges for schools were obstacles that we were able to overcome:
 - home-based supports,
 - teaching all students to wear masks, knowing that some could not,
 - knowing that we weren't always going to be able to maintain 6 feet of distance, and
 - needing to create procedures that were more like those of medical providers than educators were all obstacles that we were able to overcome.





Throughout the
Pandemic,
collaboratives provided
timely support and
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and to one another.

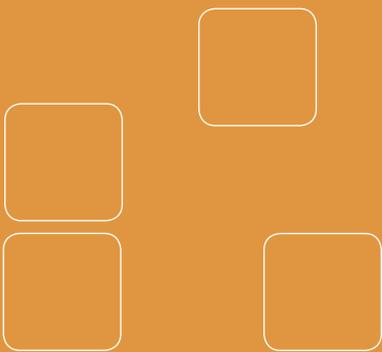


Collaboratives provided regular, ongoing communication with diverse families, including those dealing with stress, trauma, and crisis.

- Collaboratives continued to have very strong teamwork and communication with families.
- We were in weekly, and sometimes daily communication with families right from the start of the pandemic which continued throughout the year.
- We held conversations to identify gaps in learning and services that may impact student progress.
- Given the nature of our work, we have skills to effectively meet the needs with families under stress.

Throughout the Pandemic, collaboratives provided timely support and partnerships to districts and to one another.

- Collaboratives have long standing rich partnerships with their districts.
- Collaboratives facilitated forums of support to help district leaders solve the many never-before-experienced challenges that surfaced throughout the year.
- Collaboratives facilitated Job-Alike groups all across the state for
 - Superintendents,
 - Assistant Superintendents,
 - Technology Directors,
 - Special Education Directors,
 - Business Managers,
 - and others.
- We also provided low or no-cost professional development on needed topics to keep districts and their staff current in the ever-changing guidance and policies to provide safe and supportive teaching and learning environments.



Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC)

Three overarching goals were set for MOEC for 2020-21:

1. Expand the role of MOEC as a statewide resource for collaboratives.
2. Provide advocacy with DESE and with state and local legislators.
3. Advocate for greater recognition and use of collaboratives.

MOEC as a resource for collaboratives.

- **Job Alike Groups:** Given all of the unique challenges of the year, there was a need to expand means for communication, networking, and support to various learning communities within collaboratives. We enhanced and created new job-alike groups who met multiple times this year. Participants were pleased with the increased opportunities to share common issues and concerns and learn from one another, including:

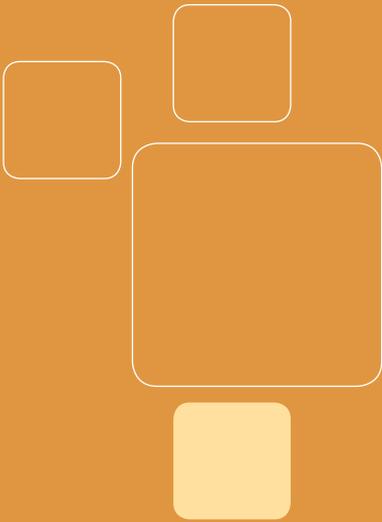
- Executive Directors
- Business Leaders
- Special Education Program Leaders,
- Professional Development Leaders,
- Technology Leaders,
- Human Resources,
- Transportation Leaders, and
- Data Specialists

- **Professional Development specific to the needs of Collaborative Leaders**

- *Healthy and Resilient Leadership*
Given COVID-19 pandemic, it was so very important to ensure that Collaborative Leadership Teams have the information and inspiration to remain healthy and resilient with intentionality so they were ready to support staff and students through this crisis. We began the year addressing this with an uplifting and engaging presentation for collaborative leaders.
- *Financial Leadership Series*
MOEC colleagues shared their expertise in this informative, focused and powerful series for collaborative leaders. Topics included Cumulative Surplus; Collaborative Regulations, Agreements, and Annual Reports; and Collaborative Budgeting Process and the Art of Projecting Census.
- *Virtual Learning Tours*
Collaborative Leaders were able to join colleagues from across the state, to network and learn more about educational design being used in other collaboratives. This virtual presentation provided an opportunity to share new ideas, successful practices, and current solutions for in-person, hybrid, and virtual models of instruction in collaborative settings.
- *Legal Issues Workshop*
This year we again hosted our annual Legal Issues Workshop from Murphy, Hesse, Toomey, and Lehane. Topics discussed were timely and meaningful including: Case Law/Statutory Update; Reasonable Accommodation and Other Considerations related to COVID-19; Identifying and Reducing Liabilities; and Important Reminders re MA Employment Laws.



Participants in Job Alike Networks had increased opportunities to share common issues and concerns and learn from one another.

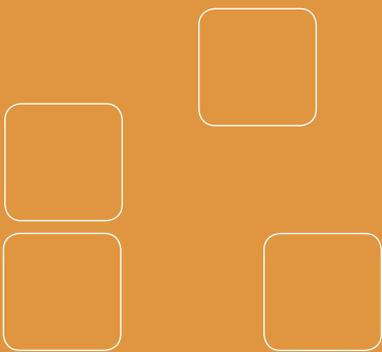


Advocacy with DESE and with state and local legislators.

