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SPECIAL REPORT

REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES

AUDIT OVERVIEW

By Law, Technical Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Professional Development Are the Most Important Responsibilities for RESAs, But These Services Are a Relatively Small Percentage of Total Expenditures.

Twenty-five (25) Percent of RESA's Resources Do Not Serve the County School Systems.

RESAs Are Mandated to Coordinate Shared Services to Counties; However, Many County-Level Services That Some RESAs Provide Are Exclusive to Specific Counties. The Legislative Auditor Is Uncertain If This Was the Legislature's Intent.

The Regional Service Purpose of Providing Educational Services to Public School Systems Is Needed, But Carrying It Out Through the Concept of Autonomous Agencies Is Inefficient.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This performance audit of the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) is authorized under Chapter 4, Article 2, Section 5 of the *West Virginia Code*. The objective of the audit was to determine the continued need for RESAs. The audit's findings and conclusions are highlighted below.

Frequently Used Acronyms in this Report:

PERD - Performance Evaluation and Research Division
RESA - Regional Education Service Agencies
BOE - Board of Education
AEPA - Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies
PST - Public Service Training
WVEIS - West Virginia Education Information System
DOE - West Virginia Department of Education
ESCs - Educational Service Centers
TA - technical assistance to low-performing schools
PD - staff professional development
LEAs - local education agencies
DHHR - Department of Health and Human Resources
TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
AFT - American Federation of Teachers
NSDC - National Staff Development Council
SPOKES - Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success
CSR – Code of State Rules
W.Va. – West Virginia
OEPA – Office of Education Performance Audits
CPD – Center for Professional Development
CFO – Chief Financial Officer

Report Highlights:

Finding 1: By Law, Technical Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Professional Development Are the Most Important Responsibilities for RESAs, But These Services Are a Relatively Small Percentage of Total Expenditures.

- Technical assistance to low performing schools (TA) and professional staff development (PD) are statutorily RESA's most important responsibilities.
- PERD found that on average 18 percent of RESA's 2015 expenditures were for TA and PD, which is not reflective of being the most important responsibilities of RESAs.

- In addition, in terms of percentages or dollar amounts, there is no correlation between expenses for TA and PD and the number of Focus schools in each RESA.
- PERD concludes that there is inadequate direction, focus and resources centered on the important tasks of providing technical assistance to low performing schools and professional staff development.

Finding 2: Twenty-five (25) Percent of RESA’s Resources Do Not Serve the County School Systems.

- RESA’s enabling statute emphasizes that RESA’s purpose is to provide educational services to county school systems.
- PERD finds that on average 25 percent of RESA expenditures in FY 2015 were for programs that do not serve county school systems. On an individual basis, RESAs 1 and 3 spent nearly 40 percent on non-county school system services.
- The primary services that fall in this category are adult education, Public Service Training, and workforce development programs.

Finding 3: RESAs Are Mandated to Coordinate Shared Services to Counties; However, Many County-Level Services That Some RESAs Provide Are Exclusive to Specific Counties. The Legislative Auditor Is Uncertain If This Was the Legislature’s Intent.

- RESAs are required by law to facilitate the coordination and sharing among county boards for county-level functions.
- RESAs employ 151 individuals who provide county-level services; however, over half (80) are non-shared employees. These non-shared employees provide services that can be shared and are shared services in other RESAs.
- The Supreme Court issued a recent decision that states if the employment of non-shared personnel is provided for in RESA Strategic Plans, it cannot be said that non-shared employment contravenes legislative intent.
- Despite the Supreme Court decision, the Legislative Auditor concludes that since part of the legislative intent is for RESAs to provide coordinated and shared services, and the same types of positions are shared by some RESAs but not by others, it is uncertain that unshared positions were the Legislature’s intent.

Finding 4: The Regional Service Purpose of Providing Educational Services to Public School Systems Is Needed, But Carrying It Out Through the Concept of Autonomous Agencies Is Inefficient.

- PERD finds that RESAs are extensions of the State Board of Education and there is significant overlap from the Department of Education in RESA programs and activities.
- Having RESAs organized as autonomous agencies invites duplication and redundancy, and imposes a coordination cost on the State.
- The Legislative Auditor recommends that the State BOE consider eliminating the autonomy of RESAs and have all RESA staff come under the authority of the DOE. The regional service purpose should emanate from regional staff of the DOE, not through regional agencies.
- Coordinated county-level functions can continue without RESAs. Therefore, consideration should be given to having coordinated county-level functions be administered by the Regional Councils.

PERD's Response to the Agency's Written Response

On November 23rd, 2016, the Performance Evaluation and Research Division received RESA's written response to this report, which can be found in Appendix F. The State Board of Education indicated that it will provide its written response in December 2016. The RESA written response gave no indication of agreement with any part of the report. With respect to Finding 1, the agencies stated that PERD correlates cost to value which results in the incorrect conclusion that a small percentage of total expenditures being devoted to TA and PD means that RESAs are not performing these tasks effectively. Due to grant restrictions, expenditures must be used for specific purposes. Therefore, the only way to increase expenditures for TA and PD would be to increase funding specific to TA and PD. RESAs added that the amount and value of TA and PD should be calculated on man-hours spent on duties as opposed to expenditures. The RESAs also expressed that some adult education is part of TA and PD, excluding executive directors' time and effort is not accurate, and that Medicaid billing should also be included in TA calculations.

With respect to Finding 2, RESAs stated that many students under the age of 21 participate in adult education. Therefore, PERD's calculations should be revised to account for the percentage of students under the age of 21 that participate in the program. The RESA written response also contends that the recent decision by the State Supreme Court of Appeals that reversed the Monongalia County Circuit Court's decision concerning interventionist services nullifies Finding 3 of the audit. The RESAs also deny any overlapping functions between the DOE and RESAs. Although they acknowledge that the DOE has direction over some programs that operate out of RESAs, they indicate that comprehensive strategic planning avoids duplication of effort between the two entities.

PERD assessed the RESA response. PERD's analysis concerning TA and PD as a percentage of total expenditures is a fair representation of the RESA's resources that can be applied to TA and PD activities. The fact that the agency has a large portion of restricted funds that cannot be used towards TA and PD is part of the funding limitations indicated in the report. The finding is not stating that RESAs are ineffective in the TA and PD that they provide. The finding is that TA and PD, as funds presently allow, do not constitute the most important responsibilities of the agencies as statute dictates. The report indicates that funding limitations is part of the cause. PERD would have included the direct cost of executive directors' involvement in TA and PD, but measuring this would have been difficult. Including some portion of adult education into TA or PD would be inappropriate in PERD's opinion. Also, including Medicaid billing as TA would be inappropriate. As the audit indicates, when RESAs provide Medicaid billing, they are providing counties a function that the counties would have to provide but RESAs are providing it at a lower cost by sharing these services.

PERD determined that although some individuals that participate in adult education are under the age of 21, they cannot take adult education if they are enrolled in public schools. Therefore, these individuals are not in the public school system. The overlap between RESAs and the DOE is significant. The audit indicates that there are extensive efforts on the part of the State BOE to coordinate RESA activities to avoid duplication, but it is unreasonable to assert that as a result of this coordination there is no duplication. There are aspects of RESA programs that duplication cannot be avoided. Since by definition RESA executive directors oversee RESA programs and the DOE has significant responsibilities over the same programs, there are measures of duplication and redundancies present.

Recommendations

- 1. The State Board of Education should consider administering the regional service purpose through regional staff of the Department of Education as oppose to regional agencies. Therefore, all autonomy and independence of RESAs should be effectively eliminated, and RESA staff should come under the Department. Appropriate statutory and rule amendments should be sought.*
- 2. The Department of Education, as the proposed oversight agency, should evaluate the need for or modification of current state-aid RESA positions or services in light of the regional service purpose being administered through regional staff instead of regional agencies, and make recommendation to the State Board of Education on appropriate reductions in the RESA state aid.*
- 3. The State Board of Education should define the regional service purpose, exclude Adult Education and Public Service Training from the purpose, and also phase out or transfer to appropriate agencies other RESA programs that do not serve public school systems. Emphasis should be placed on technical assistance to low performing schools and professional development that leads to improved student achievement.*

4. *The Department of Education should improve the focus and direction of the regional service purpose through its oversight of regional staff.*
5. *The State Board of Education should place all RESA shared county-level functions under the local control of the Regional Councils. Shared RESA employees should become county employees under the authority of the lead county of each RESA region, while non-shared RESA employees should become employees of the county for which they are under contract.*
6. *The State Board of Education should seek statutory and rule amendments to reduce the number of members of the Regional Councils to the county superintendents.*
7. *As the proposed administrator of the regional service purpose, the Department of Education should make itself available through regional staff to assist Regional Councils in any efforts to share county-level functions in the future.*
8. *If RESAs are terminated as agencies, it is recommended that the State Board of Education seek appropriate statutory (W. Va. §18-2-26(c)(4)) and rule (CSR 126-72-3.13.d) amendments to allow it to receive property owned by RESAs.*

Background and Overview

Audit Overview

The Joint Standing Committee on Government Organization requested that the Legislative Auditor examine the continued need for Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). The Legislative Auditor directed the Performance Evaluation and Research Division (PERD) to conduct this audit in response to the Committee's request.

Assessing the continued need for RESAs involved determining:

- what RESAs do in practice;
- what are RESAs mandated to do;
- to what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated; and
- can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

Obviously, discontinuing an agency should not be done simply for the sake of termination. If an agency provides services to a significant extent that are not mandated, or the mandated services are no longer needed, or the needed services can be provided more cost effectively and efficiently without the agency, then termination of the agency is justifiable. PERD's audit methodology took into consideration these aspects in assessing the continued need for RESAs and presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations in this report.

The Inception of Regional Education Service Agencies

The West Virginia Legislature created the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) in 1972. The original enabling statute (W. Va. §18-2-26) stated, in its entirety, that:

In order to consolidate and more effectively administer existing regional education programs and in order to equalize and extend educational opportunities, the state board of education is authorized and empowered to establish multi-county regional educational service agencies for the purpose of providing educational services to the county school systems, and to make such rules and regulations as may be necessary for the effective administration and operation of such agencies. A regional board shall be empowered to receive and disperse funds from the federal government, member counties, gifts and grants.

The State Board of Education (State BOE) established RESAs by procedural rule in 1982 under the Code of State Rule (CSR), Title 126, Series 3233. Eight RESA regions were created and each agency was governed by a board of directors consisting of the county superintendent and a board member from each participating county board of education (County BOE) within the region. The educational services that RESAs were authorized to provide included:

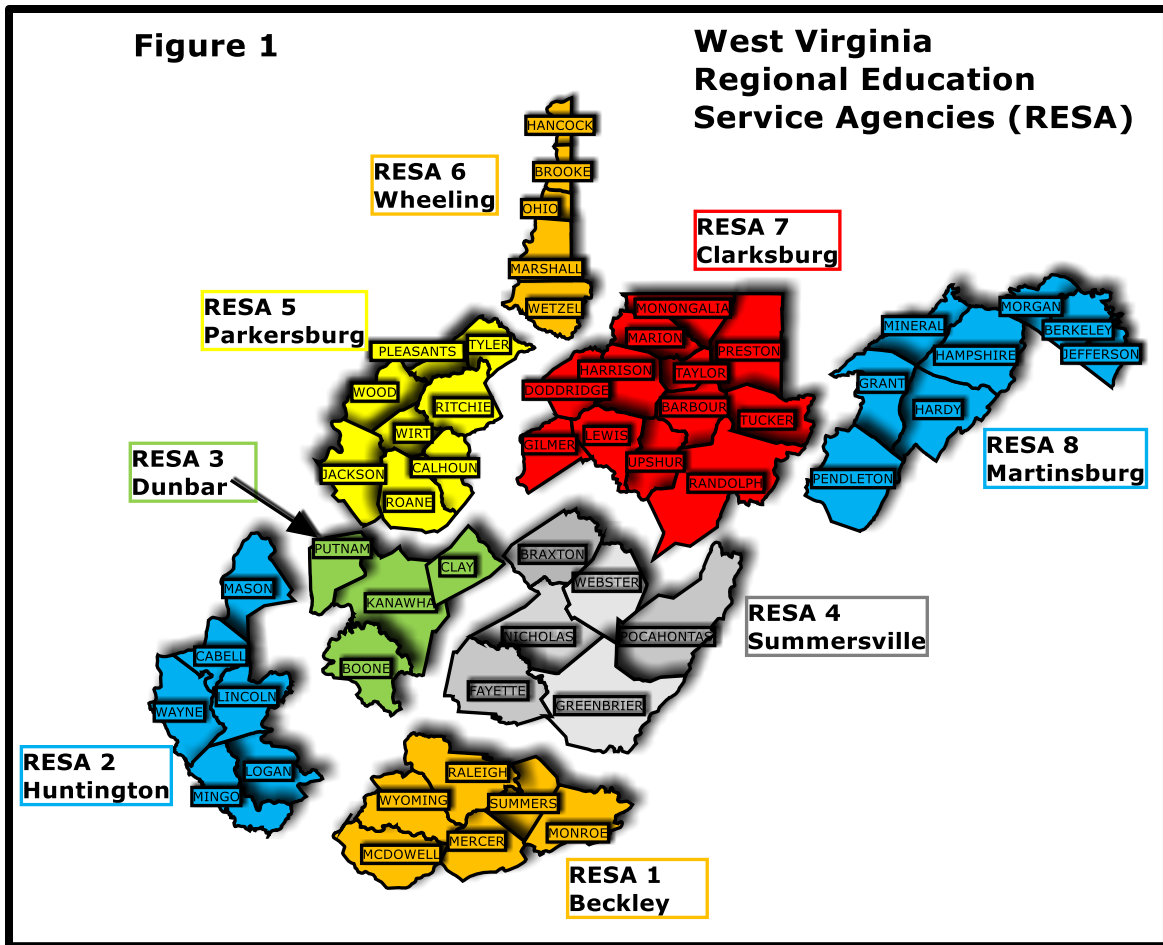
- a) **administrative services** such as computer and personnel services, educational communications, and consultation in program administration;

- b) **curricular services** including curricular specialists, curriculum development, and in-service training of teacher and other personnel;
- c) **media services** consisting of regional film library operation, educational and public television services, and audio/visual production and utilization; and
- d) **instructional services** including psychological services, diagnostic and prescriptive services, and operation of specialized programs for exceptional children.

Each RESA was also responsible for making assessments of educational needs and for planning and developing multi-county programs. Such programs had to meet the approval of the county boards of education for whom the services would be provided. The agencies were established as regional units in the school system to provide supplementary educational services. The Board of Directors were required to select a participating County BOE to serve as the fiscal agent for the respective RESA. Each fiscal agent was responsible for creating a special account for the RESA's funds, and to receive and disburse funds in accordance with policies adopted by the Board of Directors and the State BOE. The Board of Directors were also required to adopt an annual operating budget and develop rules and regulations for the efficient operation of the agency.

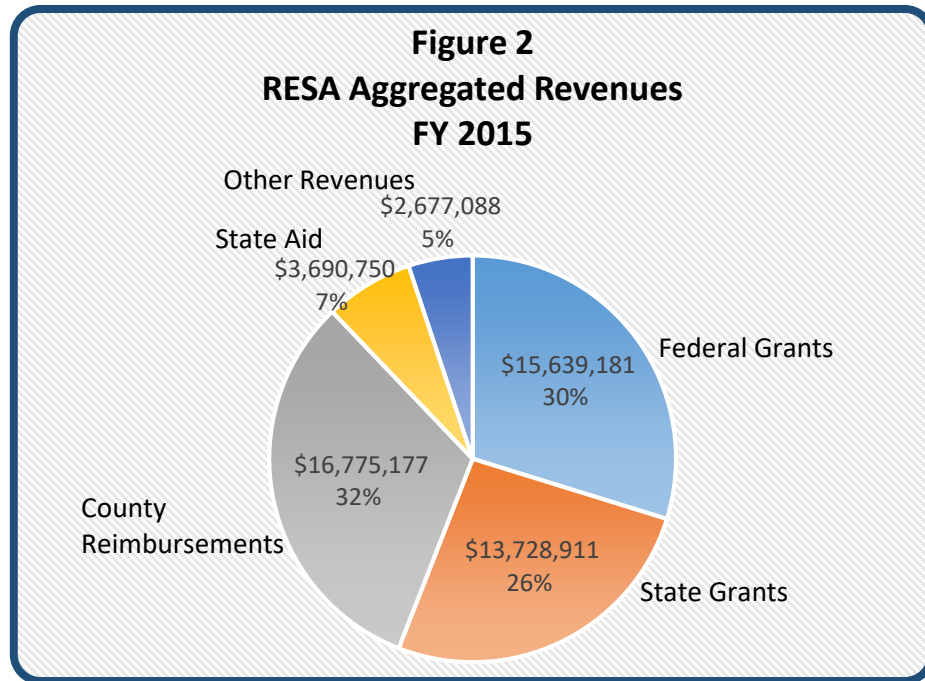
The Current RESA Regions

Figure 1 below shows the current eight RESA regions and the city in which the agency is located. The number of counties in each region ranges from 4 in RESA 3 to 12 in RESA 7. The RESA boundaries are established by rule by the State BOE. Each county school system located within a RESA boundary is required to be a member of that respective RESA. The State BOE may change the composition of a region if it is deemed beneficial, or a RESA or county school board may petition the State BOE to change the composition of a region if it can be demonstrated that the change would improve the effectiveness or efficiency of services that would lead to improvements in student performance.



RESA Funding Sources

RESAs have several sources of revenue that fund their activities. In FY 2015, RESAs received in total over \$52.5 million. Figure 2 shows the primary sources of revenue come from the administration of federal and state grants, reimbursements from counties for RESA services, state aid from the State’s Public School Support Program, and other revenues such as interest earnings, fees charged for training materials, and private grants. The composition of revenue for each RESA can be seen in Appendix C.



Federal & State Grants

On average, most RESA funds come from federal and state grants, of which the large majority are received through the West Virginia Department of Education (DOE). For individual RESAs, federal and state grants as a percentage of total 2015 revenue vary from a high of 71 percent in RESA 3 to a low of 30 percent in RESA 6. Below is a list of some major federal and state grants that fund a variety of RESA programs.

- Adult Education (Federal/State Match),
- Strategic Planning and Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success (SPOKES) (Federal)
- Special Education (Federal),
- Technical Assistance Specialists (Federal),
- Head Start & Early Head Start (Federal),
- Adolescent Health Initiative (Federal),
- TANF – Assessment (Federal)
- Youth Ready (Federal),
- West Virginia AmeriCorps Farm to School (Federal),
- Public Service Training (State),
- Technology and Modernization/Computer Repair/WVEIS System (State),
- Technical Assistance to Schools (State),
- Professional Development (State),
- 21st Century Learning (State),
- Regional School Wellness (State),

- College Foundation grant (Higher Education Policy Commission/U.S. Department of Education), and
- Homeland Security (State).

Reimbursements for County Services

In general, each RESA employs individuals who provide services that are shared by two or more counties. This is in compliance with the statutory requirement to “*facilitate coordination and cooperation among the county boards within their respective regions in such areas as cooperative purchasing, sharing of specialized personnel, communications and technology, curriculum development, and operation of specialized programs for exceptional children*” (W. Va. §18-2-26(b)(3)). RESAs charge the counties a prorated amount for the employees’ salaries, benefits and other relevant expenses. The primary shared services provided to counties are:

- computer repair;
- Medicaid billing services;
- specialized personnel (audiologists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, etc.);
- cooperative purchasing;
- bus driver training; and
- substitute teacher calling system.

State Aid

The Legislature began funding RESA with foundation allowances through the statutory Public School Support Program (W. Va. 18-9A) in 1990. As Figure 2 shows, on average state aid is about seven percent of total revenues. By statute, the foundation allowance for RESA is 0.63 percent of the basic foundation allocation to pay for county professional educators’ minimum salaries. The total RESA allowance is allocated to each RESA according to State BOE policy, which states that 60 percent is distributed equally among the eight RESAs and the remaining 40 percent is distributed according to the net enrollment of the school districts within each RESA region.

During the 2006 legislative session, the Legislature amended code (W. Va. §18-9A-8a) to restrict the RESA allowance not to exceed \$4.2 million. The restriction remained in effect through FY 2010. The Legislature further restricted the RESA allowance to \$3,990,000 effective in FY 2011, and to \$3,690,750 effective since FY 2014. During the 2016 legislative session, an attempt was made to reduce the restricted allowance to \$3,543,120. The measure (HB 4466) passed the House of Delegates but died in the Senate. Table 1 shows the unrestricted amount that the School Support formula would have allowed and the restricted amount since FY 2009. As Table 1 shows, the total amount RESAs have been denied annually by the restriction has reached over \$1.8 million for FY 2015.

Fiscal Year	Unrestricted RESA Foundation Allowance	Restricted RESA Foundation Allowance	Difference Unrestricted vs. Restricted Allowance
2009	\$5,495,171	\$4,200,000	\$1,295,171
2010	\$5,442,928	\$4,200,000	\$1,242,928
2011	\$5,401,503	\$3,990,000	\$1,411,503
2012	\$5,551,433	\$3,990,000	\$1,561,433
2013	\$5,525,080	\$3,990,000	\$1,535,080
2014	\$5,488,606	\$3,690,750	\$1,797,856
2015	\$5,542,887	\$3,690,750	\$1,852,137

Sources: West Virginia Department of Education, Source Book for various years, and West Virginia Code §18-9A-8a as amended.

Other Revenues

A relatively small amount of RESA revenue comes from miscellaneous sources, such as:

- charges for registration, tuition, textbooks and materials to attend Public Service Training and professional development;
- indirect cost allocations from federal grants;
- interest and investment earnings;
- rebates from the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA);
- Purchase card rebates; and
- Benedum Foundation grants (Community Schools, professional development) (Private).

RESA Services

There is a substantial number of services provided by RESAs collectively as Table 2 shows. The majority of services listed in Table 2 are not provided by every RESA. This can be expected since each RESA is autonomous and services can be influenced by the needs of the school systems within a RESA region.

