WE ARE a non-profit educational service agency, committed to reaching and educating learners of all ages, experienced in working with educators to help students learn and succeed.

WE BELIEVE that obstacles to learning can be overcome, and once that happens, learning is natural for everyone.

5,700+ EDUCATORS PARTICIPATED IN CES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4,762+ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES RECEIVED DIRECT SERVICE FROM CES PROGRAMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION, ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, AFTERSCHOOL, INTERNSHIPS, CAREER-TECHNICAL EDUCATION, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

150+ SITE-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING PROJECTS WITH DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

“I CAN read easily and understand. I CAN solve a hard math problem with just a little bit of support. I’ve learned over the past year that there is a kind and supportive teacher out there to help kids like me. I am so grateful for this classroom . . . I feel safe and ready to tackle anything that comes my way.”

— Mount Tom Academy Student

OUR MISSION is to develop and foster educational excellence and opportunity for all learners through collaboration and leadership.
I am pleased to present this report of a few of the many highlights of the work of the Collaborative for Educational Services in Fiscal Year 2017. This has been an extraordinary year for CES. We continued our many strong programs and services, all aimed at meeting our strategic goals of meeting member district needs; fostering the success of children, youth and families, especially those placed at risk; developing exemplary educators; and fostering evidence-based innovative practices. Our work is deep and broad: over 4,762 children, youth, and families were served by dozens of direct service programs; over 5,700 educators participated in an exciting variety of CES professional development; and we provided many more services to member districts and beyond in FY17. CES also continued our strong statewide partnerships and programs with the Departments of Youth Services, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Early Education and Care.

This past year, we completed planning for an agency re-organization, designed to make CES more prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead of us by becoming more effective, efficient, collaborative, innovative, inclusive, and sustainable, with a diverse and empowered staff. Supporting this, we made significant progress on completely upgrading our business, human resources, and customer relationship systems and we continued and deepened our commitment to social justice, equity, and inclusion.

I want to thank every board member for their time and dedication to CES. I appreciate their candor, their passion and their ability to work together to find solutions. I also want to thank Bill Diehl and all of the Administrative Cabinet for their hard work and their ability to partner with the board. And the teachers and staff! Where would we be or what would we be without them? It has been my pleasure to get to know and work with many throughout the last few years. Their talents, knowledge and expertise are what make CES great! Not only are their services treasured in Western Mass, their work is renowned throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. At a recent conference in San Antonio, Texas, I was honored to see other educational service agencies looking to CES for ideas, guidance and leadership. By working together, we will continue to serve the needs of all students.

Sincerely,

William Diehl, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Reading for Life

Laurel Dickey, Early Literacy Specialist, holds up the thick stack of stories in her lap. Some are handwritten and some typed, but all have been sent to her by Reading Recovery teachers. The stories tell of young students struggling to read at even basic levels, and how Reading Recovery brought them change. Lauren was Reading Recovery’s earliest champion at CES. In this, the program’s twenty-fifth year, she says, “Twenty-five years into the program, I still haven’t found anything that would more effectively support students to become independent literacy learners.”

In celebration of twenty-five years of Reading Recovery Specialists working with the youngest of elementary school students to overcome learning hurdles and become strong readers, teachers also talk about how the program impacted them personally. “Being a Reading Recovery teacher is the most powerful experience of my life,” says Susan Jurgensen, who completed her Reading Recovery training in 2003 and has been working with students ever since. “To see the look in a child’s eye when they ‘get it’ and then turn around to use the skill independently is always a joy. We breed success and success can become contagious.”

Thirty-year-old Aaron Soule is such a Reading Recovery success story, according to his mother, Meg Clancy. “Even though I read to him on a daily basis,” before he started school, Meg said, “it was clear he was still struggling.” Aaron was placed in one of the first spaces available in the fall at his school for Reading Recovery intervention, and Aaron’s mom immediately sensed a difference. “He connected right away.” Not a reader in September, by Christmas Aaron was already reading well above his grade reading level.

Those few months with Reading Recovery started a love of reading and self-confidence that have stayed with Aaron throughout school, and continues now as an adult. After high school, Aaron attended HCC and graduated from Westfield State with a degree in Communications, which he now uses in his work as a Petty Officer Second Class in Aviation Support for the Navy at Andrews Air Force Base. He still loves to read and shares his love of books with others.

Aaron is far from the only student who can point to a few short months in Reading Recovery as a key to academic success. “Anthony went from being a non-risk taker and non-believer to trying anything and believing in his abilities to succeed.” “Brian may be the first of his family to escape special education.” “Alina…would call family friends and read to them over the phone. In the classroom, her confidence grew and she was excited about school and confident in her abilities.”