- A significant challenge for collaboratives throughout the pandemic has been the lack of dedicated funding to reimburse collaboratives for the extraordinary expenses needed to keep students safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our unique governing structure left us lacking COVID-19 related funds for our programs that have been available to others in the educational domain.
- The MOEC Legislative Committee and Legislative Liaison advocated for COVID-19 funding support for collaboratives through the Legislature, Governor Baker, Secretary Peyser, DESE, the Federal Congressional Delegation, MEMA/FEMA, and the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) to advocate for reimbursement for COVID-19 related costs.
- Collaboratives were unable to access the state and federal funds allocated for K-12 education to respond to this unprecedented pandemic as these funds were reserved for LEAs. We continue to work with DESE to find support to offset collaboratives costs.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

- MOEC and its members participated in numerous sessions with DESE to ensure that the collaboratives' perspectives are embedded in their initiatives and outreach efforts, particularly during this Pandemic.
 - We contributed to DESE Responses to COVID-19: Return to School Working Group and subcommittees including Health, Social/Emotional & Psychological Well Being Subcommittee; Academics, Teaching and Learning Subcommittee; and Physical and Structural Subcommittee.
 - We contributed to the following DESE Guidance Documents:
 - Special Education Technical Assistance Advisory 2021-1: COVID-19 Compensatory Services and Recovery Support for Students with IEPs;
 - Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services;
 - Is Special Education the Right Service?; and
 - Seclusion and Time Out Procedures
- We collaborated with DESE to enhance clarity of the Cumulative Surplus Guidance to be sure that the document will provide support for collaboratives to conform to the intent of the regulations.
- We were successful in advocating for our inclusion in some grant opportunities that collaboratives were not eligible for in the past. We are grateful to DESE for their openness to these opportunities to best serve our students.
- We were represented on DESE Advisory Groups:
 - Safe and Supportive Schools Committee
 - Special Education Advisory Panel



Massachusetts Great and General Court

An ongoing challenge for collaboratives that has been exacerbated by the pandemic is a provision in the Ethics Law that limits the ability of collaboratives to leverage the expertise of member district staff to meet the needs of students in collaborative programs and to provide high quality professional development to staff. We have advocated for *An Act to Support Educational Collaboratives* (S2066 and H3200) designed to address what we perceive is an unintended consequence of the statute that precludes collaboratives from sharing knowledge and skills across and among collaborative member districts or within collaborative programs and their students. We look forward to continued discussion regarding the consequences of this dilemma and are confident of its resolution.

Advocacy for Greater Recognition and Use of Collaboratives

Statewide Educational Organizations

MOEC is recognized as a significant voice in the educational community across the Commonwealth. We have longstanding and valued partnerships with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), and the Coalition for Special Education Funding. Together, our organizations focus on our primary mission of ensuring high quality programs and services for every student and staff member in our school districts. We are proud of our relationships with these organizations and welcome their support of educational collaboratives. We are frequent presenters and participants at their annual conferences and institutes and appreciate the respect that their organizations afford us.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

As an outcome of the Collaborative Regulations passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in September of 2020, MOEC launched Regional Liaison Representative group meetings with the Commissioner this year.

We are working more closely with DESE's Office of Student and Family Support to identify ways that collaboratives could partner with DESE to support districts, families and students as the state returns face to face full time in school as we return from the trauma, stress and isolation of the pandemic. Across the Commonwealth many school districts do not have the capacity to meet the complexity of student mental health needs on their own. We are eager to support that work and look forward to ongoing dialogue and collaboration.



MOEC is recognized as a significant voice in the educational community across the Commonwealth.

MOEC Member Collaboratives

West

Collaborative for Educational Services (CES)
Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC)

Central

Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC)
CAPS Education Collaborative
Central Massachusetts Collaborative (CMC)
Keystone Collaborative
Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative (SWCEC)

Greater Boston

ACCEPT Education Collaborative
CASE Collaborative
EDCO Collaborative
LABBB Collaborative
Shore Educational Collaborative
The Education Cooperative (TEC)

North

Collaborative for Regional Educational Services & Training (CREST)
Valley Collaborative
Northshore Education Consortium (NEC)
SEEM Collaborative

South

Bi-County Collaborative (BICO)
Cape Cod Collaborative
North River Collaborative (NRC)
Pilgrim Area Collaborative (PAC)
READS Collaborative
South Coast Educational Collaborative (SCEC)
Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC)
South Shore Educational Collaborative

www.collaborative.org
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www.avcollaborative.org
www.capsed.net
www.cmasscollaborative.org
www.keystone.org
www.swcec.org

www.accept.org
www.casecollaborative.org
www.edcollab.org
www.labbb.com
www.shorecollaborative.org
www.tec-coop.org

www.crestcollaborative.org
www.valleycollaborative.org
www.nsedu.org
www.seemcollaborative.org

www.bicounty.org
www.capecodcollaborative.org
www.northrivercollaborative.org
www.pilgrimac.org
www.readscollab.org
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www.ssec.org

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