Table 2
Matrix of RESA Services Provided

Program/Service	RESA 1	RESA 2	RESA 3	RESA 4	RESA 5	RESA 6	RESA 7	RESA 8
Administrator PD Hours submitted to CPD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Adolescent Health Initiative	X				X	X	X	X
Adult Career Pathways Program		X	X		X	X	X	X
Adult Education	X		X		X	X	X	X
AE Assessment	X		X		X	X	X	X
AE Technology Coordination	X		X		X	X		X
AEP ECO Stewards			X					
AEP Energy Cost Savings			X		X	X		
AIM Project (Accessible Instructional Materials-Sp. Ed.)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assistive Devices Repository	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Attorney Services		X						
Audiology Services		X	X			X	X	X
Basal Alignment Project			X					
Black Belt Leadership II Certification C.Core							X	
Blended Learning Project	X	X	X					
Bullying and Cyber Support	X	X	X	X			X	
Bus Operator Training Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Catalyst School/Professional Learning	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Project			X					
College & Career Ready Coordinator			X					
Community School Coordinator	X	X						
Computer Training Lab	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperative Purchasing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Co-Teaching	X	X	X			X	X	
County Professional Development Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CPI Training (Crisis Prevention Intervention)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Credit Recovery Program				X				
Culture Survey Results Review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Curriculum Alignment Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Early Childhood Program Birth to 3								X
Early Childhood Program Head Start								X
Ecourse Offerings for Teachers & Admin.	X	X						

**Table 2
Matrix of RESA Services Provided**

Program/Service	RESA 1	RESA 2	RESA 3	RESA 4	RESA 5	RESA 6	RESA 7	RESA 8
Elementary Math Coaching Project		X						
Energy Management Services		X		X	X	X	X	
English as Second Language		X			X			
PCI (Protected Infrastructure Information Program) ACA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Lab			X					
E-rate Coordinator			X					
Evaluation System Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Exemplary Teacher Program	X	X					X	
Exemplary Personnel Program (RESA 2 gives Principal of the Year Award)		X					X	
Food Service Personnel		X			X			
Graduate Classes 3rd Party Contracts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Grad 20/20 Dropout Prevention Grad Project	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Handle on Science	X	X			X	X	X	
Hit the Ground Running			X					
I Believe/I Lead					X	X	X	X
Instructional Coaches Training	X	X		X	X			X
Instructional Materials Review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interactive School Improve. Website Dev.	X	X						
Itinerant Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instructional Practice Inventory (IPI) Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kickup/Electronic Mentoring/Coaching Project		X						
LCC (Literacy Collaborative Committee)		X	X			X		
Master Plan Committee	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
McRel Classroom Instruction Works Proj.	X	X	X	X	X			
Medicaid	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mentor Requirements for Principals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
National Association of Ser. Agency Work	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NBCT Support (National Board Certified Teacher)							X	
New Teacher Mentor	X	X	X		X		X	X
Next Gen Writing Project		X	X					
Non Cognitive Student Support Project		X						

Table 2
Matrix of RESA Services Provided

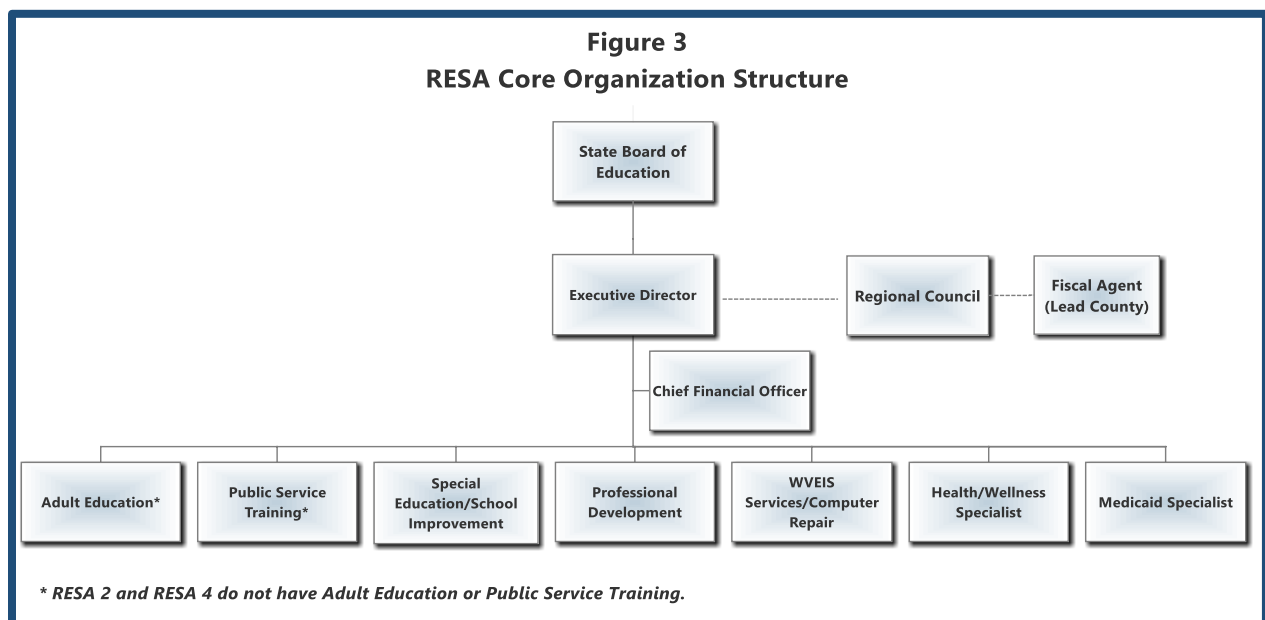
Program/Service	RESA 1	RESA 2	RESA 3	RESA 4	RESA 5	RESA 6	RESA 7	RESA 8
OEPA Mock On-Site Visit Preparation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Occupational Therapy			X				X	
Orientation and Mobility Therapist							X	
Parental Communication System							X	
Policy 4373 Support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Principal Leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public Service Training Program	X		X		X	X	X	X
Rural Education Consortium		X						
School Improvement-County Supported	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School Safety Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education Contracted Services		X	X		X	X	X	
Support for Personalized Learning/Instruction SPL/SPI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SPOKES (Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success)	X		X		X	X	X	X
State Professional Development Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Statewide AEPA Administration		X						
Student Academic Competitions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Test-Out Program						X	X	
Student Transportation		X		X		X		X
Student Tutoring Services	X	X		X				X
Substitute Calling System				X		X		
Student Leadership/Student Voice, Scholarship Project		X						
Substitute Teacher Training	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Talent Pool Services/Consultants	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) Testing Site	X		X		X		X	X
Technical Assistance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technology Coordination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Technology Repair Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teleconferencing Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Thinking Maps							X	

Program/Service	RESA 1	RESA 2	RESA 3	RESA 4	RESA 5	RESA 6	RESA 7	RESA 8
Workforce Investment Program	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Writing Across the Curriculum	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
WV Wood Technology Program							X	
WVEIS (WV Education Information System)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Source: Regional Education Service Agencies.
The highlighted services and programs serve individuals outside of the public school system population.*

RESA Core Organization Structure

Although there is significant variation in the types of services each RESA provides, there are some common services that each RESA offers, some of which are dictated by statute or by the State BOE or the DOE. Figure 3 shows the core organization structure of RESAs in terms of services and personnel. Adult education and public service training (PST) is offered at all RESAs except RESA 2 and RESA 4. Other core services include professional development, technical assistance for schools and school systems, special education, technology repair services, cooperative purchasing, Medicaid reimbursement, health and wellness programs, and support for the DOE’s West Virginia Education Information System (WVEIS). By rule, each RESA is required to employ an executive director (CSR 126-72-3.2.a), a chief financial officer (CSR 126-72-4.3), and a fiscal agent may be selected from one of the county boards of education in the RESA region to perform accounting functions (CSR 126-72-4.2).



RESA Employees

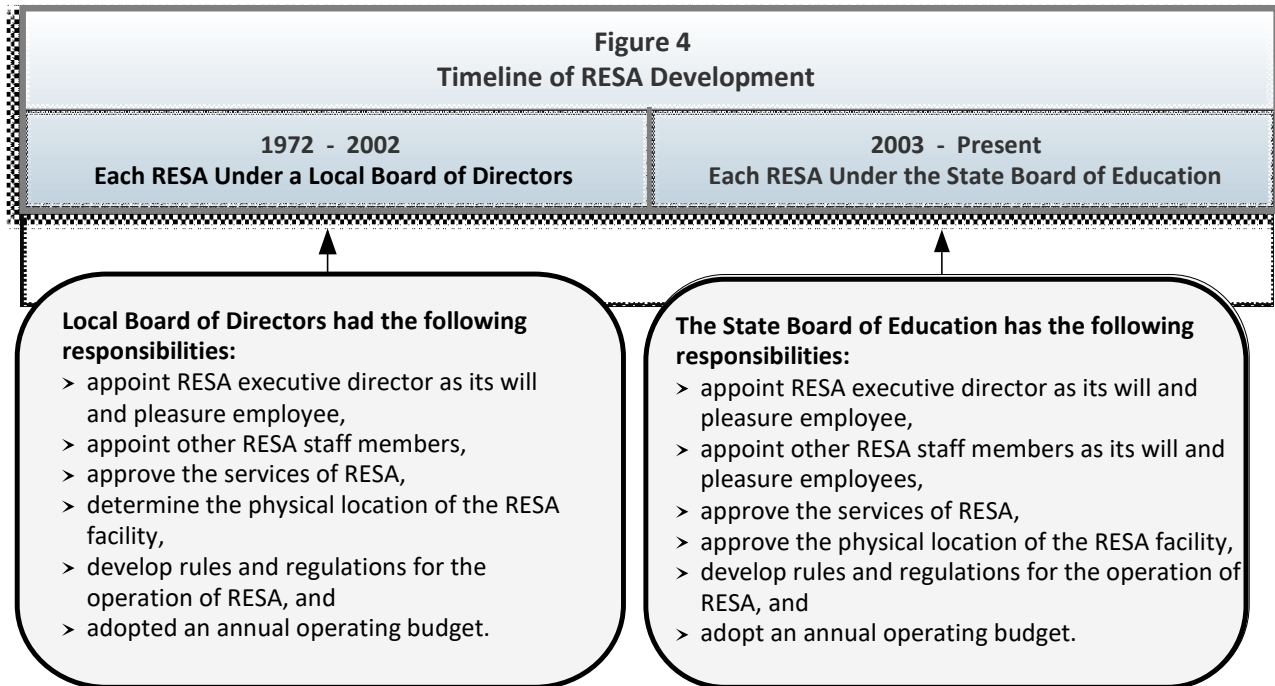
Each RESA employs individuals to provide its particular services. As Table 3 indicates, most RESA employees are regular full-time. Regular full and part-time employees work regularly scheduled positions and are eligible for RESA's benefit package. It should be noted that some RESAs have employees who are considered non-regular part-time or full-time because they either work hourly as needed or they are contracted to temporarily supplement the RESA workforce or assist RESA in the completion of a project. These individuals are not eligible for RESA's benefit package.

RESA	Regular Full-Time	Regular Part-Time	Total Number of Employees
RESA 1 – Beckley	57	0	57
RESA 2 - Huntington	16	1	17
RESA 3 - Dunbar	58	1	59
RESA 4 – Summersville	18	1	19
RESA 5 – Parkersburg	45	2	47
RESA 6 – Wheeling	55	0	55
RESA 7 – Clarksburg	84	1	85
RESA 8 – Martinsburg	169	0	169
Total	502	6	508
<i>Sources: Individual RESA data. Non-regular full and part-time employees are not included.</i>			

The Evolution of RESA - From Local Control to State Control

From 1972 to 2002, the statutory purpose for RESAs was primarily to consolidate and effectively administer regional education programs in the county school systems in order to equalize and extend educational opportunities within counties. During this time, each RESA was under a local Board of Directors that consisted of the county superintendent and a member of the board of education from each county within the RESA region, and one voting member appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools. As Figure 4 shows, each Board of Directors was responsible for all operational and programmatic responsibilities of RESA. The Boards hired RESA staff, approved RESA services, adopted an annual operating budget and developed policies for RESA operations.

However, passage of HB 4319 during the 2002 legislative session reestablished RESAs under the State Board of Education. All of the responsibilities formerly authorized to local Boards of Directors were transferred to the State Board of Education. In addition, the legislation redefined the Boards of Directors as Regional Councils to advise and assist RESA executive directors in carrying out their duties. Three additional voting members were added to the regional councils, which included a chief instructional leader other than a superintendent, a school principal and a teacher.



In addition to restructuring the governance of RESAs, HB 4319 shifted the emphasis of RESAs from consolidating county school system educational and administrative services to assisting the State Board of Education in implementing its educational goals and objectives based on a standards-based accountability model. As part of the refocus, the legislation listed the following six main purposes of RESA:

1. Providing technical assistance to low-performing schools and school systems;
2. Providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education;
3. Facilitating coordination and cooperation among the county boards within their respective regions in such areas as cooperative purchasing; sharing of specialized personnel, communications and technology; curriculum development; and operation of specialized programs for exceptional children;
4. Installing, maintaining and/or repairing education related technology equipment and software with special attention to the state level technology learning tools for public schools' program;

5. Receiving and administering grants under the provisions of federal and/or state law; and
6. Developing and/or implementing any other programs or services as directed by law, the state board or the regional council.

The legislation specified that the first two items listed “*constitute the most important responsibilities for the agencies*” (W. Va. §18-2-26(c)). Previously, item number 3, facilitating coordination of county boards of education services, was the primary focus.

There were concerns by counties and RESAs of losing control of RESAs to the State as early as 2000 when the BOE amended its rule to require Board of Directors have semi-annual meetings with the BOE and the DOE to establish and set goals and objectives for each RESA, to assess the attainment of the goals and objectives, and to require BOE approval of the physical location of RESAs. During the public comment period for amending the rule, one county school superintendent expressed the following concern:

It appears that the State Board and State Superintendent are trying to take over the RESAs. “. . . I feel we are quite capable of setting our own goals and objectives. . . . It would be OK to require our goals to align with the State Goals but if this is [the] way RESAs will have to operate, there appears to be little need for a Board of Directors. I believe this section needs to be reworded to allow for more local autonomy and less control by the State Board and State Superintendent. I also believe RESAs were made to provide a SERVICE to the counties and not to become another arm of the West Virginia Department of Education. This section virtually says, RESAs belong to the State Board and State Superintendent.

A RESA executive director, authorized by his board of directors, also commented on the amended rule by stating:

It would seem the local board of directors is in a better position to determine the location and physical housing arrangements necessary at the local level without the necessity of State Board approval. . . . There is no question that the goals and objectives of the RESA should align with state goals and objectives established by the State Board. However, to say the State Board and/or the State Superintendent should set goals and objectives for the RESA is to severely limit the effectiveness and control of the RESA Board of Directors. The local Board is in a better position to determine the needs of the counties in their regions, and therefore should set the goals and objectives for the RESA and determine the activities necessary to meet those goals and objectives.

RESAs Have Come Under Several Studies Which Have Expressed Mixed Opinions

Over the years, several studies have examined RESAs either directly or as a part of the state’s education system. These studies have been initiated by the Governor’s Office, the

Legislature, or the Board of Education. The following list identifies recent studies that involved significant review of RESAs.

- October 2014 -- *Report of the West Virginia Board of Education's Commission on School District Governance and Administration.*
- October 2014 -- *2014 House Bill 2940 Meetings Findings, West Virginia School Board Association.*
- September 2013 -- *HB 2940 Regional Discussions, Summary of Findings & Recommendations, West Virginia School Board Association.*
- January 2012 -- *Education Efficiency Audit of West Virginia's Primary and Secondary Education System, Public Works LLC, Commissioned by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin.*
- November 2006 -- *RESA Task Force Report, A Comprehensive Study of the Programs, Governance and Administration of Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), Response to West Virginia Senate Bill 127.*

In general, these studies have acknowledged RESAs as important resources for the State's public education system. However, while the studies recognized the strengths and value of RESAs, several concerns were raised identifying structural problems and limitations. Typical concerns mentioned are the lack of:

- clear focus and direction in terms of defined core-services RESAs should provide and what is RESA's primary interest: serving county boards of education or the State Board of Education;
- coordination of planned services between RESAs, counties and the DOE; and
- sufficiency in carrying out major statutory responsibilities such as providing technical assistance to low-performing schools.

These issues were raised in a number of quotes from each report, as stated below:

In turn, the Commission favors keeping the RESA concept but changing these agencies so their focus is more on serving the needs of the 55 school districts as expressed by the districts themselves. . . . The Commission recommends the restructuring of the state's Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) with changes to be developed, piloted and implemented over the next five years.

Report of the West Virginia Board of Education's Commission on School District Governance and Administration, October 2014, pp. 4-5.

County boards should identify the services which should be shared and that Regional Education Service Agencies (existing or as restructured) should coordinate, collaborate, or facilitate provision of the services, especially in collaboration with county superintendents or county administrators.

2014 House Bill 2940 Meetings Findings, West Virginia School Board Association, October 2014, p. 7.

County superintendents and county board members see RESAs as the logical entity to usher the sharing of county-level administrative services. . . . the question arising from county boards and county superintendents is simply put: Do RESAs serve county boards by providing needed or emergent shared services, or does the state Board of Education view RESAs as state Department of Education “branches” conveniently dispatched and dispersed to various locales throughout the state to accomplish prioritized state Board of Education or state Department of Education objectives first and foremost?

HB 2940 Regional Discussions, Summary of Findings & Recommendations, West Virginia School Board Association, September 2013, p. 19.

The lack of a statewide, coordinated planning process for the RESAs creates a system that fosters independence but also allows the RESAs to work in isolation, sometimes to the detriment of the entire system. There are opportunities to reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiencies if WVDE (DOE) establishes a comprehensive planning process, helps RESAs identify core services to be provided by all RESAs and works to establish shared services across RESAs.

Education Efficiency Audit of West Virginia’s Primary and Secondary Education System, Public Works LLC, January 2012, p.75.

The majority of staff development sessions were initiated by counties or connected to required activities within restricted state and federal grants. A review of the sessions would indicate that many of the staff development sessions were not targeted to low performing schools. . . . there is limited state-level funding for RESAs to provide the amount and type of targeted professional development and assistance needed for low performing schools.

RESA Task Force Report, A Comprehensive Study of the Programs, Governance and Administration of Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), Response to West Virginia Senate Bill 127, November 2006, p. 8.

The 2012 *Education Efficiency Audit of West Virginia’s Primary and Secondary Education System* (Efficiency Audit) identified ways that the Board of Education could improve education procedures in schools and cost effective measures to help achieve that improvement. The report recommended that the DOE expand its interaction and use of RESAs to improve assistance to school districts. For instance, the report recommended that DOE partner with RESAs more to provide technical assistance and support districts’ needs. Furthermore, the report recommended streamlining regional and local professional development advisory and policy making structures. The BOE responded that:

The WVBOE agrees with the recommendation to use a bottoms-up approach to design a professional development plan that is both flexible and responsive to the actual needs of schools and teachers. We support the RESAs in leading customized professional development aligned with specific state professional development goals and individual district and school professional development sections of their strategic plans. The Board will appoint a WVBOE Professional Development Advisory Committee to assist in streamlining regional and local professional development advisory and policymaking structure as stated in No. 1 of this section.

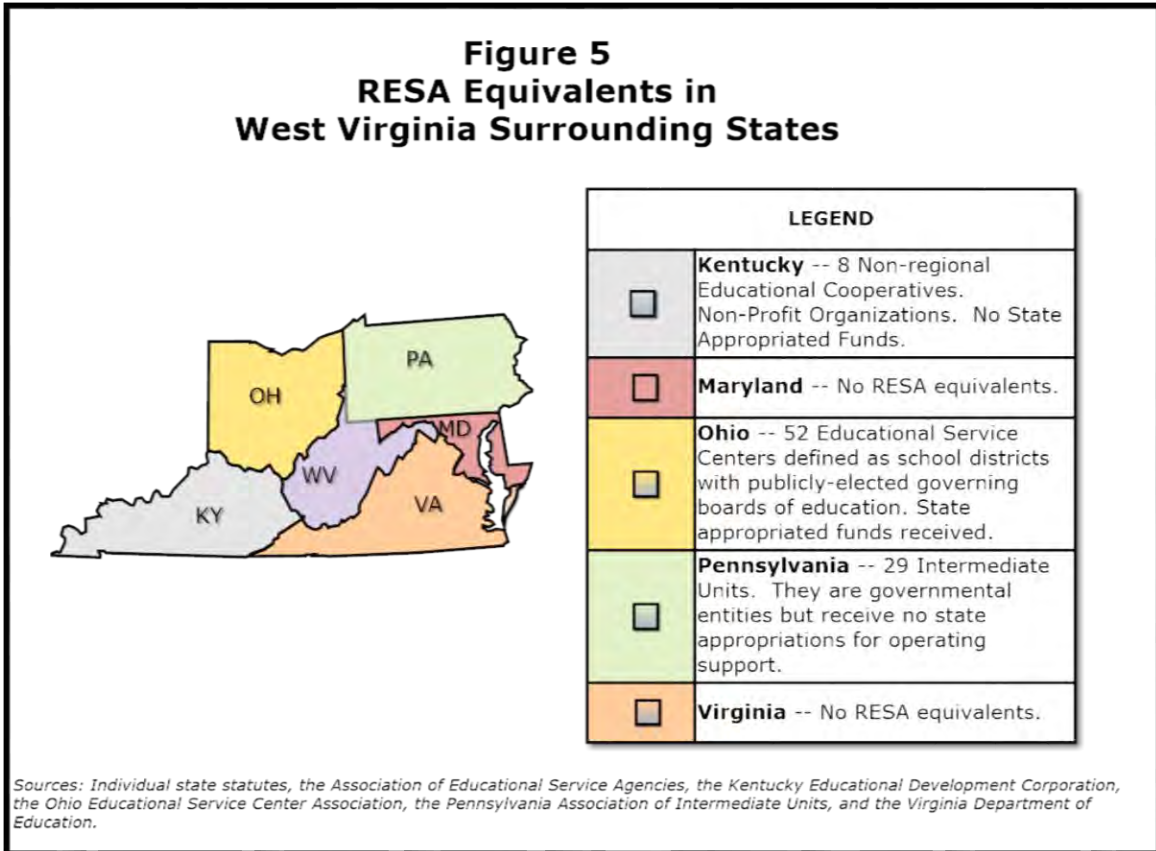
From Audit to Action – Version 3, West Virginia Board of Education, November 2012, p. 52.

The Efficiency Audit suggested providing adequate funding for RESAs to become centers of excellence for teacher quality and professional development. The BOE stated that it “...agrees with the recommendation and advocates for funding to strengthen and professionalize RESAs in order for them to become centers of excellence for both professional development and teacher quality, particularly related to low-performing schools and high need areas, such as science, math and technology.” Additionally, the report recommended establishing a comprehensive strategic planning process to review each RESA’s capabilities, strengths, and current services. The BOE has implemented requirements for each RESA to submit a strategic plan that aligns with the BOE’s goals and priorities. The next recommendation stated that the BOE should clarify the core services each RESA should provide and identify opportunities for collaboration. The BOE responded that it agreed with the recommendation and the concern was being addressed in relation to the areas of service required of RESAs in Code via a matrix to be shared throughout the districts. The BOE went on to suggest that a statewide forum be held to share the individual RESA core services and capabilities to increase collaboration between agencies and increase statewide awareness.

RESA Equivalents in the Surrounding States

PERD was asked to include in the audit an examination of RESA equivalents in West Virginia’s surrounding states. Figure 5 below shows the results of PERD’s review of state statutes, other documentation, and discussions with surrounding state officials. PERD found that the states of Maryland and Virginia do not have RESA equivalents. Kentucky has eight Educational Cooperatives, each of which are non-profit organizations, completely entrepreneurial, and they receive no state appropriated funds. They also are not regionally based. Membership with an Educational Cooperative by school districts is voluntary but most members are in contiguous counties. Kentucky’s cooperatives provide professional development to educators, services to meet the administrative and support needs of schools, technology services, and other educational services. Kentucky’s revenue sources include membership fees, fees for services, and state and federal grants.

**Figure 5
RESA Equivalents in
West Virginia Surrounding States**



Ohio has 52 Educational Service Centers (ESCs). These centers are considered local political subdivisions or school districts under law, and they are governed by publicly-elected boards of education. Originally ESCs were county boards of education but their names were changed in 1995 and they were consolidated from 88 county offices to 63 ESCs. Since then several voluntary mergers have occurred and there are now 52 ESCs. Nearly all ESCs provide pre-school special education, special education speech and psychology services, curriculum and instruction consulting, and professional development as it relates to school improvement, standards, curriculum and assessments. ESCs also assist Ohio’s Department of Education through contracts to provide school improvement services and intervention with the lowest performing school districts. School districts in Ohio have the option every two years to realign to a different ESC anywhere in the state if they are not satisfied with the services they receive. School districts may purchase from any ESC in the state at any time, and if all client school districts of an ESC terminate their agreements, then the governing board is abolished and the ESC is dissolved.

Ohio provides a subsidy to ESCs of approximately \$27 per enrolled student, and school districts also contribute \$6.50 per enrolled student. The state per-student subsidy has been reduced over the years from \$37 in FY 2010 to \$27. The majority (63%) of ESC funding comes from fee-for-service contracts with local client school districts. Other sources of revenue come from federal and state grants.

It should be noted that in 2006 Ohio established an Educational Regional Service System (ERSS) that supports state and regional initiatives to improve school effectiveness and student achievement. The ERSS consists of 16 regions, with most regions comprising multiple counties. Each region has an advisory council composed of several members representing ESCs, the smallest and largest student populations of the region, and higher education institutions. Each Regional Advisory Council is required to select a school district or ESC in the region to be the fiscal agent. Fiscal agents are required to enter into performance contracts with the Ohio Department of Education for the implementation of state and regional education initiatives and school improvement efforts. The fiscal agent shall receive funds as specified in the contract to implement the Regional Advisory Council's efforts.

Pennsylvania has 29 Intermediate Units which are equivalent to educational service agencies. These entities provide fee-based educational services and several units have contracts with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to provide Pre-School Early Intervention, special education, and Department initiatives. Pennsylvania's intermediate units also receive competitive state funding in areas of early childhood education such as Head Start supplemental assistance and pre-kindergarten programs. Since 2011, state appropriated funding for the general operating support of intermediate units was eliminated. Although intermediate units are governmental entities created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, they operate entrepreneurially through developing, marketing and selling programs and services for funds.

PERD Survey of Superintendents and Principals

At the start of this audit, PERD took an electronic survey of West Virginia's county school education superintendents and school principals. The survey asked a variety of questions concerning their opinions of RESA services, whether RESAs were still needed, and whether there would be adverse effects if RESAs were discontinued. Thirty-four (34) of the 55 superintendents responded to the survey, while 254 of the 681 principals responded.

