



# The Essential Role of Educational Service Centers in the ESSA Era

The reauthorization of ESEA, the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), creates a fundamental shift in the focus and control of public education systems. States, districts and schools are now empowered to drive local engagement and decision-making to improve educational outcomes for all students in all schools. **This is the ESSA era, and we welcome it.**

We believe ESSA creates an opportunity for Ohio to set a new, bold vision for its education system that focuses on high quality local implementation of evidence-based practices for educational improvement. However, local implementers require significant support. This is a challenge the state simply cannot manage alone.

As the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) designs and implements the state's ESSA plan, the membership of the Ohio ESC Association offers eight strategic recommendations for how the state can partner with educational service centers (ESCs) to ensure the continuous improvement of every school and district in Ohio. By working together, the students of Ohio—our future—can emerge as informed citizens, drivers of the state's economic growth and prosperity, and essential contributors to realizing Ohio's opportunities.

**Recommendation 1:** Develop a unifying vision and actionable strategic plan for Ohio's public education system.

**Recommendation 2:** Prioritize the creation of a culture of continuous improvement at all levels and among all key players.

**Recommendation 3:** Focus improvement activity at the school level.

**Recommendation 4:** Designate and resource ESCs as the state's "go-to" regional support providers, a role that needs to be reflected in the state ESSA plan.

**Recommendation 5:** Establish a revitalized working relationship between ODE and ESCs that includes clear communications, well-defined expectations, and active and continuous collaboration.

**Recommendation 6:** Utilize ESCs as key partners in the various opportunities created by ESSA to drive educational and school improvement.

**Recommendation 7:** Commit to developing and adopting a flexible, but meaningful, system of ESC accountability in partnership with the state.

**Recommendation 8:** Fund ESCs at appropriate levels of state and federal funding commensurate with the expectations for their levels of service as defined by state law and the state ESSA plan.

ESCs have over a century of service, in partnership with the state of Ohio, to students, schools and districts across the Buckeye State, including the implementation of a myriad of federal and state education reform efforts.

Reaching every corner of the state, Ohio's ESCs - trusted, effective and high-quality school and district support partners - are ready to help make Ohio's new vision a reality.