“Leah came into the Reading Recovery program as a painfully shy first grader. In the very beginning of the Reading Recovery program she made little eye contact and spoke infrequently. As time went on, she began to open up . . . she became more enthusiastic and excited about the stories she was reading. The day I saw her smile and laugh with me, I knew she was well on her way to becoming a confident and successful reader.”

The Reading Recovery program was developed over forty years ago as a preventative early literacy program focusing on first-grade students who struggled with basic reading concepts and were at risk of failing to learn to read. The ability to read affects so many other aspects of a child’s learning, that not becoming a reader can have lifelong ramifications.

Teachers have been participating in professional development at the Collaborative Reading Recovery Site for twenty-five years. Reading Recovery Specialists commit to an intensive training program developing the skills to work with the youngest of students. In districts using Reading Recovery, struggling literacy learners are given the accelerated boost needed for them to catch up to their peers in the classroom.

LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/reading-recovery

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Facilitating Change in Special Education

Sharon Jones stood at the front of the Hotel Northampton ballroom in June of 2017, describing in a soft voice the purpose of the capstone projects delivered by each of thirty special education team leaders. “These have given you all an opportunity to facilitate change,” she said to the professionals gathered in the room. “Now you get to share…”

Shelley went first, standing with her team partner to talk about her work for students in her district transitioning from pre-K to Kindergarten, who experience behavioral challenges. Shelley shared that her daughter was getting married soon, and on this particular day, the entire wedding party waited for her at a day spa. But she was here at the capstone event, and excited to share her project with the group. Following Shelley, each of the team leaders received nods, laughter, and applause, as their colleagues recognized shared challenges and the work done to address them.

They talked about their data, findings, approaches and successes - and all had plenty of ideas about what they’d like to work on next, after the Institute was done.

The members of the first Massachusetts Special Education Team Leader Institute (SETLI) were at the Hotel Northampton to present their capstone projects, celebrate their year-long work, and receive their completion certificates. The Institute’s mission, in partnership with and supported by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)’s Office of Special Education Policy and Planning, is to equip special educational team leaders with tools to foster family and community engagement and improve student outcomes by facilitating team meetings that are collaborative and compliant with regulations and best practices in the field.

The first year cohort consisted of thirty special education professionals from across the Commonwealth. This original group was led by the Collaborative for Educational Services’ Laurel Peltier, Ed.D., and Sharon Jones, both Curriculum and Instructional Specialists in special education for CES.

Attendees had a chance to reflect on their experience, and made a special note about the bond that had grown between cohort members, and with their facilitators. This was a common theme as each of the newly minted certificate holders spoke. Many confirmed that while the group’s time together had ended formally, they would stay connected, supporting each other, and continuing to share experiences in their work with special education students.

Laurel Peltier noted: “It’s certainly exciting to see how our first SETLI cohort has embraced the call to lead IEP teams in a way that emphasizes collaboration and compliance as key elements of their work. I felt proud of each member of the cohort for their willingness to take what we learned together and apply that knowledge to practical, sustainable change in each of the districts represented. Even more exciting is the community of support and friendship that the people in this cohort have built. They are truly demonstrating respect, kindness, cooperation and a sense of hospitality toward students, families, colleagues and one another as they lead IEP teams across the state.”

Susan Fischer of ESE’s Office of Special Education Planning and Policy was on hand for the event. “The work you are doing is amazing,” she told the team leaders.

The success of the first year’s Institute has meant that 2017-18 will be expanded to a total of sixty attendees.

LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/SETLI

“This has been an incredible experience! We’ve created a whole network, and we talk all the time about practice. It has lit a fire in terms of what I can do in my own school! This makes us better.”

— Marianne Lockwood
Northampton Public Schools
Youth Leadership Initiative Summits

Strategic Planning Initiatives for Families and Youth Coalition (SPIFFY) in partnership with Community ACTION Youth Programs sponsored two youth summits this year, with twenty-two individual youth and eleven different youth groups from the region. Young people learned about risk and protective factors, talked extensively about what it means to be a leader, shared their stories, and were able to make connections with other youth from across the three counties and do some asset mapping. This work was part of the effort to elevate the voices of young people and create a network they can use to mobilize and speak out at public hearings and at coalition meetings in their area.

► LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/spiffy-coalition

Early Childhood Year End Event

On June 5th, seventy-five families gathered at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst to celebrate another year at their early childhood family centers and playgroups, all funded by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, through the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) Grant.