For the most part, superintendents and principals utilize many RESA services and they find them to be valuable and needed. The level of satisfaction for specialized personnel, professional development, computer repair, and cooperative purchasing, was relatively high for superintendents and principals. In terms of whether there was a continued need for RESAs, 25 (73.5 percent) superintendents felt there would be significant adverse effects if RESAs were discontinued, while 9 (26.4 percent) felt there would be minimal to no adverse effects. For principals, 164 (65.6 percent) felt there would be significant adverse effects if RESAs were discontinued, while 86 (34.4 percent) felt there would be minimal to no adverse effects. The results of the surveys, including all comments as written, can be found in Appendix D of the report.

The West Virginia Association of School Administrators Supports the Mission of RESAs

The West Virginia Association of School Administrators provided PERD with a letter supporting the mission and goals of RESAs. The letter listed the outputs and achievements of RESA services over the past five years as indicated below:

- professional development for over 150,000 educators,
- services or repaired over one half million computers,
- cooperative purchasing and cost avoidance of over 50 million dollars,
- assisted counties with Medicaid billing reimbursements of over 200 million dollars,
- provided public service training for approximately a quarter of a million community servants,
- orchestrated student academic fairs and activities for over 15,000 students, and
- over one half million WVEIS users with vital timely help desk assistance.

The Association expressed its support of RESA programs and services and urged the Legislature to support the 55 county boards of education by continuing the work of RESAs. The letter is in Appendix E of the report.

Finding 1: By Law, Technical Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Professional Development Are the Most Important Responsibilities for RESAs, But These Services Are a Relatively Small Percentage of Total Expenditures.

As stated previously, the Legislature passed HB 4319 during the 2002 legislative session that established RESAs under the State Board of Education. In addition, the bill reprioritized the regional service purpose to include six service areas, with technical assistance to low-performing schools (TA) and staff (professional) development (PD) constituting the two most important responsibilities for RESAs.

PERD finds that RESAs perform mandated services and these services are still needed by the county school systems. Since TA and PD are RESA's most important functions, RESAs have been incorporated into the State's school improvement framework. This framework includes a State System of Support that administers TA and PD to schools through various departments of the DOE, local education agencies (LEAs) and RESAs. Some of the components of school improvement include:

- establishing teams within schools to gather and analyze school data, conduct needs assessments, develop an improvement plan, and monitor or adjust the plan;
- assisting teachers in enhancing their knowledge and skills related to instruction, classroom curriculum and student engagement;
- assisting in improving the culture and climate of the school which includes the working relationships of school personnel and the health and well-being of students;
- providing specialized knowledge in the instruction of special populations such as students with disabilities and English language learners;
- providing professional and leadership development; and
- supporting parent and community involvement.

The State assigns a designation to each school that represents its overall academic achievement and progress. One of the following five designations are assigned to each school:

1. Priority Schools: persistently lowest achieving schools;
2. Support Schools: schools that are not meeting both their index-based trajectories and demonstrate that a majority of their subgroups are not making sufficient academic progress;
3. Focus Schools: schools with persistent and pervasive subgroup achievement gaps/subgroup graduation rate gaps;
4. Transition Schools: schools that are either not meeting their index-based trajectories or demonstrate that a majority of their subgroups are making sufficient academic progress; and
5. Success Schools: schools that are meeting both their index-based trajectories and demonstrate that a majority of their subgroups are making sufficient academic progress.

The designation of each school determines the support needed and who will provide the principal support. Priority schools receive extensive support from the DOE and LEAs. RESAs can be used to assist the DOE or the LEA to support Priority schools. Focus schools receive

targeted support for subgroup analysis from the DOE, LEAs and RESAs, while Support and Transition schools receive basic support from LEAs and RESAs. Success schools are supported by their respective LEAs. With respect to all Focus-designated schools, a memorandum of understanding exists between the DOE, RESAs and County BOEs for the years 2013-2017.

The BOE's Standards for High Quality Schools (CSR §126-12; Policy 2322) represent the foundation for continuous school improvement for all schools and therefore, serves as the basis for improving Priority and Focus schools. These standards encompass several general principles which include:

- establishing a positive and safe climate and culture within schools;
- developing effective school leadership;
- delivering standards-focused curriculum and instruction, and assessments;
- developing student support services and family/community connections;
- providing professional development for educator growth;
- developing efficient and effective management of school facilities and resources, and personnel; and
- providing for continuous improvement which involves establishing goals and monitoring results.

In order to establish and fortify these principles in low-performing schools, a host of support services are needed in areas of special education, professional development, instructional coaching, instructional planning, curriculum specialists, wellness specialists, and 21st century technology tools and infrastructure. Each RESA has staff and programs that provide support toward school improvement for Focus schools. RESAs also provide technical assistance and expertise through a respective Focus Assistance Support Team (FAST) to assist school teams that are established for the school improvement process. Specific RESA personnel and programs that are needed in the school improvement process include:

Special Education: Each RESA has a special education director who provide services and support for students with disabilities that adversely impact their learning.

Graduation 20/20: RESA specialists provide training and coaching to support school teams to graduate students with disabilities within four years of enrolling in the ninth grade.

Professional Development: Each RESA has personnel for a variety of professional development.

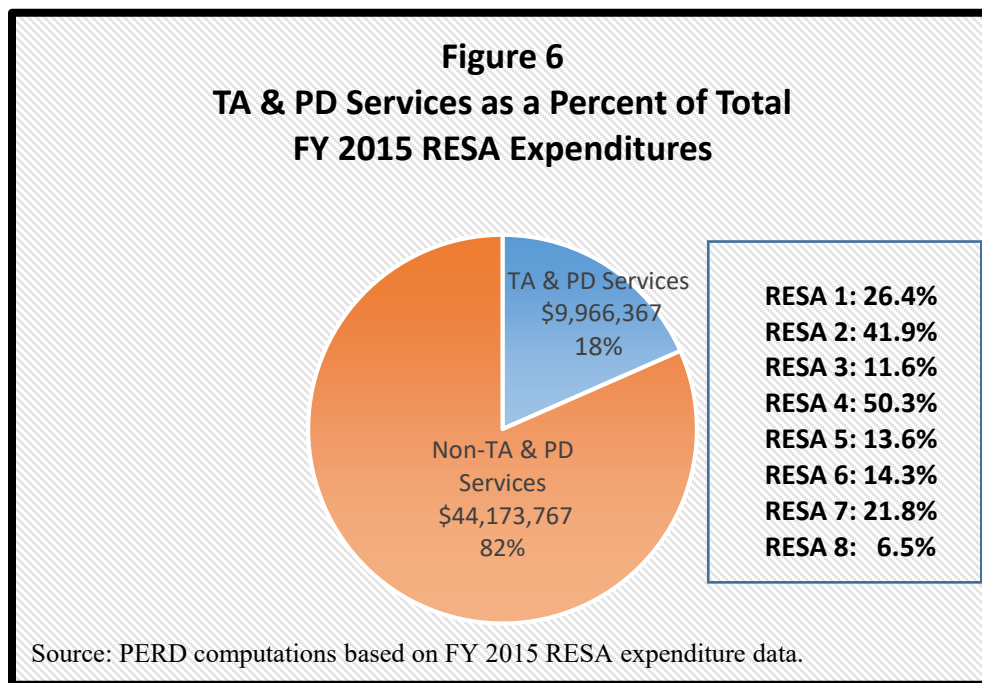
Wellness & Adolescent Health Programs: These programs provide assistance and information in suicide prevention; teen pregnancy prevention; substance abuse prevention; tobacco prevention; oral health awareness; adolescent well-child visits; physical activity awareness; and prevention awareness in diabetes, asthma, obesity and hypertension.

21st Century Community Learning Centers: A program that creates community learning centers that provide academic enhancement opportunities during non-school hours, particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.

Instructional Practices Inventory: A process in which teachers learn the different levels of student engagement so that instructional designs can be created to improve student learning.

TA and PD Services Are 18 Percent of Total RESA Expenditures on Average.

Although RESAs provide a wide range of TA and PD services, the extent of these services varies from one RESA to another. An important issue is whether TA and PD constitute the two most important services RESAs provide in accordance with statute. Therefore, PERD reviewed RESA expenditures, Strategic Plans and Annual Reports for fiscal years 2013-2015 in order to determine what percentage of RESA's financial resources are dedicated to TA and PD. This determination was performed for each RESA and for RESAs combined. PERD's analysis is shown in Figure 6. The results show that on average, an estimated 18 percent of total RESA expenditures for FY 2015 were TA and PD related. On an individual basis, the percentages range from a high of 50.3 percent for RESA 4 and a low of 6.5 percent for RESA 8. These percentages do not vary significantly in FY 2013 or 2014 for individual RESAs.



These figures are based on the expense categories of expenditure data as they were provided to PERD from each RESA. The expenditures include salaries and benefits for direct and most indirect (support staff) costs, for the major categories of TA, special education, PD, school improvement support, adolescent health, wellness, technology repair and modernization support, Graduation 20/20, and 21st Century Learning. Expenditures for WVEIS that each RESA incurs are not included because they do not constitute TA. WVEIS is for all schools in general and many of the programs that WVEIS supports are for county and school accounting and administrative purposes. Although some RESA executive directors spend some time directly delivering TA or PD, the calculations in Figure 6 do not include a portion of their salary and benefits toward TA or PD. Also, vacancies for any length of time whether for TA, PD or non-TA and PD positions would

under or overstate the estimated percentages respectively. However, it also needs to be understood that some expenditures such as wellness and adolescent health programs, and technology modernization, are not exclusive to low-performing schools but are for all schools in general. While these expenditures contribute to an overstatement of TA and PD, they were included in total to the TA and PD categories because they are factors in the school improvement process. Given these caveats, a plus or minus margin of error exists for the estimated TA and PD percentages. However, given that the large majority of TA and PD expenditures are captured, and non-TA and PD expenditures are unambiguous, the margin of error is relatively small.

Expenditures that fall in the category of Non-TA and PD include:

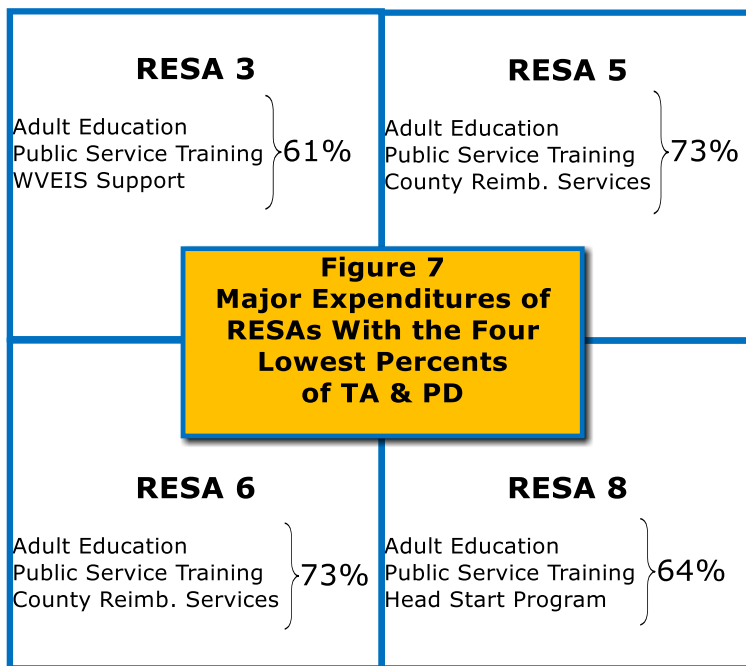
- Adult Education,
- Public Service Training (PST),
- coordinated county reimbursed services,
- RESA 8's Head Start program,
- WVEIS support, and
- workforce and economic development programs.

Adult education, PST, and workforce and economic development programs serve populations that are outside of the age category of the county school systems. The Head Start program at RESA 8 cannot be considered TA. Although the Head Start program provides some special education services, they are not specific to low-performing schools. While coordinated county-level services include RESA-employed specialized personnel who provide special education services such as audiology, physical therapy, speech language pathology, occupational therapy and Medicaid reimbursement, PERD did not include these as TA or PD because counties are obligated by law (W. Va. §18-20) to provide them and they are paying for these services. In effect, the counties are providing these services through contractual arrangements with RESAs. The purpose in RESAs employing these specialists is to save counties money by allowing them to share the personnel. Counties pay a prorated share of the costs based on set criteria. However, it should be noted that many RESA-employed specialized personnel are contracted exclusively to a county with no shared provisions.

Given that 18 percent of RESA expenditures on average were for TA and PD, it would be unreasonable to conclude that they constitute RESA's two most important responsibilities in practice. One reason for this is that other services crowd out TA and PD. Figure 7 shows the RESAs with the four lowest percentages of TA and PD. In FY 2015, nearly 61 percent of RESA 3 expenditures were for adult education, PST and WVEIS support.¹ For RESA 8, over 51 percent of its expenditures were for its Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and when adult education and PST are added, the percentage is over 64 percent. Other RESAs such as RESA 5 and RESA 6 have a relatively high concentration of their expenditures on reimbursed coordinated county services, and when combined with adult education and PST they represent nearly 75

¹ RESA 3 is the WVEIS hub for all RESAs, and it maintains the WVEIS back-up server in a separate facility located in Nitro, West Virginia. Therefore, RESA 3 has more WVEIS staff and receives significantly more WVEIS funds than the other RESAs.

percent of total expenditures. **While these services are beneficial, they are disproportionate when TA and PD are considered most important.**



Another reason for the relatively low percentages of TA and PD is funding limitations. TA and PD are generally funded by state or federal grants which RESAs receive through the DOE. Since the DOE is the lead organization for school improvement, it significantly influences the extent to which RESAs are used for school improvement purposes and the amount of funding to allocate. The discretionary use of state aid that RESAs receive is limited. Some executive directors, who are paid through state aid, directly provide TA and PD services, and several RESAs are able to use some state aid to fund additional PD or technical assistance activities, but beyond that, state aid is limited.

The effect of this disproportionality is magnified when you consider the number of Priority and Focus schools in individual RESA regions. **For example, 21.8 percent of RESA 7’s FY 2015 expenditures were on TA and PD; yet it has 4 Priority schools and 36 Focus schools in its region (see Table 4 below).** With 36 Focus schools, it would be expected that RESA 7 have a larger percentage of expenditures on TA and PD. Instead, more than 62 percent of RESA 7’s expenditures were on county reimbursed services, adult education, PST, a College Foundation grant, a Farm-to-School grant, and a workforce development grant. In contrast, RESA 4 had 50.3 percent of its expenditures for TA and PD, yet it has only 3 Focus schools. In addition, RESA 2 has 8 Priority schools and 14 Focus schools in its region and its TA and PD expenditures were nearly 42 percent of total expenditures, while RESAs 3 and 5 have similar numbers of Focus schools but their percentages of expenditures on TA and PD were considerably less than in RESA 2.

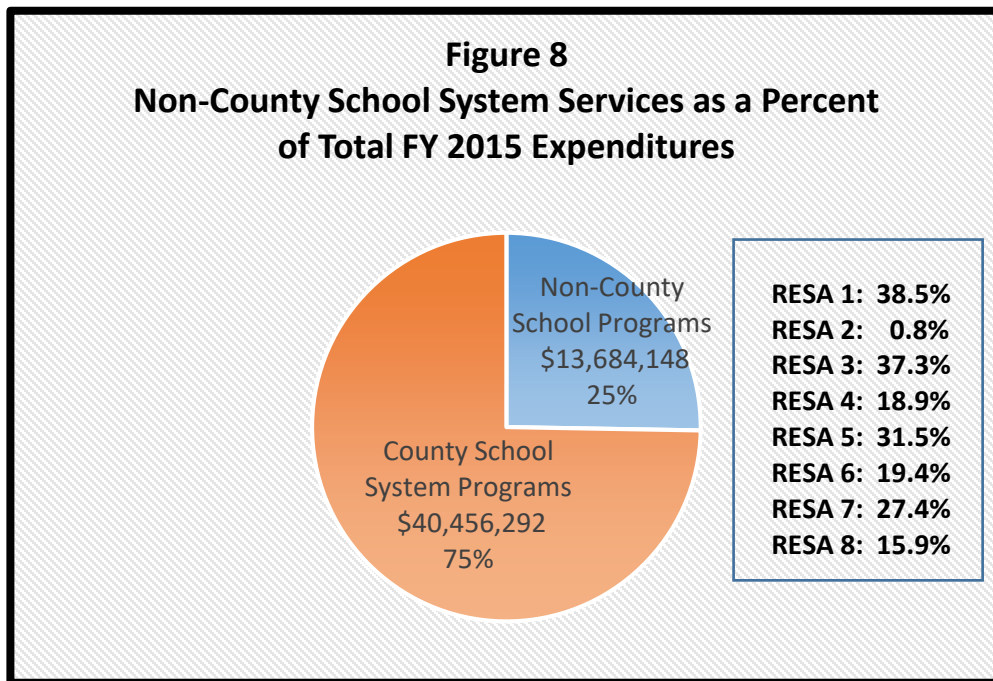
Table 4 TA & PD Expenditure Percentages and the Number of Priority and Focus Schools				
RESA	Total FY 2015 TA & PD Expenditures	TA & PD Expenditure Percentage	Number of Priority Schools	Number of Focus Schools
RESA 1	\$1.8 Million	26.4%	4	6
RESA 2	\$1.3 Million	41.9%	8	14
RESA 3	\$1.0 Million	11.6%	2	10
RESA 4	\$1.6 Million	50.3%	4	3
RESA 5	\$0.8 Million	13.6%	2	13
RESA 6	\$0.7 Million	14.3%	0	7
RESA 7	\$1.9 Million	21.8%	4	36
RESA 8	\$0.8 Million	6.5%	3	7

Sources: PERD calculations of RESA expenditures, and the Department of Education for the number of Priority and Focus schools.

In absolute dollar amounts, RESAs 1 and 4 spent nearly the same amount (\$1.8 million and \$1.6 million respectively) on TA and PD with only 6 and 3 Focus schools respectively as RESA 7 spent (\$1.9 million) with 36 Focus schools. In terms of percentages or dollar amounts, there is no correlation between expenses for TA and PD and the number of Focus schools. **This suggests that there is inadequate direction, focus and resources centered on the most important responsibilities of RESAs.**

Finding 2: Twenty-five (25) Percent of RESA’s Resources Do Not Serve the County School Systems.

RESAs were created to serve county school systems and this remains RESA’s purpose despite legislative amendments over the years. RESA’s original enabling statute indicated that it was established “for the purpose of providing educational services to the county school systems.” The 2002 statutory amendment was the most significant because it realigned RESA under the State BOE. Despite the realignment, the legislative intent remains to “provide for high quality, cost effective education programs and services to students, schools, and school systems.” In addition, from the earliest legislative rule to the current rule, RESAs have been identified as “an integral part of the State school system” and “the regional units in the State school system” to provide supplementary educational services to county school systems and provide opportunities for cooperation and coordination of county school functions. **However, Figure 8 shows that on average 25 percent of RESA expenditures in FY 2015 were for programs that do not serve county school systems.** This amounted to over \$13.6 million. On an individual basis, RESAs 1 and 3 spent nearly 40 percent on non-county school system services. These services are generally adult education, PST and workforce development programs.



These non-school system services are listed below in Table 5. Adult Basic Education is a federal grant program that the State DOE makes available through RESAs. Adult education includes classes for the GED, workplace education programs for business and industry, basic skills assessments with Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) referrals, and other collaborative programs through the WorkForce WV Career Center. Public Service Training is a DOE state grant community program. It is used to train firefighters, law enforcement, EMS

Squads, Water Treatment Facilities, Waste Water Facilities, and other special public service groups. The SPOKES acronym stands for Strategic Planning in Occupational Knowledge for Employment and Success. It is a six-week program that teaches academic and job preparation skills like job readiness, computer skills, and work process skills. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a program that screens potential applicants for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides reimbursement for nutritious meals for young children enrolled in family day care homes, and it also helps to develop positive eating habits. The West Virginia Environmental Training Center is operated by RESA 5 and provides training for wastewater and water plant operators, managers, inspectors, and technicians. RESA 5 also offers an online program called Hit the Ground Running in conjunction with the DOE and the West Virginia Workplace Education Program that helps individuals learn or refresh the skills most requested by employers in the State’s Region IV Workforce Investment Area. The West Virginia Wood Technology Center is operated by RESA 7 in conjunction with the Randolph County Development Authority. The Wood Technology Center is an economic development project that offers workforce training and business support. RESA 7 also provides training and technical assistance on the College Foundation of West Virginia website to the counties in RESAs 5, 6, and 7 as well as Braxton County in RESA 4. RESA 7 has a partnership known as Youth Ready - Workforce Investment Board with the State’s Region VI Workforce Investment Board that allows students to attend workshops and classes on job attainment skills like resume writing and preparing for job interviews. RESA 8 has a program known as West Virginia Birth to Three that focuses on services and supports for children ages birth to three who have a delay in their development or may be at risk for delay.

**Table 5
Non-County School System Services Provided By RESAs**

Services	R E S A							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Adult Basic Education	X		X		X	X	X	X
Public Service Training (PST)	X		X		X	X	X	X
SPOKES Program	X		X		X	X	X	X
(TANF/WV WORKS)	X		X				X	X
Child and Adult Care Food Program				X				
West Virginia Environmental Training Center					X			
Hit the Ground Running			X					
West Virginia Wood Technology Center							X	
College Foundation of West Virginia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Youth Ready-Workforce Investment Board							X	
WV Birth to Three								X

Sources: Various RESA agencies.

While the RESA services listed in Table 5 have value to local communities, they are intended for individuals who are not enrolled in public schools. The adult education program prohibits services to individuals who are enrolled in public schools. Although adult education is

administered by the DOE, it is not a core program for the Department or school systems. In 22 states, adult education is governed by agencies other than their departments of education such as workforce development agencies and higher education.

In light of the legislative intent to serve county school systems, it is not clear how these non-school system programs developed within RESAs. The Adult Education and PST programs have been offered by RESAs since at least the mid-1990s. The 2002 amendment listed six RESA service areas, the last of which is a catch-all provision that states RESA's areas of service include *"Developing and/or implementing any other programs or services as directed by law, the state board or the regional council"* (W. Va. 18-2-26(b)(6)). Since some non-school system programs are grants from the DOE, it could be said that RESAs provide these services as directed by the State BOE. However, the concern with this interpretation is that the six service areas listed in Code are directed at county school systems. According to the legislative purpose statement, *"the Legislature envisions certain areas of service in which the agencies can best assist the state board in implementing the standards based accountability model pursuant to subsection (a)"* (W. Va. 18-2-26(b)). Subsection (a) describes the standards-based accountability model that is designed to improve the performance and progress of students, schools and school systems. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that all six RESA areas of service are intended for county school systems and their students, including any other BOE-directed program.

Nevertheless, there should be concern that RESAs spend as much as they do on non-school system programs when there are low-performing schools in their regions. Table 6 shows the number of Priority Schools and Focus School in each RESA region and each RESA's expenditure percentage on non-school system programs. RESAs 1 and 3 had the two highest percentages of non-school system expenditures. RESA 1 has 4 Priority Schools and 6 Focus Schools, while RESA 3 has 2 Priority Schools and 10 Focus Schools. RESA 5 spent over 31 percent on non-school system programs and has 2 Priority Schools and 13 Focus Schools. RESA 7 had 27 percent of its expenditures associated with non-school system programming; yet, it has 4 Priority Schools and 36 Focus Schools. In contrast, RESAs that had among the highest percentages of expenditures for TA and PD are also among the lowest in expenditures on non-school system programs. RESA 2 has 8 Priority Schools and 14 Focus School while it spent less than 1 percent on non-school system programs. **Diverting on average 25 percent of RESA's capacity to serve non-school system populations is contradictory to RESA's statutory purpose and ignores the improvement needs of many schools in these regions.**

**Table 6
Non-School System Programs, Number of Priority and
Focus Schools by RESA Region**

RESA	2015 Percentage of Non-School System Expenditures	Number of Priority Schools	Number of Focus Schools
RESA 1	38.5%	4	6
RESA 2	0.8%	8	14
RESA 3	37.2%	2	10
RESA 4	18.9%	4	3
RESA 5	31.5%	2	13
RESA 6	19.4%	0	7
RESA 7	27.4%	4	36
RESA 8	15.9%	3	7

Sources: PERD calculations for non-school system programs based on individual RESA data, and West Virginia Department of Education data on Priority and Focus Schools.

Finding 3: RESAs Are Mandated to Coordinate Shared Services to Counties; However, Many County-Level Services That Some RESAs Provide Are Exclusive to Specific Counties. The Legislative Auditor Is Uncertain If This Was the Legislature’s Intent.

RESAs were created to facilitate “*coordination and cooperation among county boards*” for county-level functions. As part of this coordinating process, West Virginia Code §18-2-26(b)(3) specifically mentions “*cooperative purchasing*” and “*sharing specialized personnel,*” each of which involves a service that is shared by multiple county school systems. Sharing the service among counties reduces the cost to each participating county. Table 7 shows that each RESA has employed individuals who provide county-level services totaling 151 employees; however, on average over half of these employees are non-shared. The salaries, benefits and other expenses for these employees are paid by RESAs and subsequently reimbursed by the counties receiving the services along with an administrative fee.

	Total County-Reimbursed RESA Employees	Non-Shared County-Reimbursed RESA Employees	Percentage of Non-Shared County-Reimbursed RESA Employees as a Percent of Total County-Reimbursed RESA Employees
RESA 1	24	21	87.50%
RESA 2	6	2	33.33%
RESA 3	16	11	68.75%
RESA 4	4	0	0.00%
RESA 5	13	2	15.38%
RESA 6	37	23	62.16%
RESA 7	33	19	57.58%
RESA 8	18	2	11.11%
Total	151	80	52.98%

Sources: Based on employment data and service agreements with counties as provided by Regional Education Service Agencies. Calculations were made by PERD.

These non-shared employees provide services that can be shared among member counties and are shared services in other RESAs. For example, RESA 6 has non-shared employees who provide social work services exclusively for Marshall County Schools and Wetzel County Schools. RESA 6 also employs several non-shared specialized employees such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech pathologists, sign language interpreters, and braille and hearing specialists. These specialized personnel and others such as audiologists are shared positions in other RESAs. RESA 3 employs six non-shared computer technicians for Kanawha County Schools and four non-shared computer technicians for Boone County Schools. Computer

technicians are the most frequently shared and non-shared positions within the RESA system. RESA 8 operates a bus program for Berkeley County School's special needs afterschool program, which includes employing a transportation director and a secretary. These employees work directly from a Berkeley County school building and have no office space in the RESA 8 building. Berkeley County reimburses RESA 8 for these employees. **In these types of employment agreements, RESAs are functioning more like employment agencies than facilitating coordination and cooperation among county school boards.**

The State BOE amended its rule, CSR §126-72-2.5.g, to allow RESAs to assume responsibility of one or more county functions for one or more member counties. This amendment allows RESAs to employ personnel that can be exclusive to one county. It should be noted that this amendment was made in January 2015, years after RESA's practice to employ non-shared personnel. PERD finds that RESAs have employed non-shared county employees for each year of the audit scope (FY 2013 – FY 2015).

A Recent Supreme Court Ruling Addresses the Issue of Non-Shared RESA Personnel

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) filed a lawsuit in 2011 against the Monongalia County BOE for hiring interventionists from RESA 7 who would provide personalized training for students who were having difficulties in math and reading. The AFT's argument was that the interventionists were classroom teachers and by using RESA 7 to employ these individuals, the Monongalia County BOE violated teacher hiring laws. The Monongalia Circuit Court Judge ruled in favor of the AFT. The Monongalia County BOE appealed to the State Supreme Court. In September 2016, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals reversed the circuit court's ruling by indicating that county boards are authorized to contract with RESAs to provide interventionist services for county students.

The Legislative Services Division within the Office of the Legislative Auditor states that the Supreme Court of Appeals expressly addresses W.Va. Code §18-2-26(a) and its intent by stating: *“The intent of the Legislature in providing for establishment of RESAs, hereinafter referred to in this section as agency or agencies, is to provide for high quality, cost effective education programs and services to students, schools and school systems.”*² In addition, the Supreme Court provides that another intent of the RESAs, in both code and rule, is to assist the State Board in implementing programs and services as directed by that body (W.Va. Code §18-2-26(b)). Also, *“among the various legislative rules governing RESAs is one that expressly authorizes RESAs to employ staff to “perform services described in the Strategic Plan or to operate...projects that may require staff and support services for effective implementation.”*³ In the case, the employment of the interventionists was provided for in the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the Court found that the

² West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, *Monongalia County BOE v. American Federation of Teachers, et al.*, September 2016 Term, No. 15-0662, p. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

legislative rules expressly empower RESAs to contract with and receive funds from the county boards of education in support of the Strategic Plan.

The Legislative Services Division further explains the Supreme Court decision by stating:

Although part of the legislative intent is to provide coordinated and shared services, the Supreme Court is emphasizing that the overarching intent of RESAs is to provide “high quality, cost effective education programs and services to students, schools and school systems” and also give effect to the State Board’s implementation of programs and services, including the Strategic Plans. Thus, if the employment of non-shared personnel is provided for in the Strategic Plans, it cannot be said that the employment contravenes legislative intent, even if it is not shared.

The Legislative Auditor acknowledges the decision of the State Supreme Court of Appeals as it relates to this finding. A review of each RESA’s Strategic Plan indicates that there are references to shared and non-shared county-level functions to be provided. Therefore, it cannot be stated that the non-shared employment arrangements contradict legislative intent.

Nevertheless, the practice of employing non-shared positions raises concerns. The legal opinion of the Legislative Services Division indicates that part of the legislative intent is to provide coordinated and shared services. However, as stated previously, most of the unshared positions are computer technicians and specialized personnel that can be shared and are shared in other RESAs. **Therefore, the question becomes how is the legislative intent to provide shared services being met by those RESAs that are not sharing the same types of positions that are being shared by other RESAs? What are the criteria and reasons for these positions not being shared?** Some counties may not want to share positions because it would be inconvenient or insufficient. However, counties may also desire the flexibility of having county services without the obligation of having contractual employees on their payroll, or to be able to terminate services at any time since RESA contracts allow for this as long as the pro-rated amount of the contract is paid. This has been a concern of the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association. For several years, the Association has proposed legislation for the Legislature’s consideration that would prohibit County BOEs from using RESA employees to displace or to avoid employment of additional service personnel and professional instructional personnel of the county boards of education. The Association’s most recent legislation was HB 4516 which was introduced during the 2014 legislative session. However, no action was taken on the bill. **If the reason for shareable positions not being shared is reluctance by some counties, then there is concern that state aid funds are being used to facilitate a purpose that some counties are resisting.**

Another concern with non-shared county positions is salary differentials. PERD examined this possibility in Kanawha County’s school system. The Kanawha County School Board employs eight positions that have the title “computer programmers,” and the Board also pays RESA 3 for six non-shared “computer technicians.” These 14 positions meet similar qualifications and have substantially equivalent job descriptions. However, the Board’s eight computer programmers are under contract with the Kanawha County BOE, while the six RESA 3 computer technicians are will-and-pleasure employees of the State BOE. PERD requested salary data for these 14 positions to determine if there are any pay differentials. Table 8 shows the salary data for these positions.

We found that Kanawha County’s eight computer programmers are paid more than the RESA 3 computer technicians, but this is likely the result of the computer programmers having longer tenure with Kanawha County, and in a few cases the computer programmers had higher credentials than some RESA 3 computer technicians. Although the salary differentials in these cases are not a concern, the practice of employing non-shared employees who have equivalent counterparts in the same county runs the risk of potentially creating employment disparities. Counties may benefit from these non-shared employment arrangements but the savings would be higher if these positions were shared.

RESA 3 Computer Technicians Salaries	Computer Technicians Years of Experience	Kanawha County Programmers Salaries	Programmers Years of Experience
\$37,957	3	\$52,806	30
\$36,908	1	\$46,756	29
\$36,879	1	\$46,756	27
\$36,612	2	\$46,756	18
\$30,898	1	\$46,756	15
\$28,669	0	\$45,354	11
-	-	\$45,354	11
-	-	\$42,569	7

Sources: Information Provided by RESA 3 and Kanawha County Board of Education.

RESA State Aid Is Being Used to Provide Services That Should Be Funded By Counties.

Some RESAs are providing direct services to counties using their RESA state aid but are not charging counties for these services. Although this is commendable and beneficial for counties that struggle financially, it is questionable for RESAs to use its state aid to provide services to a county when the county is required to provide those services through its own funding sources, and when other counties are reimbursing RESAs for those same services. In RESA 4, one full-time computer technician is funded completely with state aid funds without reimbursement. In RESA 8, an audiologist is contracted to provide services for all RESA 8 member counties using state aid, including salary, benefits, travel and supplies, but RESA 8 does not charge counties for these services. RESA 3 employs an audiologist that is funded in part through county reimbursement and in part funded with RESA state aid. Currently, the number of RESA employees providing these direct services without charge is only a few and not all RESAs are engaging in this practice.

Finding 4: The Regional Service Purpose of Providing Educational Services to Public School Systems Is Needed, But Carrying It Out Through the Concept of Autonomous Agencies Is Inefficient.

Extensive Inefficiencies Exist in the Present System of Delivering the Regional Service Purpose.

As the Background section of this report indicates, RESAs were originally established to be governed by local Boards of Directors made up of county boards of education members. However, during the 2002 legislative session, RESAs were reestablished to be governed by the State BOE, while the Boards of Directors were redefined as advisory Regional Councils. All regular full and part-time staff of RESAs became will-and-pleasure employees of the State BOE. The State BOE exercises its general supervision over RESAs through its staff and through delegation to the DOE (CSR 126-72-3.1). Essentially, RESAs were reconstituted as arms of the State BOE. A legal opinion obtained from the Legislative Auditor’s Legislative Services Division reinforces this in stating that *“RESAs are not distinct state agencies, but an extension of the BOE.”* **However, the BOE continues to recognize RESAs as local educational agencies (LEAs) (CSR §126-72-2.5.a), and RESAs remain organized and function as separate independent agencies.**

As agencies, RESAs have executive directors who oversee subordinate positions and they have a level of independence. They are required to prepare an annual budget and a strategic plan, they may acquire and hold property, they are required to have an independent financial audit and a performance audit, and they may apply for grants on behalf of school systems. State aid is used to fund the administrative staff and other operating expenses which represents the overhead of providing RESA services. **The Legislative Auditor finds that as extensions of the State BOE, there is significant overlap of state-level involvement in RESA activities and plans.** This overlap creates considerable inefficiencies. The following sections discuss the inefficiencies of the current RESA system.

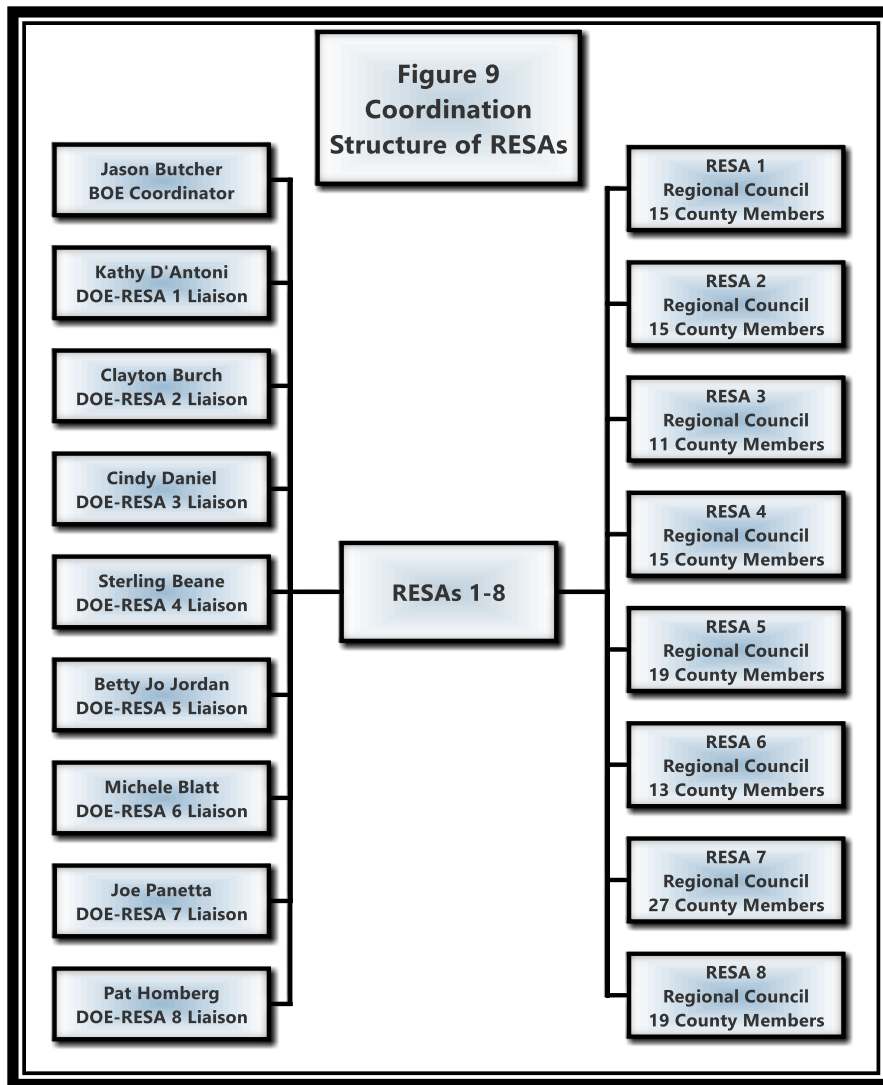
As Autonomous Agencies, Coordinating RESA Activities Is Costly and Problematic.

The significance of RESA’s hybrid nature is that they have divided interests between what counties desire, the State’s interests, and each RESA’s individual autonomy. The State BOE asserts its interests through its direct authority over RESAs, and counties control their interests through the Regional Councils. RESAs are also obligated to develop or implement any other program or service as directed by the State BOE or the Regional Council (W. Va. §18-2-26(b)(6)). In addition, the realignment granted RESAs “greater latitude” in developing programs in their service areas (W. Va. §18-2-26(c)).

PERD finds that although each stakeholder (the State BOE, County BOEs, and RESAs) has the same goal of improving the public school system, the desires of each stakeholder invariably crowd out what another stakeholder can accomplish. These disjointed interests have also been highlighted in several studies over the years as discussed in the Background section. County superintendents have raised the issue that while RESAs were created to serve county school

systems, the State BOE's interest seems to have priority. The Efficiency Audit identified that RESAs are allowed to operate independently and in isolation "*sometimes to the detriment of the entire system.*" Furthermore, the State BOE's Commission on School District Governance and Administration recommended changing RESAs so that "*their focus is more on serving the needs of the 55 school districts as expressed by the districts themselves.*"

These fragmented interests in delivering RESA services impose a significant amount of coordination to avoid duplication, redundancies and deficiencies. Figure 9 shows the coordination structure over RESAs. At the state level, there are nine positions that spend some portion of their time as RESA liaisons. The State BOE has a liaison position in which a significant amount of the job description includes coordinating the goals and priorities of the BOE, the DOE and RESAs. In addition, the DOE has eight personnel who spend a portion of their time as RESA liaisons. At the county level, eight Regional Councils exist. Each Council consists of the county superintendent and a county board of education member from each county within the respective RESA region, along with three instructional personnel selected from the region according to rule (CSR §126-72-3.4). The number of mandatory county members are listed in Figure 9 for each RESA Council. In addition to these county members, a representative for the BOE and the DOE are ex-officio, non-voting members.



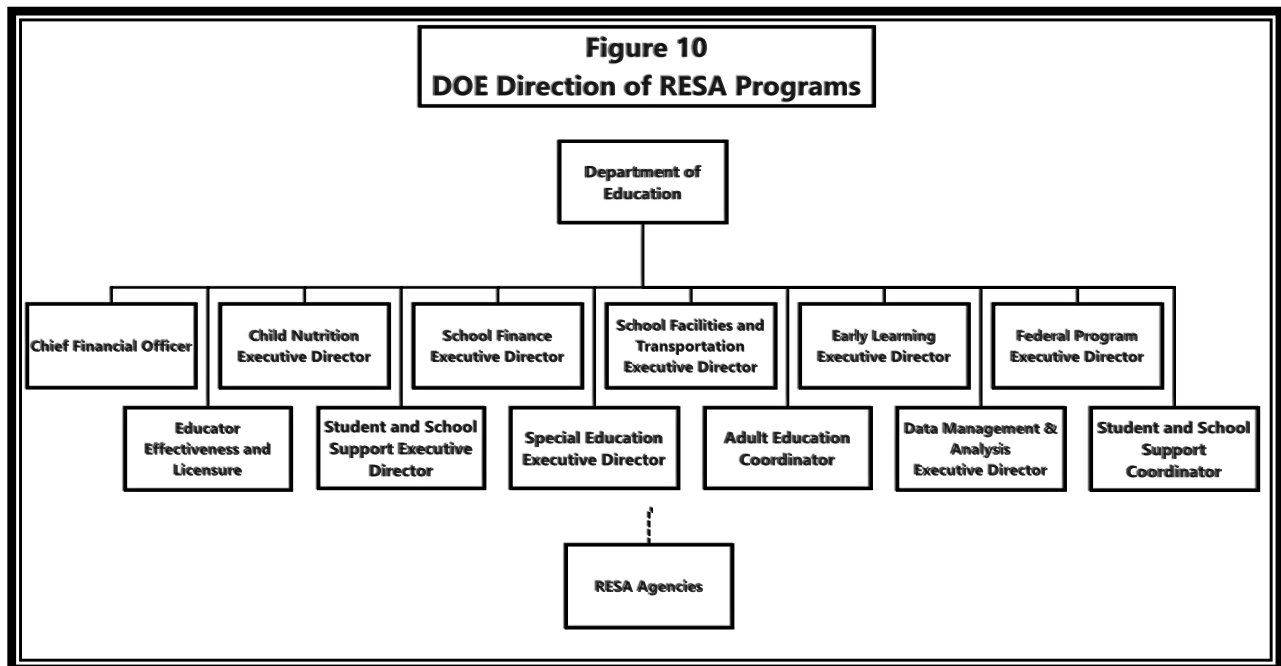
The cost of this coordinating endeavor cannot be calculated precisely, but some costs are available as a minimum. By law, county board members may receive compensation at a rate not to exceed \$100 per meeting attended (W. Va. 18-2-26(j)(2)). RESA staff are also reimbursed for attending Council meetings and to attend at least one county board meeting of each RESA county to explain the agency’s services and gather suggestions for program improvements. For FY 2015, RESAs paid a total of \$45,307 to county board members and RESA staff to attend Council meetings. Most of this expense is for county board members. The calendar year 2015 cost to reimburse state-level personnel to attend Council meetings was \$1,451. This cost is relatively low because some state-level officials were able to attend Council meetings via teleconference. It is difficult to estimate the cost associated with the time state-level personnel spend as RESA liaisons. The BOE coordinator is significantly involved in RESA coordination according to his job description. Given the salaries of other state-level RESA liaisons, the amount of their time addressing RESA coordination tasks would likely be tens of thousands of dollars. It would be a

fair estimate that the total annual cost to coordinate RESA activities is between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

The cost and the number of personnel associated with coordinating RESA activities is significant. However, despite this coordination, there still remains problems that this study and others identify. A measurable amount of what RESAs do is contradictory to its mandate, there remains deficiencies in important services, duplication and redundancy exist, and there is no core purpose demonstrated in practice. **The Legislative Auditor concludes that coordinating RESA activities for the most part has proven problematic.**

The DOE and RESA Executive Directors Have Overlapping Functions Over RESA Programs.

Each RESA has an executive director who is responsible for directing and overseeing its agency’s programs, plans and activities. **However, the Legislative Auditor finds that the BOE and the DOE also provide substantial direction and oversight over many RESA programs and activities.** Figure 10 shows the DOE staff who have regular communication with RESA staff concerning RESA programs. There are 12 separate DOE positions that have involvement with RESA programs and grants. Eleven (11) of these positions are in addition to the 9 state-level RESA liaisons. In total, there are 20 separate DOE and BOE staff who are linked to RESA programs.



With respect to Adult Education and PST, the DOE provides the programmatic supervision and oversight of the RESA staff who administer these programs, such as strategic work plans, monitoring progress, periodic reporting and communication. The DOE staff meet frequently with RESA adult education and PST staff. The DOE staff also work closely with RESA staff on the WVEIS program. With respect to Wellness programs, the DOE and the DHHR work together to develop an overarching common work plan for RESAs, as well as training on the plans. RESAs are required to develop individual work plans that relate to the overarching plan, and report to the DOE what they have accomplished. Moreover, the most important responsibility RESAs have is to provide technical assistance to low performing schools. However, the DOE is ultimately responsible for providing TA to Priority and Focus schools. Consequently, the DOE staff, such as School Improvement Coordinators, oversee the school improvement process, assist in the understanding of the State's school improvement policies, and monitor schools regularly. The DOE works closely with RESA staff to ensure RESA's improvement efforts are properly aligned and focused. Other RESA activities have BOE or DOE involvement by virtue of the State's responsibility to connect its goals and priorities to RESA activities.

The DOE is intrinsically involved in many RESA programs and activities, either in the capacity of direct oversight or as a coordinator. There is redundancy in having RESA executive directors oversee or direct programs that are also overseen or directed by the DOE. As Table 9 indicates, the State is paying nearly \$1 million for the executive director positions. While the Legislative Auditor does not intend to demean the services that each RESA executive director provides, there is the need to acknowledge the inefficiencies in the use of state funds for these positions. The following list describes the inefficiencies of RESA executive director positions.

1. The autonomy of the position can be detrimental and counterproductive.
2. Executive directors are overseeing programs that serve populations outside of the RESA mandated constituency.
3. Some RESA programs are actually overseen and directed by the DOE.
4. Other RESA programs have significant DOE involvement in terms of coordination and guidance.
5. The oversight of the coordinated county-level functions can be conducted at a lower cost by the lead county of each region, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

If programs that do not serve county school districts are removed as part of the regional services purpose, and coordinated county-level functions are administered by the Regional Councils, what remains are programs that are essentially the DOE's responsibility. Therefore, the need for the RESA executive director positions should prove to be unnecessary.

Table 9			
Total FY 2015 State Aid Cost for RESA Executive Director Positions			
	Salary	Benefits	Total Cost
RESA 1	\$96,128	\$27,806	\$123,934
RESA 2	\$96,129	\$33,472	\$129,601
RESA 3	\$96,128	\$20,018	\$116,146
RESA 4	\$96,128	\$24,375	\$120,503
RESA 5	\$96,128	\$24,883	\$121,011
RESA 6	\$96,128	\$25,839	\$121,967
RESA 7	\$93,190	\$27,623	\$120,813
RESA 8*	\$94,823	\$10,828	\$105,651
Total	\$764,782	\$194,844	\$959,627

Sources: Information provided by each RESA.
**The current executive director was hired in the middle of FY 2015, so the salary amount for FY 2014 for her predecessor was used.*

Functioning as agencies, RESAs represent an unnecessary and costly organizational layer between the DOE and County BOEs. The State should consider eliminating RESAs as autonomous organizations. The State should continue the regional service purpose by placing under the DOE’s administration all RESA programs and activities associated with state and federal grants that come from or through the DOE, technical assistance to low performing schools, professional development, and any other grant that it deems appropriate to administer. The DOE should evaluate the continued need for the executive director positions or the need to modify the job title and description.

Coordinated County-Level Functions Can Continue Without RESAs With Less Overhead Costs.

In several citations of West Virginia Code, county school systems are encouraged and authorized to identify, participate in, or operate multi-county educational programs. West Virginia Code §18-2-26a requires that all county superintendents within a respective RESA region should meet biennially to identify county-level services that may be shared between county boards. County BOEs are also authorized to operate multi-county vocational education centers (W.Va. §18-2B-2(b)). For many years, adjacent County BOEs have been allowed to jointly establish and maintain schools (W. Va. §18-5-11 and §18-5-11a), and they may also enter into cooperative agreements to improve instruction by employing specialists in fields of academic study (18-5-13(q)).

As of FY 2015, RESAs had 151 employees who provide county-level functions, primarily computer repair, Medicaid reimbursement and some specialized personnel. Half of these positions are not shared but are exclusive to specific counties. The RESA system has done well since its inception in establishing these shared county-level functions; however, these functions can continue without RESAs. The RESA employees who provide county-level functions work in buildings that are owned by a County BOE or work in schools, they are in close vicinity of a County BOE, and their payroll is already processed by a respective county fiscal agent or can be processed by one. **The Legislative Auditor determines that the State should consider relinquishing RESA services of coordinated county-level functions to local control by having these RESA employees become county employees overseen by the lead county of the region.** This can be accomplished with minimal cost implications to counties. This would also reduce the state aid overhead costs associated with coordinated county-level functions. The State should also consider having all shared county staff be excluded from the budgets of the lead counties.