Activities included nature play, creating, and exploring the educational offerings throughout the center’s activities. The family centers provide programming for children and parents that help strengthen the path to learning. The family centers and playgroups are run by CES for families and children from birth to kindergarten, located in seventeen local communities.

► LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/early-childhood

Above: A child blows bubbles at the early childhood year end event. Photo by Martha Makoney.
I Wish My Teacher Knew

The roomful of educators watched a video from the CBS evening news. Anchor Barry Peterson narrated the story of teacher Kyle Schwartz, who asked her class to write down things “I wish my teacher knew”. 93% of her students qualify for public assistance. Some of the answers were revealing. The educators shook their heads as they listened.

“I wanted my teacher to know that I’m tired because I don’t sleep at night.”

After the video ended, teachers talked about how this practice might work at their schools, to help them better understand the world in which their students live.

The context provided by the children’s notes shone a light on the barriers that exist for them, that they had never shared. It was one of many simple but important practices that participants agreed could open up new sensitivity about what their students face, every day.

First-hand accounts from students in poverty were only a part of the resources provided to educators who participated in the first cohort of the Leading Educational Access Project (LEAP). Training of Trainers initiative. During the course of the training, educators learned about the impact of poverty on learning, the shame felt by students who did not want to share with their teachers about why they didn’t have the resources, place, or space to do work at home, the effects on the brain resulting from growing up in poverty, and the role that race and bias play in keeping educators from fully understanding their students’ context.

LEAP was developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to provide support to sixteen LEAP school districts, those with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged learners, and to train a team of trainers from across the state who might work with other schools and districts. CES prepared the course that would train teachers to improve teaching with poverty in mind, develop strategies and practices to improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for this population of students. While LEAP first focused on special education students living in poverty, its focus has widened to address the learning needs, academic and social-emotional, of all students living in poverty.

CIES Professional Development consultants designed and led the training-of-trainers sessions. Led by project manager, Albert Mussad, a team of consultants with expertise in special education, English learner education, social justice, brain science, and curriculum development prepared and delivered presentations, created resources, and convened communities of practice. Participants represented all aspects of the educational enterprise, including teachers, guidance and school adjustment counselors, behavior analysts, directors of special education, pupil services, professional development, school turnaround, ESE staff, Massachusetts collaborative staff members, and district and school administrators.

Along the way, the project changed hearts and minds. Participants commented on the emotionally difficult nature of the content, especially about poverty and its effects, and the challenge for educators to take their learning back and make a difference. “I will be more sensitive to my students. It opened my eyes to things I hadn’t really thought of before this training.”

The LEAP Project is continuing into a second year and serving a new group of trainers.

APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS BETWEEN FIVE AND SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES ARE LIVING IN POVERTY.


Inclusive Practices

This past year, ESE contracted with collaboratives across Massachusetts to develop a cadre of Inclusive Practices Ambassadors. CES Ambassador, Sharon Jones, along with three other regional Ambassadors, met with principals and other administrators in multiple districts to introduce them to the wealth of resources developed by ESE to support the inclusion of all types of learners in classrooms and schools. Inclusive Practices and Transition assistance continue to be in great demand by schools and districts, and have been areas of focus for CES over the course of the year.

LEAP began as a wide-ranging and collaborative ESE response to research showing that Massachusetts students living in poverty are far more likely to be found eligible for special education services than other students. In the spring of 2016, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (ESE) Office of Special Education Planning and Policy (SEPP) sought to develop a statewide cadre of professionals who could support Massachusetts school districts, and identify successful policies, procedures, and practices to improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for this population of students. While LEAP first focused on special education students living in poverty, its focus has widened to address the learning needs, academic and social-emotional, of all students living in poverty.

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► LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/poverty
Supporting Schools Through Social Media

At the start of the 2016-2017 school year, CES began raising awareness of our Western Massachusetts schools on a new Facebook page and Twitter feed. “Proud of Western Mass Schools,” celebrates the special events, milestones, and good work of both educators and students, and acknowledges distinctive work in our area schools in an upbeat, supportive way.

School principals and district administrators now tag CES in their own news briefs on social media, so that these events can be added to the Proud Facebook page and Twitter feed. The Facebook page has reached close to 400 followers in ten months, and districts and schools from Hampshire, Franklin, Berkshire and Hampden counties have been featured in posts and tweets.