RESA Professional Development Should Come Under the DOE's Authority and It Should Determine the Extent to Which the Positions Are Needed.

In 2005, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) was selected by the Legislature to conduct a study of the State's professional development for public school educators. One conclusion from the study is that the State's PD system is too diffuse to assure that providers are working to meet state goals for PD. The 2012 Efficiency Audit concurred with NSDC's assessment. As many as 13 entities were identified as having legislative mandates to address PD in the public school system. The Legislative Auditor determines that this number has not changed. This places a burden on the State to coordinate PD to educators to minimize duplication. The need for coordination suggests a problem in and of itself as the NSDC points out in the following statement:

In public policy, "coordination" is a word that serves a useful purpose by evoking an image of smoothly meshing gears, producing a synergy that drives a powerful machine. This may be true in manufacturing, but it is rare in public institutions where each entity has, or creates, a distinct purpose, program, and culture. In this context, "coordination" is often a code word for efforts to reconcile problematic differences among entities with complementary missions.

In order to coordinate PD for public school systems, the State BOE is required to establish an annual Master Plan for the four major PD providers, and include goals in the plan. The four major providers are the DOE, the Center for Professional Development (CPD), RESAs and Higher Education (primarily West Virginia University and Marshall University). Table 8 shows the PD offerings from FY 2011 through FY 2015. From 2011 to 2014, the DOE was the leading provider of Master Plan PD. RESA's PD offerings were relatively small in comparison from 2011 to 2013. In FY 2014, RESA's PD offerings increased significantly and in 2015 RESAs led other providers with 197 offerings. However, the increase in RESA offerings was due in part to receiving \$80,000 in additional state funds, with each RESA receiving \$10,000.

PD Provider	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
RESA	9	56	24	156	197
CPD	11	28	57	65	73
Higher Ed.	28	17	24	25	34
DOE	148	117	301	233	64

Source: The State Board of Education, individual Master Plans.

It should be added that RESAs offer other PD sessions in addition to what they provide for the Master Plan. These additional offerings may be at the request of counties but do not address specific educational goals of the Master Plan. PERD reviewed these additional PD offerings and found that RESAs often provide training that is an extension of state or federal grants. For example, RESAs list as PD training in tobacco use prevention, training to educators in preparation for the Office of Education Performance Audits (OEPA), and training for adult education teachers.

The Legislative Auditor finds that having several autonomous agencies provide PD invites duplication and redundancy, and increases the difficulty for the State to coordinate PD for the public school system. A benefit from restructuring RESAs away from the concept of autonomous agencies would place RESA’s PD staff under the oversight of the DOE. The DOE can assess the need for RESA’s current number of PD staff, the number of offerings, and the types of PD offerings. For FY 2015, the total cost of RESA’s PD staff was over \$624,000. This does not include support staff they may have.

Restructuring RESAs as Outlined Should Eliminate the Need for RESA’s Chief Financial Officer Positions.

Each RESA is required by rule (CSR §126-72-4.3) to employ a chief financial officer (CFO). Also by rule, RESAs may select as its fiscal agent one of the county boards of education in the region (CSR §126-72-4.2). The selected fiscal agent may maintain a separate bank account for the receipt and disbursement of all RESA funds and perform the accounting functions. The Legislative Auditor finds that each RESA employs someone responsible for financial aspects of the agency and each RESA makes more or less use of the fiscal agent, but not all RESAs employ the equivalent of a CFO. The services that fiscal agents may provide include payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable, receipts, purchase orders, invoicing, reconciliation, preparing financial statements for independent audits, and coding for grants. RESAs 3, 4 and 7 employ CFO positions that conduct most of these financial responsibilities. RESA 8 recently employed an individual who is taken on more of the agency’s finances. Previously, RESA 8 had been substantially reliant on its fiscal agent. RESAs 1, 2, 5 and 6 do not employ a CFO. They contract with their respective fiscal agent for most financial duties. Instead of CFOs, RESAs 1, 2, 5 and 6 employ individuals who conduct purchasing and provide financial data to the fiscal agent that are

inputted into WVEIS. All RESAs rely on their fiscal agents to maintain their retirement accounts and print checks. The costs to use fiscal agents were not available from all RESAs. Some RESAs allow the county to receive the interest earned on RESA funds as reimbursement for the fiscal agent's services. These amounts were not available or had to be estimated. RESA 8 pays its fiscal agent \$3,000 annually and maintains all interest on RESA funds, RESA 5 pays \$10,000 annually, and RESA 6 estimates that nearly \$2,300 was received by Ohio County in interest for the services of the fiscal agent.

If RESAs are restructured by having lead counties oversee county-level functions, and place under the DOE authority the responsibilities of administering RESA's state and federal grants that come from or through the DOE, then RESA's financial positions may not be needed. In the case of four RESAs, the fiscal agents have rendered financial services for the RESA's grant programs and county-level functions. The DOE could take over the financial aspects of RESA's state and federal grants or continue to rely on fiscal agents if it is best. In either case, the DOE should find that the eight RESA financial positions can be eliminated. In FY 2015, RESAs paid a total of \$543,234 (salaries and benefits) for the financial positions (CFO or business manager). This amount does not include support staff.

In addition, if restructured as this report outlines, there would be no need for RESAs to be audited, financially or for performance. The State would save the costs of having the Office of Education Performance Audits conduct RESA performance audits as required by CSR §126-72-6.4, and the independent financial audits as required by CSR §126-72-4.2 which totaled over \$59,000 in FY 2015.

Summary and Conclusions

The objective of this audit was to determine if there is a continued need for RESAs. The audit methodology involved determining what RESAs are mandated to perform, assess the extent to which RESAs carry out their mandate, and determine if mandated services can be provided more efficiently and effectively without RESAs. PERD determined that RESA's mandate is to provide educational programs and services to county school systems, with technical assistance to low performing schools and professional development being the most important responsibilities. There are three basic findings of this audit which are summarized below.

1. RESAs provide mandated services, but a significant percentage of RESA's expenditures are on activities that do not serve county school systems.
2. Expenditures for technical assistance to low performing schools and professional development are relatively low for services that constitute RESA's most important responsibilities.
3. As autonomous agencies, RESAs represent a costly and inefficient organizational layer between the public school systems and the Department of Education.

These findings lead to the overall conclusion that although RESAs provide valued services, the RESA system as a whole is entwined with deficiencies and inefficiencies that are best addressed by restructuring it. These deficiencies and inefficiencies are evidenced by a relatively small percentage of resources available for TA and PD, State aid used to administer services that are not part of the RESA purpose, State Aid used to administer RESA programs that the DOE has overlapping responsibilities, and using State aid to administer shared county-level functions that can be maintained by the counties. The following conclusions are discussed below.

Conclusion 1: The Regional Service Purpose Is Needed and Should Be Continued, But the Purpose Should Not Be Provided Through the Concept of Independent and Autonomous Agencies.

The layer of government that RESAs represent costs the State more than \$3.6 million, it is significantly overlapped by the DOE, and RESAs are costly and difficult to coordinate. In addition, because of RESA's autonomy and the lack of state-level direction, the regional service purpose has been diverted to a great extent. The Legislative Auditor recommends that the State BOE consider eliminating the autonomy and independence of RESAs and have all RESA staff come under the authority of the DOE. **The regional service purpose should emanate from regional staff of the DOE, not through regional agencies.** If this restructuring is implemented, PERD's analysis determines that greater efficiencies in the use of the RESA state aid should become evident. The DOE will likely find that the continued use of state aid for the executive director positions, the finance directors, professional development personnel and other RESA overhead costs may be either unnecessary, substantially reduced or modified.

Restructuring RESAs as stated would require statutory amendments to W. Va. §18-2-26 that specifies the State BOE authority to establish RESA and select executive directors for each RESA. Also, CSR §126-72 would need to be amended to implement this recommendation.

This recommendation is consistent with what has been identified and recommended by the Efficiency Audit and the Commission on School District Governance and Administration. The Commission stated in its report:

Subsumption of RESAs within the office of the state superintendent of schools.

This model appeals to many Commission members because it could usher a “right-sizing” of the WVDE. The agencies then become accountable directly to the state superintendent, who is accountable to the WVBE. This placement of the RESAs would allow the WVDE to focus primarily on technical assistance to counties rather than compliance — a matter cited in The [Efficiency] Audit: “We conclude that efficiency and performance factors call for consolidating service delivery under the single bureaucracy of the WVDE” (pp. 15, 30 and 31).⁴

The primary difference between the Commission’s observation and PERD’s recommendation is that RESA staff would come under the DOE, not RESA agencies. Removing the organizational structure and autonomy of RESAs as agencies would facilitate greater efficiency and focus. It is also worth noting that West Virginia’s surrounding states have moved away from having a state-funded layer of government between their departments of education and their county school districts. West Virginia has slowly reduced state aid to RESAs, but state aid remains sizable while evidence reveals a system that is not working as intended and has considerable inefficiencies.

Conclusion 2: The Regional Service Purpose as Presently Administered Lacks Focus and Direction.

The evolution of RESA activities has resulted in an average of 25 percent of expenditures on programs that do not serve public school systems, and for some RESAs the percentages are nearly 40 percent. A relatively low percentage of expenditures are for TA and PD, and 50 percent of the agencies’ coordination of county-level functions represents non-shared positions. These conditions exist partly because of the autonomy of RESAs and partly because of inadequate state-level oversight. The low resources towards TA and PD are not only a funding issue but an oversight issue. TA and PD resources are not only low but there is no correlation to the number of Focus schools within RESA regions. By administering the regional service purpose through regional staff of the DOE, it is expected that the DOE would assume greater control over the purpose, and achieve a more efficient and focused administration of it. This reconfiguration would also facilitate the centralization of professional development with the DOE, which the Efficiency Audit advocated.

⁴West Virginia Board of Education’s Commission on School District Governance and Administration, p. 25.

As part of the effort to improve the focus and direction of the regional service purpose, it is recommended that the DOE give the purpose a strict definition in accordance with legislative intent. It is the Legislative Auditor's opinion that the regional service purpose consists of TA, PD and facilitating coordinated county-level functions. Therefore, it is recommended that the DOE exclude programs that do not serve public school systems. Although adult education and PST are overseen by the DOE, these programs should not be considered part of the regional service purpose. Moreover, other RESA programs that do not serve school systems should be phased out or transferred to appropriate agencies. The DOE's regional staff should have a narrow focus of providing TA and PD, and to be available to assist Regional Councils in coordinating county-level functions when called on.

Conclusion 3: RESA's Coordinated County-Level Functions Should Come Under the Local Authority of the Regional Councils.

RESAs have done a commendable job in establishing the groundwork for coordinated county-level services, despite half of them being non-shared functions. What RESAs have started in terms of shared services can be continued by counties themselves, and the cost would be lower since RESA's overhead costs would be eliminated. Moreover, the occurrence of non-shared positions represents reluctance by many counties to share positions. **This puts in question whether the State should continue providing the overhead for programs that do not fulfill one of RESAs statutory purposes which is to facilitate the sharing of specialized personnel.** The Legislature has for years authorized counties to coordinate county-level functions. Therefore, RESA employees who provide coordinated county functions should become county district employees. The lead county of each RESA region can continue those shared functions without RESAs, and counties using non-shared RESA services should assume responsibility for those RESA positions. PERD also finds that Regional Councils should remain in place in order to facilitate communication and coordination between school districts and the DOE. However, there may not be the need to have as many members on the Councils. It may be feasible to have only county superintendents attend these meetings. With RESAs no longer existing as agencies, the Regional Councils would only need to meet with DOE regional staff as needed. Furthermore, if Regional Councils endeavor to consolidate other district functions in the future, the DOE should make itself available to assist through its regional staff.

Conclusion 4: The Adverse Effects Claimed by RESAs If They Are Discontinued Are Erroneous.

At the start of this audit, PERD requested that RESAs describe why they are needed and what adverse effects would occur if they are discontinued. RESAs indicated that the State would lose agencies that provide significant flexibility in terms of receiving various sources of funds and expending those funds in alignment with local needs. In addition, they indicated that RESAs provide a wide range of programs that serve a diverse population ranging from adult students to pre-K children, as well as outreach services to community organizations, displaced workers and higher education. The agencies summarized their overall operation by stating that ***"RESAs are designed to administer these diverse programs while maintaining a singular mission."***

The Legislative Auditor contends that it is impossible for RESAs to administer diverse programs as described and maintain a singular mission. In fact, the diversity of RESA’s programs is a source of its ineffectiveness and inefficiencies. The legislative mandate stresses that RESA’s areas of service are to assist the State BOE in implementing the standards-based accountability model for public education, with technical assistance to low performing schools and professional development for state public education as the two most important responsibilities. RESA’s diversity has in effect crowded out TA and PD, and a significant amount of RESA activities do not serve public school systems.

Other studies have come to similar conclusions. The Efficiency Audit identified that opportunities exist to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies if the DOE “*establishes a comprehensive planning process*” and “*helps RESAs identify core services.*”⁵ Furthermore, the Efficiency Audit stated that some RESA services should be reviewed because

... they are not part of the core mission of the Department of Education or school districts. They should, therefore, be carefully reconsidered. Anything that may cause a distraction from the core mission should be eliminated.⁶

The Commission on School District Governance & Administration agreed with the Efficiency Audit in this regard, and found that “*RESAs often provide trainings or other services to organizations and functions outside the public education arena. These services are often referenced as RESA ‘entrepreneurial services.’*”⁷ The Commission favors the idea of changing RESAs “*so their focus is more on serving the needs of the 55 school districts as expressed by the districts themselves.*”⁸

RESAs added that if they are discontinued, the following adverse effects would be realized:

- \$16.4 million would be needed for the same services if they had to be provided through or by the counties,
- 187 additional employees statewide would need to be hired to provide the services to the counties that RESAs are currently providing,
- 47 additional Medicaid Specialists statewide would need to be hired, and
- \$7.3 million in cost savings to counties would be lost because cooperative purchasing would cease to exist.

These arguments are based on the assumption that without RESAs, each county would have to individually hire new staff statewide for the services that are presently shared or provided through RESAs. **The fallacy of this assumption is that without RESAs, counties with shared-service agreements with RESAs for Medicaid reimbursement, computer technicians and specialized personnel would have the incentive and authority to continue those shared**

⁵ *Efficiency Audit, p. 75.*

⁶ *Efficiency Audit, p. 76.*

⁷ *Commission report, p. 23.*

⁸ *Commission report, p. 4.*

arrangements. These RESA employees would become county employees. Counties are already paying their share of salaries and benefits, and an administration fee to RESA, they would simply pay their share to a fiscal agent instead. The county's staffing levels would go up but their finances would not be affected because they have been paying for these personnel all along. Counties that pay for non-shared RESA personnel would have to put these employees under county contracts. Again, the county's staffing levels would go up, but county finances would not be affected since they already have been paying for the staff. Therefore, no increases in county budgets would occur even though the county's staffing levels will increase.

Also, the cooperative purchasing agreement that RESAs have with the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) can be continued without RESA if a school district elects to be the contract administrator. The AEPA only allows one member to represent the entire state. The AEPA indicates that in some instances the state representative is not an educational service agency, but a school district or a non-profit organization. Therefore, none of the abovementioned consequences will occur if RESAs are discontinued as long as school districts maintain the status quo.

RESAs also indicated that if it is terminated, Berkeley, Morgan and Jefferson Counties will have to administer the Head Start program that RESA 8 operates. This is an accurate statement. The three counties already have an agreement to share the cost of the state match for the federal grant, and the grant fully funds the Head Start program. If the Head Start program came under the direct oversight of the counties, they would have to apply for the grant annually and keep the program accountable. This may cause some administrative indirect expense, but these costs would be relatively minimal and the program itself would be self-sustaining. Therefore, the Head Start program can continue without RESA. RESAs listed other consequences if they are terminated; however, restructuring RESA as recommended can address those concerns appropriately.

Also, if RESAs are discontinued as agencies, it follows that the property held by them, as authorized by CSR §126-72-3.13.d, would ultimately become property of the State BOE according to a legal opinion from the Legislative Services Division. Since the power to hold and acquire property on behalf of RESAs is contained in State BOE rule, the rule would need to be modified to effectuate any transition that may result from an elimination of the RESAs.

The Legislative Auditor acknowledges that restructuring RESA will take some time to fully implement. Adverse effects would be minimal and outweighed by the increased efficiency and effectiveness of the regional service purpose. A significant amount of the \$3.6 million in state aid can be saved depending on the DOE's assessment of the need for current state aid positions such as the executive directors, the chief financial officers and professional development directors. Other cost savings would result from eliminating the need for financial audits, performance audits, and compensation for county board members attending Regional Council meetings. The Legislative Auditor does not mean in any way to denigrate the work of RESA organizations and their personnel. In many respects, RESAs have established arrangements that are beneficial to school systems and exemplify the regional service purpose. Furthermore, to some extent the current inadequacies of the RESA system have developed beyond the control of RESAs. Reconfiguring RESAs as outlined would have results that are consistent with concepts and ideas

presented in the Efficiency Audit and by the Commission on School District Governance and Administration. The Legislative Auditor makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- 1. The State Board of Education should consider administering the regional service purpose through regional staff of the Department of Education as opposed to regional agencies. Therefore, all autonomy and independence of RESAs should be effectively eliminated, and RESA staff should come under the Department. Appropriate statutory and rule amendments should be sought.*
- 2. The Department of Education, as the proposed oversight agency, should evaluate the need for or modification of current state-aid RESA positions or services in light of the regional service purpose being administered through regional staff instead of regional agencies, and make recommendation to the State Board of Education on appropriate reductions in the RESA state aid.*
- 3. The State Board of Education should define the regional service purpose, exclude Adult Education and Public Service Training from the purpose, and also phase out or transfer to appropriate agencies other RESA programs that do not serve public school systems. Emphasis should be placed on technical assistance to low performing schools and professional development that leads to improved student achievement.*
- 4. The Department of Education should improve the focus and direction of the regional service purpose through its oversight of regional staff.*
- 5. The State Board of Education should place all RESA shared county-level functions under the local control of the Regional Councils. Shared RESA employees should become county employees under the authority of the lead county of each RESA region, while non-shared RESA employees should become employees of the county for which they are under contract.*
- 6. The State Board of Education should seek statutory and rule amendments to reduce the number of members of the Regional Councils to the county superintendents.*
- 7. As the proposed administrator of the regional service purpose, the Department of Education should make itself available through regional staff to assist Regional Councils in any efforts to share county-level functions in the future.*
- 8. If RESAs are terminated as agencies, it is recommended that the State Board of Education seek appropriate statutory (W. Va. §18-2-26(c)(4)) and rule (CSR 126-72-3.13.d) amendments to allow it to receive property owned by RESAs.*

Appendix A

Transmittal Letter

Appendix B

Objective, Scope and Methodology

The Chairs of the Joint Committee on Government Operations, and the Joint Committee on Government Organization requested that the Legislative Auditor conduct an audit on the continued need for the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA). The Legislative Auditor directed the Performance Evaluation and Research Division within his office to conduct the audit under the authority of West Virginia Code §4-2-5. The purposes for RESAs, according to the enabling statute W. Va. §18-2-26, are to provide technical assistance to low-performing schools; provide staff development; facilitate coordination and cooperation among county boards of education for various county-level functions; install, maintain or repair education-related technology equipment; receive and administer federal or state grants; and develop other programs as directed by law, the State Board of Education or Regional Councils.

Objective

The objective of this audit is to determine the continued need for RESAs.

Scope

The scope of this audit consists of all eight RESAs for the period of fiscal years (FY) 2013-2015. The scope includes an examination of RESA's enabling statute, legislative rules, revenues, expenditures, independent financial audits, regular full and part-time staffing levels, programs, services, Strategic Plans, Annual Reports, federal and state grants, service agreements with counties, policies of the West Virginia Board of Education (State BOE) as they relate to RESAs, and the responsibilities of the West Virginia Department of Education (DOE) as they relate to RESA programs. Some information was gathered for background purposes for years starting from the inception of RESAs (1972) to the present.

Methodology

The methodology used to assess the continued need for RESAs involved determining:

- what RESAs do in practice;
- what RESAs are mandated to do;
- to what extent do RESAs perform what is mandated; and
- if mandated services can be provided more efficiently, effectively and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

PERD reviewed relevant statutes and legislative rules in order to determine what RESAs are mandated to perform. A legal opinion was also sought from the Legislative Auditor's Legislative Services Division to determine the status of RESAs as state agencies and what would be the status of RESA properties and employees if RESAs were terminated.

In order to understand what RESAs do in practice, PERD gathered and analyzed several sources of information to identify the programs and services RESAs offer. This included site visits to each RESA headquarters; interviews with the staff of RESAs, the DOE and the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR); a review of strategic plans; organizational charts; websites; financial data; and federal, state and private grants. All testimonial evidence was confirmed by either written statements or corroborating evidence.

After determining what RESAs perform in practice and what the law required, it was necessary to assess the extent to which RESAs perform mandated functions. The law mandates that RESAs have six service areas. The law also mandates that of those six service areas, the two most important are to provide technical assistance to low performing schools (TA), and provide professional development (PD) to school educators. Therefore, in order to determine if TA and PD constitute the two most important service areas for RESAs, PERD calculated the percentages of total expenditures that were spent on TA and PD for each RESA for FY 2013-2015. In order to make these calculations, PERD examined detailed expenditure data and relied on the expense categorization of expenditure data as they were provided by each RESA. In some cases, PERD requested clarification on certain expenditures and confirmed them in writing. In order to determine the sufficiency and appropriateness of the financial data provided by each RESA, PERD compared the data with the independent financial audits that each RESA is required to have performed (CSR §126-72-4.2). The sufficiency and appropriateness of the financial audits were assessed by requesting from the independent audit firms the most recent peer reviews of their organization, the credentials of the auditors, and their independent statements. PERD found that the financial data as provided by each RESA and the independent financial audits were sufficient and appropriate.

The service areas for RESAs also include the requirements to install, maintain and repair education-related technology equipment, and to facilitate the coordination and cooperation among county boards of education for certain county-level functions. This includes the sharing of specialized personnel, cooperative purchasing and communication and technology. In order to assess the extent that RESAs perform these service areas, PERD requested a list of all regular full and part-time employees from each RESA, the revenue sources that fund each position, the counties in which RESA employees provided services, and the service agreements or contracts with the counties. In order to determine the sufficiency of these employment data, PERD compared the list of employees and compensation to employee data provided by the Consolidated Public Retirement Board. We confirmed if a county-reimbursed employee was shared or non-shared by reviewing the service agreements and contracts with counties. Any discrepancies were clarified by the RESA executive directors in writing. PERD found that employee data and the counties for which they served to be sufficient and appropriate.

RESA's statutorily mandated service areas also include administering federal and state grants and implementing other programs directed by the State BOE or the Regional Council. In addition, RESAs are mandated to provide educational services to county school systems. In order to assess the extent to which these mandates were performed, PERD reviewed RESA's federal and state grants and calculated the percentages of total expenditures that were spent on programs that did not serve county school systems for each RESA for FY 2013-2015. PERD reviewed West Virginia Code §18-8-1a, §18-5-18 and §18-5-44, to determine the compulsory public school

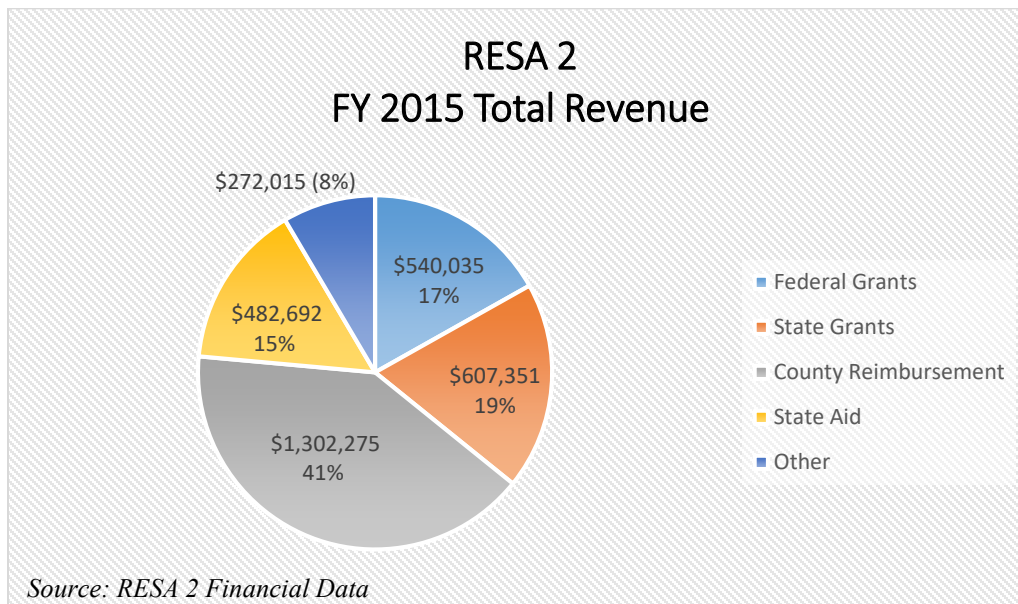
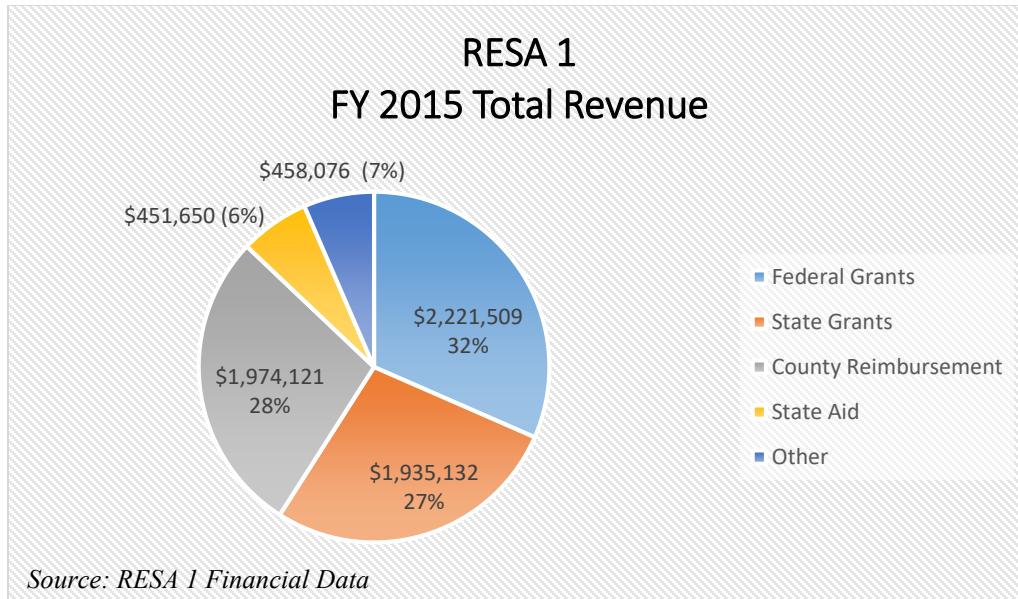
attendance ages for kindergarten through the age of 17, and voluntary early childhood education (pre-K) for children 4 years old. PERD reviewed RESA grants to determine the age categories of the population served. For adult education and public service training grants, PERD met with staff of the DOE to confirm the restrictions on who could participate in these programs. These interviews were confirmed in writing. This information along with the financial data for the various programs that do not serve county school systems were found to be sufficient and appropriate.

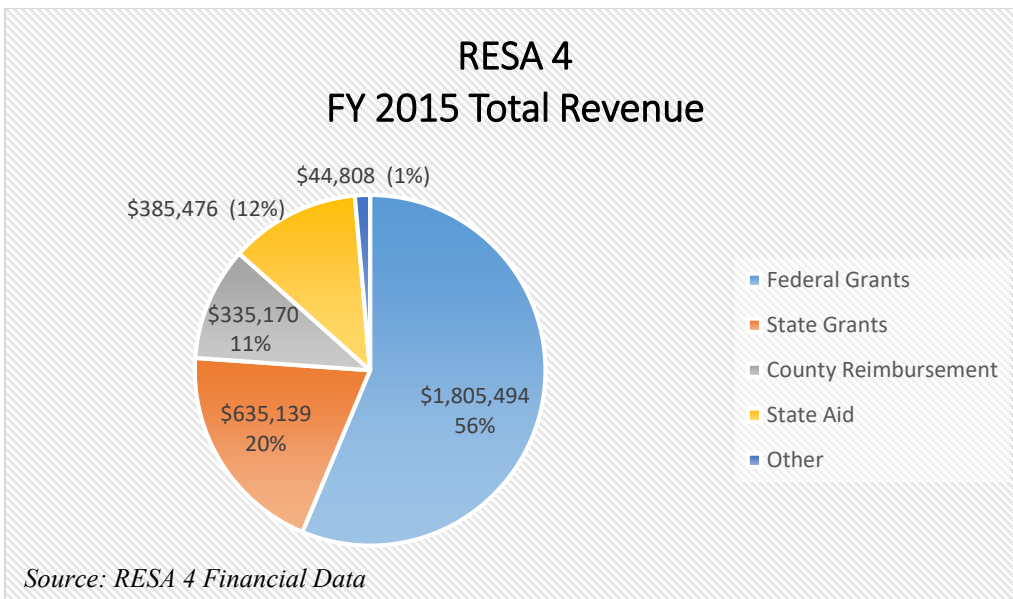
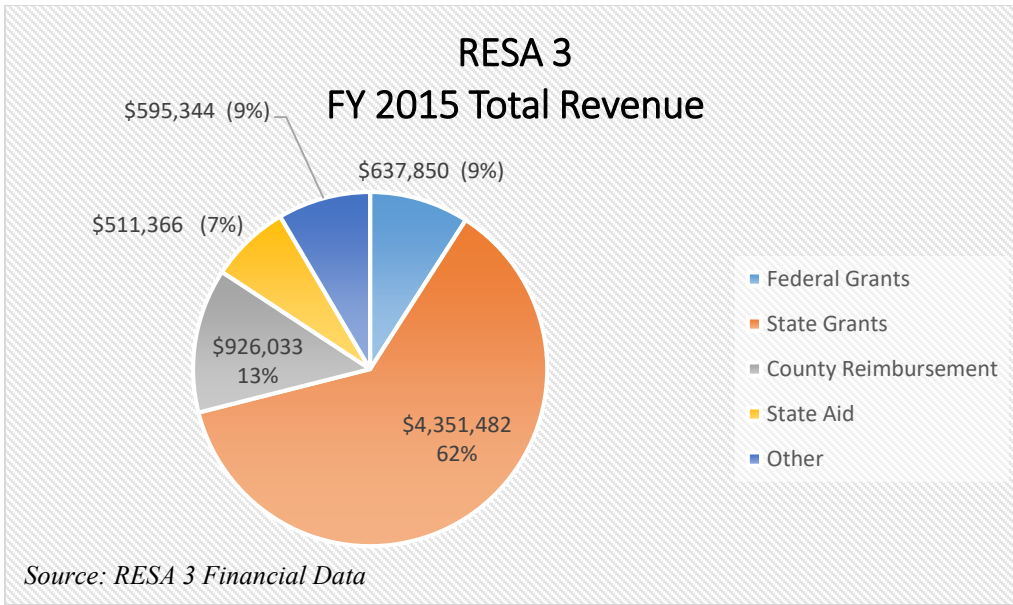
In order to determine if RESA mandated services can be provided efficiently, effectively and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist, PERD reviewed RESA grants received through the DOE to determine the extent to which the DOE's responsibilities overlap or are involved in RESA programs, and if county-level functions provided by RESAs can be provided by lead counties. PERD interviewed DOE staff to evaluate the involvement they have with Adult Education, Public Service Training and Wellness programs. Staff from the DHHR were also interviewed with respect to Wellness programs. PERD also interviewed RESA staff to understand the interaction they have with the DOE for WVEIS support. In addition, PERD reviewed the DOE's responsibilities as they concern the school improvement plan, professional development and technical assistance from RESAs. PERD evaluated the involvement and costs of fiscal agents with respect to RESA's financial management by speaking to fiscal agents and RESA staff. All interviews with RESA staff, fiscal agents, the DHHR and the DOE were confirmed in writing and with corroborating evidence. PERD determined that the evidence gathered in this process was sufficient and appropriate.

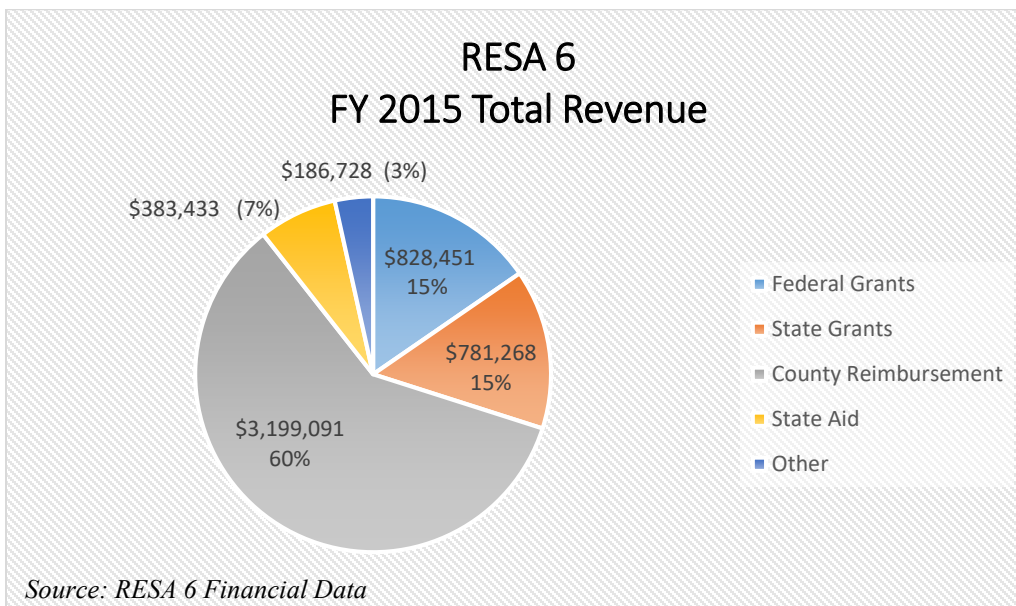
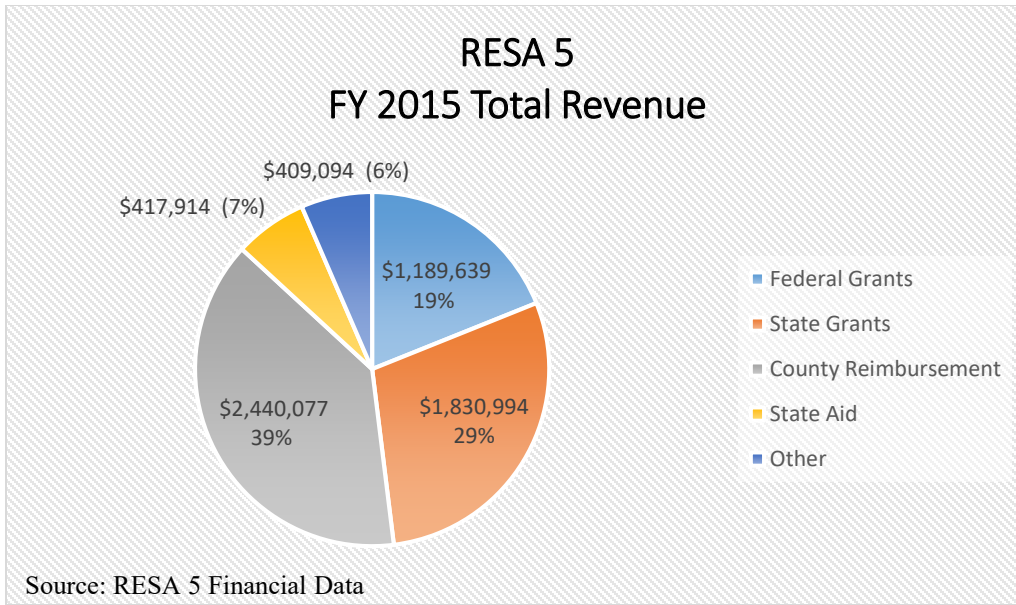
We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

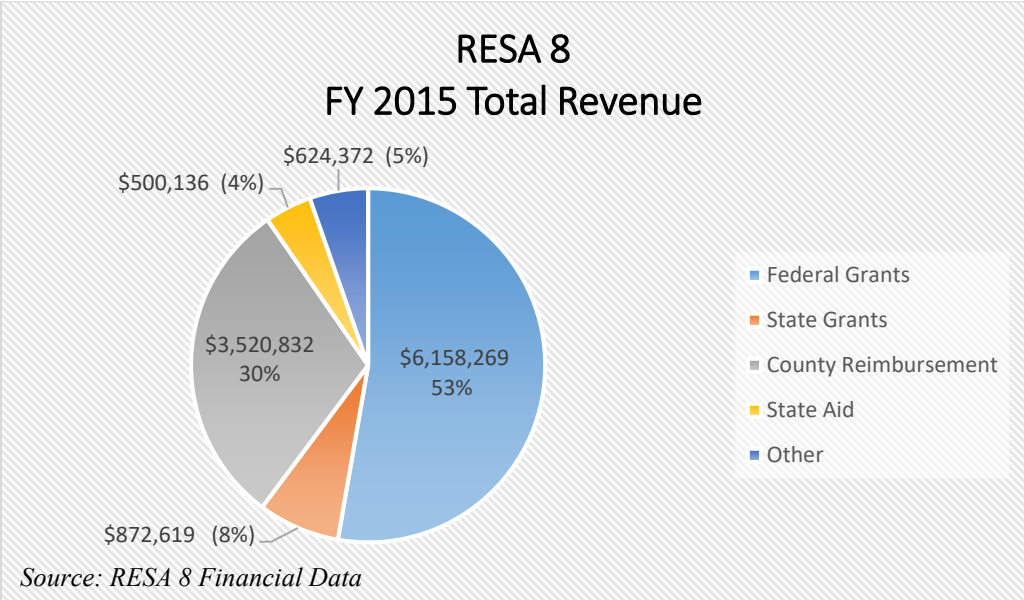
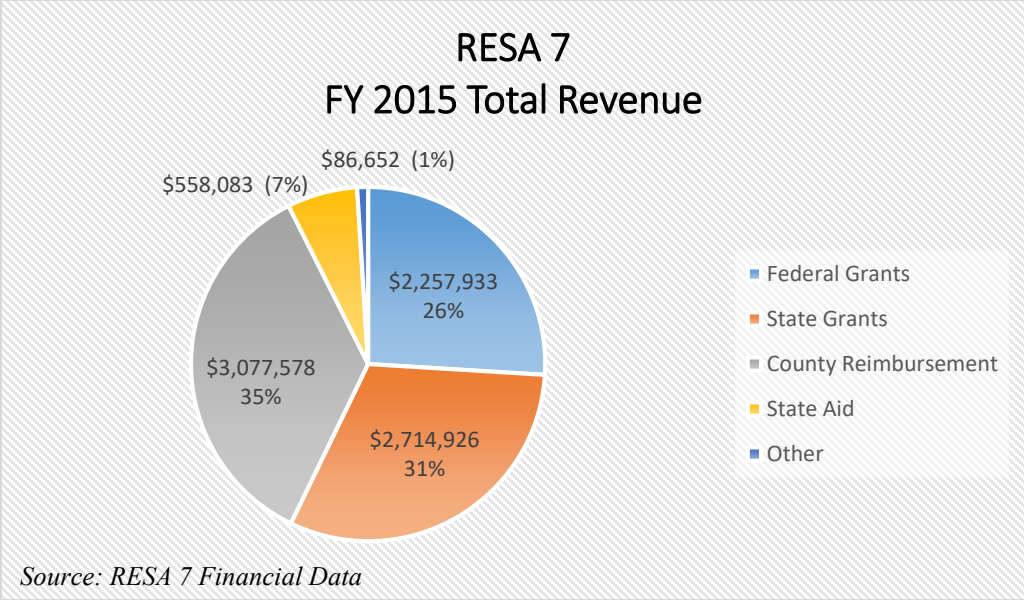
Appendix C

Total FY 2015 Revenue for Each RESA









Appendix D

Survey of West Virginia County
School Superintendents & School Principals
Concerning RESA Services and the Continued Need for RESAs

Performance Evaluation and Research Division
Office of the Legislative Auditor
Conducted November 2015

Survey of County School Superintendents

The following survey questions were sent to all county school superintendents electronically. Thirty-four (34) superintendents responded, for a response rate of 62 percent. Question number 1 requested a survey code, and question number 2 asked for the number of years experience as a superintendent. The average number of years experience was 29. All comments to each question are included as written. Contact information was provided to PERD by the State Board of Education.

Question 3. How many schools in your county are you aware of that do not receive any services from the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0	97.1%	33
1	0.0%	0
2	0.0%	0
3	0.0%	0
4	0.0%	0
5	0.0%	0
6	0.0%	0
7	0.0%	0
8	0.0%	0
9	0.0%	0
10 or more	2.9%	1
Additional Comments		10
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. I have worked in five districts across the state and always have had cooperation with RESAs.
2. Poorly worded question. Some may receive one service per year. RESA would support any school where we needed services.
3. RESA has worked with every school in our county with trainings for staff or with them when they were designated Focus schools.
4. Our RESA serves all of our schools in some capacity.
5. All schools receive RESA support.
6. RESA has been a vital part of many programs and professional development offerings of which teachers and administrators have taken part. We have traveled to RESA for some and the RESA staff has come to our county for others.
7. All are supported by the myriad of services provided through RESA.
8. I have found that when requested, our RESA provides services.

9. All schools receive RESA services through technology support, child nutrition etc. They may be unaware of the support.
10. RESA has provided services to every school in my district.

Question 4. Of the RESA services utilized by your county, how many are performed by other state, local or private organizations?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0	53.6%	15
1	21.4%	6
2	10.7%	3
3	10.7%	3
4	0.0%	0
5	0.0%	0
6	0.0%	0
7	0.0%	0
8 or more	3.6%	1
Additional Comments		11
<i>answered question</i>		28
<i>skipped question</i>		6

Comments:

1. PD and tech support could be done by private organizations, but RESA provides these resources at much lower rate.
2. Another poorly worded question. RESA has provided a number of services over the years. Too many to count. Often they have been directed by the WVDE to be the vehicle for delivery. Over time things change as the needs of the system change.
3. *The number listed above is only an estimate.
4. I would imagine that any and all of the services provided by RESA could be replicated by another provider.
5. RESA provides great services to our county. Much more personal and effective.
6. I am uncertain. Do not have the experience to answer this question.
7. RESA provides training to our employees. We also have training provided by other organizations.
8. Professional development is offered by the state and private organizations.
9. I am not aware of any duplication of services specific to that offered through RESA.
10. However, seems to be issues with services offered by RESA and CPD -
11. The services we receive from our RESA are not provided directly by WVDE, County or private companies.

Question 5. Which of the following services does your school utilize through the RESA in your region? (Choose all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Cooperative Purchasing	64.7%	22
Computer and Technological Services	61.8%	21
Professional Development	61.8%	21
Specialized Personnel	41.2%	14
Specialized Programs for Exceptional Children	26.5%	9
All of the Above	52.9%	18
Additional Comments		4
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. We use computer and technological services on rare occasions as they charge us and have to travel to us. Professional staff development we use once or twice a year. Specialized personnel are often assigned to us by the WVDE through the RESA.
2. Excellent benefits to our district.
3. After-School Grant and additional Grant Administration (Math Science Partnership, etc.) on a Regional Level.
4. We purchase paper cooperatively with other counties through Resa. This could easily be done on our own. We contract technology services through Resa but lately it has become so expensive with their administrative fees attached in addition to the service costs, we could hire an employee on our own cheaper and plan to do so next year.

Question 6. What is your level of satisfaction with cooperative purchasing services provided by the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	94.1%	32
Somewhat Satisfied, needs improvement	5.9%	2
Dissatisfied	0.0%	0
Additional Comments		6
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. The improvement could occur at the county level as well.
2. RESA's are a great asset to our school system!
3. We should be using them more. RESA 8 is doing a GREAT job. It is us that
4. Our RESA is wonderful- provides any assistance we require

5. A great job done with limited resources.
6. As a new superintendent, RESA has been my "go to" for help with our FOCUS school, immediate assistance through the FAST team for a middle school in need of assistance with collaborative teaching, IPI training, EWALK, training, Principal Mentor training, and questions in general. Fantastic support system!

Question 7. What is your level of satisfaction with professional development services provided through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	82.4%	28
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	14.7%	5
Dissatisfied	2.9%	1
Does not apply	0.0%	0
Additional Comments		5
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. Dissatisfaction stems from the fact that WVDE shifted responsibility of training to RESAs, but cut funding for this change. RESAs have been challenged to pick up and cover the additional expectations with funding reductions.
2. Excellent support. A very strong point for RESA 3.
3. I would prefer that teachers and administrators are pulled from buildings and classrooms less during the school year, however, this is a professional development issue and not a RESA issue.
4. Excellent
5. The professional development opportunities offered through RESA VII have proven invaluable. Opportunities have been provided for teachers, principals, directors, and superintendents. We could simply not afford these opportunities if we had to do them on our own.

Question 8. What is your level of satisfaction with computer and technological services provided through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	73.5%	25
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	17.6%	6
Dissatisfied	0.0%	0
Does not apply	8.8%	3
Additional Comments		7
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. We use them infrequently. We are charged for their services and the distance from the RESA office to the schools reduces the time techs have to perform needed work. We have been able to provide our own employees to address these needs for the most part. However, if a system of remote support could be offered for networks, servers, etc. like WVEIS, this would be invaluable. However, it seems contrary to the mission of a RESA to charge a county.
2. Could actually use more of their services.
3. Regularly use for technical support for WVEIS.
4. We only use RESA for assistance with WVEIS and any dissatisfaction usually is the result of state level issues.
5. We use RESA Tech services for additional help when we are in overload, but much of our work is done by our own technical support department.
6. WVEIS support has been so important and beneficial to our county.
7. Always ready to aid and assist as needed and requested

Question 9. What is your level of satisfaction with specialized personnel provided through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	70.6%	24
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	2.9%	1
Dissatisfied	0.0%	0
Does not apply	26.5%	9
Additional Comments		4
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. WVEIS is very good and without a cost. Medicaid we are charged for as well. We use our own people often rather than being charged by RESA. Bus driver training is good; however, our personnel go to RESA to do the training.
2. We have been extremely pleased with the individual that has provided us with new principal mentoring.
3. Without RESA, we would financially be in trouble with the services they offer
4. As I said in previous comment box, our RESA is fantastic and I depend on them!

Question 10. What is your level of satisfaction with specialized programs for exceptional children provided through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	55.9%	19
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	5.9%	2

Dissatisfied	2.9%	1
Does not apply	35.3%	12
Additional Comments		1
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. I have not seen direct services supporting schools or the district managing the various complexities of addressing the needs of exceptional children. Could not say that this service is essential or valuable.

Question 11. Are there RESA services that schools in your county have discontinued using because of lack of quality or general dissatisfaction?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	11.8%	4
No	79.4%	27
Not sure	8.8%	3
Additional Comments		3
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. Most of our services from RESA are at the direction of the state versus our requesting services. For example, a focus or support school gets assigned RESA intervention. The delivery of services is a "one size fits all" approach. In addition, the state just assigned graduation coaches to specific schools even though the districts may not have requested this service and were making progress addressing the issue. Periodically the WV School Boards Association requires boards to attend meetings at RESA. Again, RESA is a vehicle for state agencies to deliver to counties not necessarily something counties request.
2. We stopped having our computers serviced using RESA techs. It was less expensive for us to hire a systems specialist than to pay for the services through RESA.
3. computer technician - wait time and availability

Question 12. According to West Virginia Code §18-2-26(c), the two "most important responsibilities" for RESAs are: 1) providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems, and 2) providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education. Do you believe that providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems is the highest priority of the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.6%	24
No	20.6%	7

Do not know	8.8%	3
Additional Comments		5
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. It may be their priority, but they are not being held accountable through the strategic plan to show they have had impacted student achievement positively.
2. RESA staff regularly provides professional development opportunities for any targeted school and participates regularly in our Focus and Support School meetings.
3. Our lowest performing school received inconsistent support from RESA. Our RESA is too large for sustainable support.
4. Very supportive and helpful
5. Again, when requested they are there!