LEARN MORE: www.facebook.com/wmasspublicschools

2017 Schuman Scholarship

The Joan Schuman Scholarship award is awarded each year to one or more special education students in Franklin or Hampshire County. This spring, HEC Academy student Avery Riddle submitted an application that deeply moved the reviewing panel. In the application, Avery wrote:

“My academic plan is to focus in the field of art while gaining a working knowledge of psychology. By combining my studies in both art and psychology, I would like to create a portfolio containing visual representations of mental illness that I hope will help provide a universal medium through which understanding and compassion can emerge ... We find strength in solidarity, and I wish to motivate and educate through my art all of those most in need of such inspiration.”

Avery has gone on to study art and psychology at Greenfield Community College.

LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/schumanfund
Over 200 educators and community members at the Holyoke Community College Kittredge Center auditorium were quiet as keynote speakers Pa’Lante took the stage, facing away from the audience. One by one, each student turned to face the audience and share a story of their experience with injustice. They shared their journey - how they had become empowered, and then empowered others, to create a culture of equity, respect, and youth voice. Pa’Lante’s story set the stage for a day of purpose and hope.

The Transforming Education for Social Justice Conference grew out of the social justice work and inquiry that had engaged the Collaborative for Educational Services staff for some time in their own organization. According to Safire DeJong, Ed.D., a coordinator of the social justice work at CES, “A lot of folks throughout the valley are interested in social justice and doing powerful and courageous work, but there weren’t a ton of cohesive resources for teachers who want to transform their classrooms and schools.”

“We thought putting a conference together would help people to see that they are part of a broader network, to be able to share resources and receive support. It also seemed like a clear way to focus on young people being at the center of the work,” DeJong continued.

Having student voices be part of the discussion was also key for the conference committee, according to DeJong. She suggested Pa’lante, a youth group that she had worked with from Holyoke High School, to lead the keynote at the conference. Pa’lante shared their work as Restorative Justice Peer leaders with attendees.

The Pa’Lante keynote also served as a call for adults to support young people in their social justice work - one of the themes of the conference. According to DeJong, “The members of Pa’Lante worked really hard to put it together. It was useful for them to be able to share their work outside of their school, with a broader community. They got a lot of positive feedback.”

A grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts enabled the work of the Transforming Education conference to continue in the second half of the school year, with three follow up meetings held at Franklin County Technical School, Northampton High School, and Holyoke High School, facilitated by teachers from the hosting school who had attended the fall conference. Says DeJong, “I think there is a growing body of teachers, administrators, and parents who are really supporting this work in schools. CES is providing a venue now for those people to come together.”

Social justice work remains a priority focus at CES. The Social Justice and Equity in Schools Professional Learning Community hosted by the organization continues meeting at their offices in Northampton, and the second Transforming Education conference is underway and scheduled for March of 2018.

Dr. DeJong is excited about moving the work forward. “For me personally the most rewarding thing is that I get to do work daily towards living in a world that I can feel proud of. I can work towards a vision of equity and belonging and connection. In a way, I hope that this creates more opportunities for healing and possibility and transformation, and that is important to me as a human being.”

LEARN MORE: www.collaborative.org/transformeding

“Pa’Lante made a huge impact on me. I was so inspired that I went home and started working on a committee to install a Restorative Justice program in the district where I live.

After about a year, we passed a proposal and a budget was approved, and now Amherst Regional High School has a Restorative Justice coordinator and is building their own program.”

— Kelly Norris, Amherst School District, School Equity Task Force

Above: Members of Pa’Lante from Holyoke High School lead the 2016 Transforming Education for Social Justice Conference keynote.
Thank You Cecelia

This past year, Cecelia Buckley retired after thirty-eight years of working with CES. Cecelia has provided inspired and inspiring service to CES and the districts, schools, educators, families, and students we serve. Her leadership in direct services, professional development, and licensure has made improved education for all learners a reality. Her entrepreneurial spirit and honed skills in writing for grants, reports, and programs, have helped CES flourish. Cecelia has worked incredibly hard day in and day out to help ensure that CES is providing exceptional and needed services to educators and all students. She has been a wonderful colleague, talented leader, and valued friend.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

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REVENUE

- 76% Grants and Contracts
- 12% Administration*
- 7% Special Education
- 5% Professional Development

EXPENDITURES

- 83% Personal Services*
- 16% Materials and Services
- 1% Depreciation and Interest

*Includes $1,533,543 state pension contribution and expense.
Everyone is a learner

Opportunities for Giving

Lend support in personally meaningful ways through these tax-exempt funds:

- Ben DeMarino Scholarship Fund, HEC Academy Alternative School
- Joan E. Schuman Scholarship Fund
- Mount Tom Academy Alternative Learning Program
- Patty Walsh-Cassidy Assistive Technology Lending Library
- Strong Foundations for Young Children
- 21st Century After School Program

collaborative.org /giving