Question 13. Do you believe that providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education is the highest priority of the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	91.2%	31
No	5.9%	2
Do not know	2.9%	1
Additional Comments		4
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. I do not think the resources are available for them to be able to meet that goal.
2. Our RESA has always provided top of the line PD for both teachers and administrators that is relevant.
3. Quality staff development is very much a strength for the RESA.
4. I like the idea of regionalized PD that is accessible to those most informed of what there needs are. Plus, it cuts down on the amount of travel and consequently precious financial resources.

Question 14. Please indicate how well the RESA for your region performs in providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It performs well.	76.5%	26
What it provides needs improvement.	14.7%	5
It does not provide technical assistance.	2.9%	1

I do not know.	5.9%	2
Additional Comments		4
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. I would like to see this effort expanded, but RESA does a great job with such a limited capacity.
2. To be clear, it is as mentioned above, "a one-size fits all" approach. The state has directed the RESAs to perform the same approach at each school. Real school improvement comes from a desire by the school to improve. When that school determines strategically what it has to do to impact student achievement, then the school will search out experts in the areas where they need help. Those experts may be county instructional coaches, technology integration specialists, special education specialists, professional staff development experts in a given area, etc. Schools that invite the RESA for a specific task, may benefit. Schools that are resistant to change have the slowest improvement.
3. It needs to be more consistent in the area of follow through.
4. No low performing schools

Question 15. What do you believe would be the effects if RESAs no longer existed?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Significant adverse effects	73.5%	25
Minimal adverse effects	23.5%	8
No adverse effects	2.9%	1
Additional Comments		8
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. Many districts including ours has grown to rely on the low cost accessible resources that RESAs provide. To remove this availability would negatively impact the access to many low-cost resources for students and teachers in our district.
2. WVEIS support would be the area that would be missed. For some very small counties, the technology and computer techs would be impossible for the counties to employ as part of their own staff. The PSD would probably not be missed. Special education would not be missed. Very few schools get 21st century grants so I would think that could be managed under the WVDE in a general grants area. The bus driver training is beneficial. Adult education has been beneficial to some degree. It is evident that some management services such as purchasing, bus driver training, TASC (formerly GED) testing, WVEIS, Medicaid, and technology support are beneficial. The WVDE uses RESA to deliver their agenda for counties as well as to communicate with the RESA Councils. With technological advances, I would think the WVDE could deliver those messages via a face-to-face computer chat versus an expensive, drive-in meeting.

3. You would have to be able to tell me what the replacement would be. Small counties depend on RESA far more than larger counties do. We simply don't have the resources to "keep up" with all the new initiatives and programs, etc.
4. Small county school systems rely heavily on RESA for services that we can't provide.
5. We would need to change how we do business in several areas. I recognize that RESA is an exchange for service organization. They fulfill a need that could be overcome, but without them each county would need to increase staff to maintain the status quo. I do not think that would be a savings of the state budget.
6. We would be unable to offer the same level of professional development to our teachers and administrators as we receive through RESA. We would certainly be financially impacted by not having the cooperative purchasing ability as well as impacted not having the computer and technical services RESA provides.
7. Cooperative purchasing alone would be catastrophic in the loss of savings
8. We cannot provide nearly the services nor the professional development afforded through RESA. We would lose greatly.

Question 16. Considering the current educational landscape in the state, are RESAs still necessary for the centralization and coordination of resources to provide effective and efficient services to county school systems?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	79.4%	27
No	14.7%	5
Not Sure	5.9%	2
Additional Comments		5
<i>answered question</i>		34
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. Unless a more independent approach to school systems authority and accountability is developed, an avenue for dissemination of new and changing requirements will need to be maintained.
2. When looking at declining revenues and educational dollars versus the value of the services offered, one could argue that they have outlived their usefulness. It is apparent some services would need to be provided for some counties. Counties that are challenged financially may rely on the RESA more. Much of this argument centers around this question as to the efficiency of a county district. In other words, if the county is self-reliant with quality staff to meet its needs, it is less likely to call on a RESA. It is apparent that some services are valued at the county level such as cooperative purchasing, WVEIS, technology support, etc. The WVDE uses RESAs to occasionally deliver a message, introduce a new software program, provide some specific training, etc. The RESAs are the middle layer between the WVDE and the county. They are a way to group supposedly similarly situated counties together for the ease of the WVDE.

3. The counties can't do it themselves. Just clearly define what the RESA's role is and mandate it! It should be a resource for PD for all counties. Allow for flexibility within each RESA but make sure that their role is very clear.
4. Until you can provide me with another vehicle to do what RESA does now they will be needed.
5. Being able to provide services on a regional level will be critically important as local and state funding is reduced due to our State economy!

Survey of School Principals

The following survey questions were sent to all county school principals electronically. Two hundred-fifty-four (254) principals out of 681 responded, for a response rate of 37 percent. Question number 1 requested a survey code, and question number 2 asked for the number of years experience as a principal. The average number of years experience was 21. All comments to each question are included as written. Contact information was provided to PERD by the State Board of Education.

Question 3: How knowledgeable are you about the RESA in your region and its services?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Knowledgeable	65.4%	166
Somewhat Knowledgeable	33.9%	86
Not Knowledgeable	0.8%	2
Additional Comments		24
<i>answered question</i>		254
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. Been an administrator for 15 years in RESA VII
2. They provide a lot of staff development and services for our school. It is a great program!
3. Couldn't get along without their help. My staff relies on their help and expertise to address new/innovative trends in education. We have had nothing but a great relationship with RESA IV.
4. I know RESA exist but do not find this agency to be helpful. They do offer some pd opportunities but I do not see this as an active agency
5. I know some of the services they provide but I don't know all of them.
6. Both teachers and I attend staff development sessions provided by our local RESA 5. Some in the summer, some on Saturdays throughout the year and some during the school week when the state department sometimes has mandated training.
7. I have for nine years as an administrator had the assistance of RESA III.
8. My county has a great collaboration with RESA 2.
9. I worked for RESA for 6 months before becoming an administrator.
10. I am always surprised when I hear about services that can be provided by RESA. After many years as a school administrator there are so many support programs that are not made known or details are not clearly provided.
11. I receive flyers and emails
12. RESA support is very valuable for our teachers.
13. In one county, they were directly involved with schools; in the county I'm in now, my school sees them very little.

14. They do a great job of communicating with us through emails about training and upcoming events. We also have a regional RESA 8 meeting each year in the August. They have also have a news bulletin they send out to us.
15. RESA 1 is always accommodating.
16. I have worked with RESA II for 15 years!
17. I am a member of the RESA 6 board
18. I contact RESA for professional development often.
19. Have provided great technology repair support in the past years.
20. My school has worked closely with RESA I for the past several years.
21. I just recently moved to this RESA.
22. They have always been supportive and work well with me to provide trainings my staff need, I need, or information on best practice.
23. I worked for RESA for 3 years and try and utilize their services often.
24. Trainings and tech help

Question 4. In the last 2 years, how many services has your school utilized through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0	2.0%	5
1	6.9%	17
2	15.9%	39
3	11.8%	29
4	16.7%	41
5	15.0%	37
6	4.5%	11
7	2.0%	5
8 or more	25.2%	62
Additional Comments		57
<i>answered question</i>		246
<i>skipped question</i>		8

Comments:

1. Helped develop our strategic plan
2. substitute teacher training, school improvement, professional development, special education, WVEIS support system, Youth Ready, Adult Education, Human Resources, Adult Education
3. We use several RESA subs
4. Multiple professional development activities Audiological services
5. RESA 2 has provided us training and been very helpful when needed.

6. Our school utilizes RESA 7 in several different ways that are basically mandated to us. We have never gone to the RESA for requested assistance because I am not sure if we would ever get the help needed.
7. Audiology. Staff Development for Principals. Staff Development for Teachers. Special Education. Technology support.
8. I've been a principal for 7mos and have used RESA for WVEIS.
9. We call RESA for WVEIS passwords, usually when teachers begin Self Reflections.
10. I'm guessing at the number. CPI training, Rigor and Relevance, Kansas Writing, Instructional Practices Inventory, RESA Classes for Grad credit, Focus School support, to name some.
11. Considering the state is looking at budget cuts, I think RESA's across WV need re-evaluated on their effectiveness. Why is it that we have 55 board of education and in addition we have RESA offices? Funds need to be put in the schools. The only service RESA offers that I find beneficial is WVEIS support
12. I am able to give an exact number but as a former Attendance Director here in Braxton County, I utilized RESA numerous times. They have been a great asset to me and still are.
13. WVEIS help in-services mock OEPA visit coordinated in-services with other school systems
14. Lots of assistance/repairs completed by technology technician
15. Unsure I am starting at a new school.
16. Staff Development for administrator and teachers, use of technology services, WVEIS services, audiology services, and drug/tobacco prevention services. I have also recommended parents to utilize additional services that are sometimes advertised.
17. RESA III has provided invaluable professional development and technical assistance to improve student learning at my school.
18. They hire and keep track of the Interventionists, several of my teachers have attended several staff development sessions throughout the year.
19. RESA did follow-up with the commitments they made to introduce staff development for my school.
20. I'm unsure because I am new to the building. I don't think any were.
21. IPI coding; technology training; Math staff development; leadership forums
22. Approximately 4-5 services...however, we have utilized some of those services numerous times. We have had assistance from RESA 2 in implementation of PBIS program, professional development trainings, WVEIS assistance, leadership team collaboration, etc.
23. I feel we lack follow through with services and I think it is due to the lack of time for staff development. Everything is required and more collaboration but less and less time to get it completed.
24. We are a focus school and have a RESA contact assigned to us; she also does professional development for our school based on our needs.

25. 0. Drop down menu didn't work.
26. Climate Survey was done by RESA.
27. We use them for technology repair. We had a training on ZOOM.
28. The county has sponsored services through RESA, but our school has not had any.
29. Technology support. Diagnostic review of school relative to OEPA preparation. IPI
30. Drexel Sammons - OEPA Prep
31. RESA8 has provided staff trainings and workshops.
32. It may have been more.
33. It may be one or two more I am not sure
34. Teachers at my school have attended many trainings within the county provided by them.
35. Currently we utilize their FAST team. Previously, we also had used technology.
36. IPI training, book study/Action Research Project, Principal's Regional Institute, Special Ed and Medicaid Trainings, Walk-through training, Cooperative purchasing
37. focus school meetings and a few trainings brought to our school
38. We use Resa frequently for professional development.
39. I have just started this year as substitute
40. RESA ii provides staff development for the school.
41. Tech repairs, Focus school support.
42. We use RESA for many services.
43. I am former middle school, there we had active involvement, now, as a high school principal, we have issues beyond the scope of our RESA's expertise
44. I am a new administrator so I am unsure really
45. WVEIS Scheduling Support is EXTREMELY valuable. Greenhouse/Nutrition. NxG Train the Trainer. CPI Highly Certified Teacher. This is just to name a few.
46. The information usually comes too close to the registration deadline to be able to attend. As a principal, our schedules are full so it is often impossible to attend.
47. They helped do IPI data gathering but I was informed that they do not provide that service anymore
48. CPI, LIREC, Common Core, Assessment/Data Trainings, WVEIS, Thinking Maps, SMART Training
49. They provided CPI training to Putnam County Schools in August.
50. 1.) Professional Development 2.) IPI Training 3.) School Diagnostic
51. IPI, Pre K, and Principals Professional Development

- 52. I know of one this school year. I was not here last year.
- 53. Many of the services that we have utilized have been informal as it appears that Wood County Schools Board Office does not want us reaching out to RESA and their resources. We have actually be very clearly discouraged from working with RESA, but many of us see them to be a valuable resource that we choose to use anyway.
- 54. Combined trainings with other schools. I have attended every session offered, and they have always been beneficial, well presented, and knowledgeable presenters. Great organization for support!
- 55. Mandy Flora is an awesome presenter. Joanie Mazelon is very willing to help with student hearing tests.
- 56. Thinking Maps and Instructional Coaching. Computer and technological services. Principal mentoring. Instructional Coaching.
- 57. Joyce Ashworth - Staff Development at our school. Jill Woolcock - Ewalk training and assistance. Laura Murphy - helped our new secretary with WVEIS. RESA has helped to repair some of our computers and has helped with technology work orders.

Question 5. As indicated in question 2, of the RESA services provided to your school, how many that you are aware of are performed by other state, local, or private organizations?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Do not know	59.9%	145
0	9.1%	22
1	9.5%	23
2	8.3%	20
3	2.5%	6
4	3.3%	8
5	2.9%	7
6	1.2%	3
7	0.0%	0
8 or more	3.3%	8
Additional Comments		19
<i>answered question</i>		242
<i>skipped question</i>		12

Comments:

- 1. No idea.
- 2. We also have county technology technicians.
- 3. Professional development (but not the type I have received for administrators that is differentiated) and technology repair.
- 4. I am concerned because I am not sure if the WVDE is still providing professional development to assist schools.

5. County and Covey are the only ones I am aware of.
6. I get more help from the state Dept. and CPD for relevant services.
7. We have assistance from the WVDE directly as a Priority school.
8. We usually have people from the State, County, and some speakers are from out of state.
9. Technology repairs
10. I have no idea. There are often some guest speakers at Principal's Regional Institute but that is only part of the program.
11. I know that many are not offered anywhere else.
12. The only professional development we see is PRI, my training and specialization in Ohio were far superior. Most times I have spent in professional development provided by our RESA I am frustrated.
13. Other than assistance with WVEIS, the RESAs in general do not have much to offer at the school level. Although my RESA is making an effort to become more involved at the county level.
14. I have no idea.
15. professional development is offered by CPD, but RESA is more localized and can come to our schools instead of teachers having to got to Charleston
16. I do know that our county found it more valuable to have their own computer techs which was once a service RESA provided.
17. We use to have people trained in CPI in our county that provided the training.
18. Wood County has chosen to reach out to private or other organizations for a lot of training that should be done by RESA and would save a lot of money.
19. I use RESA because I am familiar with the quality of the presentations, materials, and professionalism. I go there for what I need.

Question 6. Which of the following services does your school utilize through the RESA in your region? (Choose all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Cooperative Purchasing	18.4%	46
Computer and Technological Services	78.4%	196
Professional Development	90.4%	226
Specialized Personnel	38.8%	97
Specialized Programs for Exceptional Children	23.2%	58
All of the Above	14.8%	37
Additional Comments		21
<i>answered question</i>		250
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Comments:

1. The computer and technology support has been very helpful
2. Head Start
3. We might be using more but not sure. The RESA WVEIS contact has been very helpful when we can get in touch with them.
4. WVEIS Wow has been very helpful.
5. Passwords for WVEIS or WOW.
6. I really use the service of the adults in the WVEIS office. They do help me a lot with scheduling and enrolling students properly.
7. I am sure that our county uses the cooperative purchasing at times but I have not had occasion to do so.
8. That I know of...first year principal.
9. After School Remedial and Enrichment Program
10. FAST Team
11. Only used in a very limited capacity.
12. The professional development has basically been for Administrators that I am aware of.
13. none
14. We work with RESA on a regular basis.
15. If the category of Computer and Tech services is referring to WVEIS, we would do better off without either...
16. I'm not sure about the cooperative purchasing.
17. WVEIS assistance only
18. The only one from this year or last was the CPI training. Or at least that I can remember. I did get some no smoking signs from them last year.
19. Very helpful with WVEIS issues
20. We plan to use more but have only used the one PD piece thus far.
21. I believe that all of the above occur, but not in the most effective way as the county does not want to work with RESA. Their professional development staff is top notch and has gained the trust of Wood County teachers. The entire relationship between RESA and the county are strained because of the Wood County Leadership. RESA could and should be a great partner if permitted to be so.

Question 7. What is your level of satisfaction with cooperative purchasing services provided by the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count

Satisfied	37.6%	91
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	9.9%	24
Dissatisfied	0.8%	2
Does not apply	51.7%	125
Additional Comments		18
<i>answered question</i>		242
<i>skipped question</i>		12

Comments:

1. came to meeting of capital improvements for multi-purpose outdoor facilities
2. Have not used.
3. Not widely advertised; uncertain how to access.
4. I am satisfied with the WVEIS support
5. Please see answer to number 6.
6. We have been able to stretch our money which benefits the students!
7. With the constant loss of funds, this service allows my school to purchase more items for less money.
8. They don't have capacity to do things which we have needed. I believe they are improving.
9. None that I know about.
10. I have never been told what cooperative purchasing services were available. I know that we have used this power once, but I would like to see it used all of the time to save us money.
11. Not sure exactly what this question refers to.
12. do not know much about this
13. We can buy cheaper but are not permitted to due to state contracts.
14. I just found out about the program and would like to start using it.
15. I am not aware of any cooperative purchasing services at the school level.
16. I have no experience with this.
17. I do not know what the cooperative purchasing service is, but that was not an option in the answer choices.
18. Extremely satisfied! The staff at RESA 7 are very helpful, available, and willing to help in many different capacities.

Question 8. What is your level of satisfaction with computer and technological services provided by the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	72.3%	180

Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	12.9%	32
Dissatisfied	4.0%	10
Does not apply	10.8%	27
Additional Comments		33
<i>answered question</i>		249
<i>skipped question</i>		5

Comments:

1. Mike Harker is invaluable to our school.
2. There just aren't enough technicians to keep up with the demand.
3. They are very knowledgeable and help when able. With that said WVEIS is a nightmare and needs to be thrown away. Very unreliable resource that is needed at the local school on a daily, very instant basis.
4. Very responsive program.
5. We were allowed to use them more in the past.
6. My school does not have Theresa Norris at our school this year at all. very upsetting
7. The reason I answer this way is because I feel they are understaffed.
8. I am extremely satisfied with the service RESA III provides.
9. Always very helpful with WVEIS related issues
10. Mike Harker has been extremely helpful with WVEIS issues.
11. Kathy Cornell has been of tremendous assistance in identifying issues with WVEIS and correcting any problems.
12. They respond immediately to our needs.
13. I appreciate the quick service provided.
14. Deena Tyree is a Godsend to our schools! She has helped us tremendously!
15. They do a wonderful job! they seem very helpful and knowledgeable.
16. RESA is too expensive and too slow. Their tech people have far too much territory to cover to assist regularly.
17. As related to RESA IV the Technology services provided by Karen Turner and Nicole are "Second to None." Amazing support!
18. Have not had any services directly provided at our school.
19. We have our own techs, they arrive much faster
20. I would like to see a more complex training manual for WVEIS. So many items are learned by trial and error.
21. need more people

- 22. We could always use a faster turn-around speed on repairs.
- 23. Completely
- 24. Always helpful but only with WVEIS
- 25. When they are here it is fine but we may go three weeks between seeing a technician
- 26. The Tech. Ladies at RESA 1 have always been very helpful.
- 27. very very helpful
- 28. This could be done at state level
- 29. We use them for WVEIS report if Dawn Gessell or Tammy Chapman are sick.
- 30. As already mentioned WVEIS support is very good
- 31. All of my experiences have been positive.
- 32. Jill Woolcock is to be commended for her services she provides to the schools.
- 33. Immediate feedback! :)

Question 9. What is your level of satisfaction with professional development services provided by the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	74.4%	189
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	18.5%	47
Dissatisfied	5.1%	13
Does not apply	2.0%	5
Additional Comments		35
<i>answered question</i>		254
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

- 1. I have not taken any to reply.
- 2. Jeovianna Comer is a huge asset to our school.
- 3. Our RESA has offered many high quality professional development opportunities that a single school or even county could not afford to provide.
- 4. RESA has provided several PD at our school. Teachers have always found them to be very useful in their classroom instruction.
- 5. We need to look at not always sending teachers and administrators to RESA but to have more webinars and outreach programs. It is expensive to send teachers away for the day and has a negative impact at the school level with teacher/admin absenteeism. County admin and personnel go to RESA trainings all the time and we have no idea what they are learning or doing there. Perhaps it is something good but it is not shared. I wish the PD was more personalized

- to the individual school. Most PDs are directed from the top down; instead of supporting the school on their identified needs. PDs are quite generic and use old PD strategies and techniques.
6. Would like to have more services provided during summer months for new teaching methods, technology opportunities, assessment tools, grading practices.
 7. I can not say enough about the excellent services that Ms. Clark and her team are providing. I especially have enjoyed the Saturday Leadership series provided for school administrators.
 8. I am extremely satisfied with the service RESA III provides.
 9. The RESA Staff does an excellent job with professional development. The past few years, they have been a great help to me and my staff.
 10. Marsha Jarrell, Tammy Stowers and Courtney Pritchard with RESA 2 have been very helpful in providing additional professional development opportunities for our teachers. They each have presented on a diverse amount of topics and our staff/school has benefited from their services.
 11. Professional development offered relates to issues or areas of needs. They are willing to assist.
 12. RESA personnel are knowledgeable and provide quality professional development sessions.
 13. Exceptional quality and always easy to work with to schedule.
 14. Professional development is rarely helpful and is behind the times.
 15. Hire personnel who are not well versed on issues. I believe this is improving.
 16. I think each RESA should have someone to contact all schools in their area, so as to learn about the school and ask what PD services are needed.
 17. Principals need to be surveyed asking what areas of PD is needed.
 18. The sessions are always informative and classroom/school friendly.
 19. We do not have a curriculum director. We are a focus school, and we received an OEPA audit. I think this should have been examined and the school be offered specific professional development. We have to research and ask repeatedly for help.
 20. need to meet teacher needs. Should survey them
 21. The staff development is always useful to the staff.
 22. high turnover leads to inconsistency
 23. This past meeting was at least informative.
 24. It has been about 3 years since we have used them for PD at the school level. The presenter was wonderful, but due to other issues (the fuzzy math for Title I eligibility) we cannot afford to either pay teachers for after school time or pay for subs to come during the day.
 25. They do a great job.
 26. The Professional Development provided by RESA has always been great!
 27. Extremely helpful and supportive

- 28. People are not well versed in most aspects
- 29. Excellent Job with PD!
- 30. I have to travel over an hour to attend the RESA PD if they are only offered in their offices. The RESA 8 office is not centrally located to its counties.
- 31. Prof. Dev. has always been well organized and a valuable use of time to attend. Usually very informative.
- 32. No involvement to this point.
- 33. RESA has a wonderful professional development staff and they are knowledgeable and engaging. If they are not specifically well versed in an area of need, they will go learn and be prepared to provide the support that is needed. The RESA V PD staff has a wonderful relationship with teachers throughout the county and it is sad that we are encourages NOT to call upon RESA for assistance.
- 34. Always professional, informative, and relevant to the educational climate.
- 35. Joyce Ashworth is as asset to us. Her staff development sessions are worthwhile and helpful.

Question 10. What is your level of satisfaction with specialized personnel services provided by the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	49.2%	121
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	9.3%	23
Dissatisfied	4.1%	10
Does not apply	37.4%	92
Additional Comments		15
<i>answered question</i>		246
<i>skipped question</i>		8

Comments:

- 1. Invaluable.
- 2. We have taken advantage of the expertise of the RESA personnel that our county cannot afford to provide.
- 3. With the change in administration at RESA 8, the program is far more effective.
- 4. They are always there when we need their help.
- 5. Wellness coordinator has provided programs for our school
- 6. I am satisfied with all services and feel that RESA 5 is very responsive to needs/questions for help.
- 7. I assume you classify 'specialized personnel' as ppl that assist the schools in specific areas...i.e. Kathy Cornell.
- 8. Mike Carte (RESA III) was excellent last year working with our staff on STEM projects.

9. I am not aware to those services at this time. Maybe they have been provided and I just do not know about them.
10. We do not utilize other than in our on-site preschool. While the personnel are professional, they are needy and self-serving.
11. Not sure exactly what this question refers to.
12. they have been quite innovative with our needs
13. Consultants have been very helpful
14. No involvement to this point.
15. They provide excellent services to our children which we would not get anywhere else.

Question 11. What is your level of satisfaction with specialized programs for exceptional children services through the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfied	36.0%	89
Somewhat satisfied, needs improvement	8.9%	22
Dissatisfied	4.9%	12
Does not apply	50.2%	124
Additional Comments		16
<i>answered question</i>		247
<i>skipped question</i>		7

Comments:

1. Improving graduation rates of exceptional students.
2. Satisfied with audiological support for students we send there but don't get enough support on site.
3. What specialized programs for exceptional children?? Never even knew this existed!
4. We have received a lot of help with learning more about the testing of exceptional students and how to better serve students with hearing needs.
5. I requested staff development for Classroom teacher in dealing with exceptional children and they never got back to me after multiply request. This is a great need
6. I do not know about this item.
7. I am not aware to those services at this time. Maybe they have been provided and I just do not know about them.
8. see little help
9. I have never requested programs for exceptional children services.
10. Our gifted program is worthless
11. I am not aware of what services are provided through RESA.

12. do not receive this service that I know of
13. No involvement to this point.
14. Again, I am not aware of what specialized programs for exception children RESA provides, but that was not an option.
15. We haven't used this service - yet
16. We need more clarification when it comes to Medicaid billing.

Question 12. Are there RESA services that your school has discontinued using because of lack of quality or general dissatisfaction?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	6.0%	15
No	73.4%	185
Not sure	20.6%	52
Additional Comments		14
<i>answered question</i>		252
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Comments:

1. Huge asset.
2. The IT guy who serviced our county from several years ago was of poor quality so we stopped using him.
3. There are no other options.
4. We very seldom use them because they cater to the larger counties.
5. We have never really used RESA services for our school other than the Technology component.
6. Tech services are the first to come to mind.
7. We have not discontinued any services.
8. Technology was discontinued by the central office.
9. It depends on the service. Some are due to quality and others are due an inability to schedule something that is conducive to the needs of a school or county.
10. Computer techs.
11. It's just most often they are repeating something already going on in our county. It's not anything new or innovative.
12. Weak PD experiences
13. There is one computer technician with whom I reached the point I did not want the person to work on school computers because there always seemed to be considerable problems afterwards. I am not sure if this person is still employed at our RESA.

14. We really don't know what they do anymore. Never hear anything from them.

Question 13. According to West Virginia Code §18-2-26(c), the two "most important responsibilities" for RESAs are: 1) providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems, and 2) providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education. Given the statutory responsibilities listed above, do you believe that providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems is the highest priority of the RESA in your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	63.9%	161
No	13.1%	33
Do not know	23.0%	58
Additional Comments		28
<i>answered question</i>		252
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Comments:

1. Both are of high priority
2. They provide support to all schools not just low performing.
3. We have a few people from our RESA who are actively involved in helping our low performing school, but as a whole no we aren't the highest priority of our RESA.
4. Questions 13 and 14 do not allow the opportunity to indicate that both services are equally important.
5. We are not a low performing school so I don't know
6. Have only seen them one time in two years and we are a focus school
7. Our RESA 2 staff are always willing to provide assistance to any of our schools in the area.
8. We have to go and ask them for help they never come and see how they can help us.
9. My opinion technical assistance for all schools no matter performing status is a must and essential to improving schools.
10. I've seen them once at our school. When assistance is presented, it is for all served counties.
11. All schools need access to services equally
12. Low labelled schools do receive regular RESA services.
13. We are not given many opportunities for PD.
14. I feel that ALL children should receive these services though.
15. Above and beyond!

16. No one examines our needs and helps us. It is often difficult to understand what they have available that would help us,
17. too many meetings for them. Little assistance
18. We have used the services to help provide us with skills to improve student learning. Our school has improved.
19. The lowest performing schools in my county have received quality support so far.
20. I have never been offered courses for my staff through RESA.
21. My school has been a low performing school.
22. All schools should have equal access.
23. They offer PD and a school audit. Otherwise RESA has not been involved in providing assistance on performance at my school.
24. We are not a low performing school.
25. RESA V could and should be a wonderful resource for our schools. Brenda Clark and her team are very skilled and knowledgeable and are highly respected by teachers and administrators. Unfortunately, we have been told not to reach out to RESA for support. We must go to the central office staff. While there are great people at the central office, there are not enough of them to be everywhere all the time. Also, they are not always the most knowledgeable person for specific needs. The relationship between the leadership of WCS needs to put children and schools first and allow us to openly utilize all resources available to us.
26. Depends on the quality of the local school district support. They are in closer proximity to trouble shoot than RESA in most incidences.
27. Since we are a high performing school we see the very needed tech services that they provide. I did not check yes since I feel they provide excellent tech support to all schools not just low performing schools.
28. Assistance should be provided to ALL schools, not just low performing schools. My school is a high achieving SUCCESS school and we benefit greatly from the services at RESA.

Question 14. Do you believe that providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education is the highest priority of the RESA of your region?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.7%	176
No	14.1%	35
Do not know	15.3%	38
Additional Comments		15
<i>answered question</i>		249
<i>skipped question</i>		5

Comments:

1. Both are of high priority
2. We receive emails frequently about staff development.
3. I am not sure how they prioritize. As mentioned before, it would be great if RESA personnel met with school admin and staff and determined how they can support the local school. Instead it is more of a blanket PD that is offered that might not address school needs. I have stopped attending admin PDs because they were not applicable to what we are trying to do here. It was not a good use of my time. I also see a lot of spray and pray PD and my guess is that little action or impact is made at the local level when the attendees return to school. Again this is a big waste of money sending people to low quality PD that is not relevant to the individual school. PD has to be personalized and have immediate impact.
4. Would really like to see regional coordination of this need. Too many trainings are offered in Charleston with trickle down to the rest of the state. It is too expensive and too far to send educators to centralized trainings.
5. but it is not valuable
6. I am not familiar enough with all that RESA does to make that judgment. They provide PD for our county sometimes, and I attend. It is usually high-quality, and I appreciate their efforts.
7. All staff should receive services for enhancing progress of students.
8. Again, I believe that the Resa should be more involved in analyzing the school's needs and offer assistance. We do not have anyone in the school with time to search and ask the right questions to discover what they can do for us.
9. Should be an individual school choice. However, the determining data for a school demonstrated a need is often not the same each year so very difficult to determine if there is improvement.
10. Absolutely, professional development is essential to student learning and the at RESA 4 knows that.
11. We do a much better job in house, we only need more time and more days to assist our own teachers.
12. It should be:(
13. its getting better
14. They have provided quality staff development over several year in my school.
15. They go above and beyond to try to help schools succeed.

Question 15. Please indicate how well the RESA for your region performs in providing technical assistance to low performing schools and school systems.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It performs well.	60.9%	154
What it provides needs improvement.	8.7%	22
It does not provide technical assistance.	4.0%	10
Do not know.	26.5%	67
Additional Comments		22
<i>answered question</i>		253
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Comments:

1. When I have called the RESA office for technical help it has always been provided quickly and efficiently. We do however, have a difficult time getting and retaining good quality technical support staff working within our county.
2. The WVDE has supplanted services to priority schools. As this first round of priority school designations ends, I expect RESA to step back in as a partner in improvement.
3. Not sure.
4. We call them often for their help
5. Staff development is critical.
6. If I have a Green Screen issue, they will help with that if the county cannot.
7. Not having dealt with RESA in this capacity, I don't feel qualified to make that call. I am not sure what services they provide. I know that they meet regularly with Support schools, but am uncertain of the quality of such services.
8. From what I have heard...
9. I do not think they distinguish between high and low performing schools. They give assistance when asked; they do not offer assistance. Low performing schools do not get priority.
10. They have never helped me, I have sought my own solutions and relied on my own contacts.
11. I do not work at a low performing school.
12. I am sure they believe they are providing assistance but coming in and doing a training once a year or so isn't providing the help we need
13. has PD when needed, assists
14. Or very little that I'm aware of
15. I am not in a low performing system.
16. Our needs are met in a timely manner.
17. We are not a low performing school, so I am not aware of the services provided.

18. I have not been here long enough to accurately assess this question.
19. RESA has always provided any support that I have asked for at my school. However, we often have to work "off the record" as we are not encouraged to work with them. They are very knowledgeable in school improvement and school turn-around principles.
20. I am not a low performing school so cannot fairly address this question.
21. They're very helpful and prompt when I call with a technical issue or question
22. I am aware that they provide support, but I cannot say to what level as my school does not receive these services.

Question 16. Please indicate how well the RESA in your region performs in providing high quality, targeted staff development designed to enhance the performance and progress of students in state public education.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It performs well.	68.5%	172
What it provides needs improvement.	19.9%	50
It does not provide staff development.	1.6%	4
Do not know	10.0%	25
Additional Comments		18
<i>answered question</i>		251
<i>skipped question</i>		3

Comments:

1. Our RESA seems to be stuck on IPI training and not much more.
2. Great Family Involvement training by Andrea Queen
3. What we get is performed well, but we can't afford to access it on a school by school basis during the school year.
4. I know that since retirements they have revamped various delivery models and have involved those they serve as they attempt to differentiate services.
5. Drexel Sammons and Teresa Epperly are providing critical services.
6. I think it has improved with the new executive director in our RESA. The computer/WVEIS assistance is VERY important. I always thought that the state (Title I) provided outstanding professional development. But so many people left during Phares' stint in office that I no longer recognize any names.
7. I feel there is a disconnect between RESA and county systems. Most schools are unsure, and/or unwilling to call upon RESA for assistance. This connection could be much stronger, and put to much better use.
8. The staff development is fantastic. The only problem is knowing what to ask to get the professional development that you need.

9. lets rely on our teachers for staff dev. not some high paid consultant
10. They try, and they do listen to needs
11. I
12. I am aware of only a few courses taught per year.
13. The only thing in two years that I can recall was CPI.
14. Nonspecific and mostly offered in Martinsburg.
15. The beginning of the year trainings for this school year went very well.
16. Again, if they would be permitted to do their job, this would be very high performing.
17. Excellent professional development!
18. My experience with RESA and staff development in this way has been fairly positive.

Question 17. What do you believe would be the effects if the RESAs no longer exist?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Significant adverse effects	65.6%	164
Minimal adverse effects	26.8%	67
No effect at all	7.6%	19
Additional Comments		39
<i>answered question</i>		250
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Comments:

1. Our county would have to provide a lot of services provided by RESA VII. We do not have an excess levy & could not provide these services for our kids & teachers.
2. Our county would not be able to provide the services that we get from our RESA!
3. Sadly, I don't think our school would be affected in any way. I would hope more money would come to the schools in which I would be in great favor. I believe RESAs are another level of bureaucracy that has little impact at the school level. While the RESA people mean well, they are too far (literally and figuratively) from the action at the school level. For increased performance of schools. personnel have to be in the building in the trenches working closely with students and teachers.
4. RESAs can serve needs for low-incidence populations and services that are more effectively provided on a larger than county level.
5. How can we run schools without their help? They are an integral part of running a 21st Century school.
6. lots of people benefit from them.
7. I say this assuming the money is reallocated to the local level to provide similar services.

8. The L.E.A.'s of RESA I, need a support agency sponsored by the State, to provide expert guidance in the areas of technology, Staff Development, Special Education, Management, Curriculum etc. From a Principal's perspective, RESA gives us the feeling of support and confidence, that we have an authorized resource to turn to and a representative voice from WVDE to give teachers a fresh perspective on day-to-day issues and problems that arise in education. While no organization is perfect, it is encouraging for people, "in the trenches" to know that we have a place to turn to for expert advice, for training, and for therapeutic professional interaction. In my humble opinion, completely dismantling RESA would be a big mistake! Re-structuring: maybe, but not dismantling. My opinion.....
9. If resources were provided directly to school districts the effects could be dealt with.
10. I answer minimal because I come from the largest county in my RESA region. I do believe that our central office staff has several inexperienced new staff and it would strain us to stay caught up.
11. The assistance with technology is vital. Deena and Susie are truly critical to our efficiency.
12. I believe we would lose a lot of the great professional development opportunities and the great opportunities to collaborate with peers in other counties that really help me and my staff.
13. I don't know because I'm new to administration. I do feel that the trainings I have received through RESA have been very high quality.
14. For my school...and I believe for all schools in RESA 2 there will be a significant void that will need to be filled quickly.
15. We utilize many of the services provided by RESA. The services are provided at no cost.
16. It would only be significant if they were not replaced by another agency to provide such training. Though my experience I believe the RESA budget should go to the Center for Professional Development. Their trainings are always much higher quality and more helpful.
17. IF the state resumes professional development, my preference is for the most current and most applicable. (We had outstanding sessions about common core about 5-7 years ago!) If not, then RESA becomes more important.
18. Our interventionists are hired through RESA and they are a valuable part of our instructional team.
19. PD is the one area I feel RESA would be missed most in. WVEIS is the area I use the most, but PD is hard to arrange. The connection between schools and RESA needs improved, so as to allow for more flow of information. A lot of people are not aware of all the services available through RESA, and I am one of those. I do have a much better grasp than when I became a principal.
20. The single most significant impact would be the loss of Technology Services.
21. If they did more for us the loss would be significant.
22. Anytime the children are adversely affected by services in a negative way is a hindrance to their education.
23. Our area would be in trouble...They help us with so many little things, that help the school running properly!

24. Unsure what is provided to the county other than the school level.
25. It would probably have a positive effect on the public school system as more funds would be available to help students and less funds in administration costs.
26. If the money is distributed to counties, we could do the activities that Resas do.
27. If counties are provided additional tech support through other means.
28. Money would be better spent at more local sites
29. It is an added layer of state/regional control that is not needed.
30. They do help some but I'm not sure if I would miss them
31. WVEIS-Significant
32. The only thing we would miss is about once a year as an administration staff we use their computer lab for training provided by Putnam County Board of Education Staff
33. Professional staff development for focus schools and tech help
34. Would not want to lose the local support and resources
35. It is nice when RESA offers PD and assistance with other programs. It does not affect my school much. I am sure that there is underlying assistance and /or financial help that I am not aware of.
36. RESA provides another layer of expertise, another source of information and assistance. A loss of that would be a significant blow.
37. Our school does not have funds to replace the professional development provided by RESA.
38. We need this resource and to be able to utilize it as needed.
39. Small counties like Grant and Morgan do not have the staff or resources to meet all the needs without the help of RESA.

Question 18. Considering the current educational landscape in the state, are RESAs still necessary for the centralization and coordination of resources to provide effective and efficient services to county school systems?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	62.6%	159
No	13.4%	34
Not Sure	24.0%	61
Additional Comments		37
<i>answered question</i>		254
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Comments:

1. I am very satisfied with our RESA 2. They are professional and up to date in many areas that involve education.

2. Small County of BOE'S need consolidated to RESA'S!! A county of less than 10,000 students does not need a BOE, Superintendent & Central Office staff.
3. Our RESA needs LESS counties - 12 right now.
4. In today's world (i.e. internet, webinars, Skype, etc.) there are many different ways to provide the services to local schools.
5. For as long as we remain at this distance from Charleston, we will need RESAs or some semblance of a regional agency. I would really like to see the WVDE regionalize some of its staffing and support rather than keeping everything in Charleston. Without RESAs our county would become one of 55 voices asking for attention rather than banding with other nearby counties to advocate for our region. If the state dismissed RESAs, then superintendents would be making even more trips to Charleston to participate in school governance. Rather than plan to get rid of RESAs, why not empower RESAs to do even more closer to the utilizers of the services.
6. Those who make the decisions don't often know how vital a RESA is to a school today. They should have to 'walk a mile in your shoes' and see what help you give to county schools.
7. Absolutely Not!!!!
8. We need an agency made up of people who are education veterans, and who know the plight of principals, teachers, and other education workers. They are needed to bridge the gap between Charleston and the L.E. A., and to help us meet the expectations of WVDE.
9. In my opinion, RESA 2 is beneficial for my school and staff. I can not speak for any other RESA districts.
10. If we did not have them we would be left high and dry. They are at least a resource to ask question and a place to go to for help.
11. There are many times their support adds to what a county can offer or it enhances programs along with professional development. In my opinion without RESAs many of our schools would not see improvement along with the expertise they provide schools/staff/county levels.
12. Again, though my experience I believe the RESA budget should go to the Center for Professional Development. Their trainings are always much higher quality and more helpful.
13. Absolutely
14. So little is known about what the RESA may be providing or how funding would change if RESA ended that it is difficult to answer this question.
15. I am not sure that we know the full extent of what RESA does do for our county school systems. Perhaps more information on the services our RESA does provide would be helpful to all of us.
16. If staffed by knowledgeable people.
17. Centralization is beneficial but also a disadvantage for county's that are not geographically centralized to receive services.

18. I think there could be a better arrangement than a whole staff of RESA personnel waiting for someone to call. I'm not sure how it needs to be accomplished, but a better "fit" can certainly be worked out.
19. I believe that services should be provided by all means, whether it is through RESA or other agencies.
20. I don't feel in the current state that our educational system is in, we can operate at our fullest without these services!
21. With the increase in electronic paperwork and forms, there is no reason that RESA should exist. If RESA would remove the burden of county school districts in terms of payroll, accounts payable, accounts receivable, etc. it could have a positive impact statewide. Many school districts in WV have verified distribution of staff at the central office. If RESA were to remove some of the work load from the central offices, such as payroll, insurance, and federal programs, then each central office could be managed more efficiently. RESA should not be duplicating any type of service provided by county central office personnel.
22. If we had positions in the counties that could coordinate these resources, they are not necessary. However, we need money in the county to hire the individuals to coordinate. It would be less expensive because we have to travel quite a distance to go to Resa.
23. RESA ii has been to great resource for me to plan staff development, help with WVEIS, and general questions that I have. Not having this support would be a hardship.
24. We need to compare services in other states' organizations, to improve ours. We also need local school board control over professional development funds. We have competent professionals in all of our administrative ranks, who have first-hand knowledge of student needs and school focus, who are powerless to make decisions for their own teachers, students, and parents. It is sad.
25. Some counties need more support than others.
26. Consolidation of some county BOEs would be a better way to provide additional buying power and coordination of resources. County superintendents are perfectly capable of working together to provide combined services to multiple neighboring counties.
27. I am truly not aware of that many resources are provided by RESA.
28. They may be spread too thin. Too many schools and too many counties and not enough staffing
29. No one is providing the necessary help we need at the school level! That is at the STATE, RESA and COUNTY level. Everyone just sends us more mandates to follow and programs to implement and we do not have the time or resources to implement. This over whelming amount of mandates is why all of our good experienced teachers are retiring earlier than they had planned.
30. Many of the CE's are school driven.
31. ABSOLUTELY

32. As you can tell I am not pleased with the RESA at all and have never been in any capacity. I think the money should be given to the schools and let them get their own services. Not forced to do things that are not in the best interest of the student or staff.
33. Same answer as question 17
34. I think it would be very difficult and costly to obtain similar services without the aid of RESA.
35. Absolutely!
36. We need these services unless and until another provider would be identified.
37. RESA 8 is essential to the success of the Eastern Panhandle.

Appendix E

West Virginia Association of School Administrators

Letter Supporting RESA's Mission and Goals



The **West Virginia Association of School Administrators** strongly supports the mission and goals of the West Virginia RESAs. RESA's diligently work to maximize the financial and human resources necessary to improve teaching and learning in West Virginia schools. Their programs and services help facilitate the ability of county school systems to focus on their primary mission of teaching and learning. A microcosm of programs and services are provided in the following examples.

Over the past five years the RESAs have collectively provided:

- Professional Development for over **150,000 educators**
- Services or repaired over **one half million computers**
- Cooperative purchasing and **cost avoidance** of over **50 million dollars**
- Assisted counties with **Medicaid** billing reimbursements of over **200 million dollars**
- Provided public service training for approximately a **quarter of a million community servants**
- Orchestrated student academic fairs and activities for over **15,000 students**
- Over **one half million WVEIS** users with vital timely help desk assistance

The preceding examples are emblematic of how pervasive RESA programs and services are throughout West Virginia. If the Legislators who created RESAs in 1972 could see their vision of capacity building, i.e. economies of scale, efficiencies of programs, return on investments and services offered by the RESAs today, they would be most pleased about their creation. Today's West Virginia School Administrators actively build on this vision by utilizing the capacity and flexibility of RESAs as part of an overall integrated approach to solving many of today's education problems.

The **West Virginia Association of School Administrators** clearly understands the significant impact made by the RESAs and acknowledges that RESAs have:

- **Complied** with the original legislative mandates that directed RESAs to implement cooperative planning initiatives between county school systems, with a goal of achieving greater efficiency and equity of services customized to the unique needs and wants of various regions;
- **Maximized** financial resources, human resources, and economies of scale by establishing cooperation and collaboration between county school systems and other education-related agencies to effectively facilitate programs and initiatives at a scale conducive to successful implementation;
- **Applied** for thousands of dollars in grant support to supplement state funding which increases the education systems capacity and effectiveness;
- **Provided** a flexible agency that is able to respond and adapt to the changing educational landscape by housing a variety of unique and/or ancillary programs while maintaining the integrity of each program's focus and avoiding added administrative burden to the county school systems;
- **Benefited** the total community as they partner with county school boards, institutions of higher education, various state agencies, emergency services organizations and business and industry;
- **Become** a necessary and integrated part of the education system in West Virginia that is the only focal point for effective regional collaboration and delivery of services at an effective economy of scale that is depended upon for successful delivery of services at both the State and Local level.

Therefore, the **West Virginia Association of School Administrators** wholeheartedly supports the programs and services that the RESAs provide and **strongly urges the West Virginia Legislature to support the 55 County Boards of Education by continuing the work of RESAs and providing the funding required to advance the educational policy of the West Virginia Legislature and State Board of Education.**

Arthur L. Rogers, Jr.
Executive Director

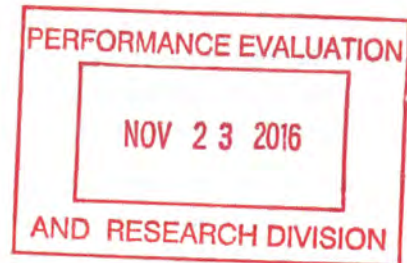
Appendix F

Agency Response

*Regional Education
Service Agencies*

RESA

A powerful engine for education



Mr. John Sylvia
Director
Performance Evaluation and Research Division
West Virginia Legislature
Building 1, Room W-314
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Mr. Sylvia:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the November 2, 2016 Legislative Auditor's report of the review of Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs).

We appreciate the review of the RESAs and the opportunity of the Performance Evaluation and Research Division (PERD) to make four determinations: 1) What RESAs do in practice; 2) What RESAs are mandated to do; 3) To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated; and 4) Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

This review process has taken over a year to complete, and the audit staff who worked with us during this time have been professional. We have been diligent in responding to requests for information in a prompt and thorough manner.

We participated in an audit exit conference with legislative analysts on November 7, 2016, and shared our concerns about the confined scope of the report. We also highlighted inaccuracies including sections requiring revision and update to reflect recent West Virginia Supreme Court rulings favorable to RESAs and their structure.

Ultimately, however, we disagree with assertions and conclusions in the final report which we believe suggests a misunderstanding of the six (6) legislative charges to the RESAs, and instead primarily limits its focus to the delivery of professional development and technical assistance. The report does not sufficiently evaluate the four (4) additional statutory areas of service each RESA provides, including the sixth and overarching charge, "Developing and/or implementing any other programs or services as directed by law, the state board or the regional council." See W. Va. Code § 18-2-26(b)(6).

From our standpoint, the review was not conducted utilizing typical audit protocol. We have significant concerns that sweeping conclusions were reached regarding professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA) without actual assessment of work conducted at any RESA. RESAs were not afforded the opportunity to showcase actual TA and PD efforts. Further, the conclusions assume that the value of PD

and TA is directly proportional to expenditures calculated against the total budget without evaluating the true cost-basis of PD and TA.

Further, we are concerned that the report fails to address the recent West Virginia Supreme Court decision that overwhelmingly supports the employment of staff at the RESA level to provide direct services to counties. The report also misrepresents recent legislative changes which afford significant and appropriate control and oversight of each RESA to its respective Regional Council.

Finally, the report suggests that RESAs should function, for unsubstantiated reasons, under the oversight of the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). The report lacks evaluative information to support such transfer, including any cost implications, changes to personnel structure, assessment of WVDE capacity, or clearly articulated reason the current structure is compromised.

We believe the RESAs function at an admirable level, and provide essential services to member counties efficiently, thoroughly, and cost-effectively. The current structure affords member counties the opportunity to utilize services particularized to unique needs, and affords targeted support in distinct areas.

We address the report's findings and conclusions in the attached documents. We stand ready to provide further background and analysis on issues of interest, including the value of TA and PD under current delivery models, and ways to effectively coordinate delivery of other statutory charges. Regardless of our disagreement with issues presented in the report, we take the review's findings seriously and are committed to modifying our processes to improve upon quantifiable shortcomings.

Those modifications may include: streamlining duplication of effort across RESAs; identifying cross-RESA PD and TA needs and better documenting participation to demonstrate non-monetary value; and focusing on alignment of priorities while documenting any geographically constrained projects that might temporarily skew priorities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our response.

Nick Zervos,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Zervos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RESA Executive Director Liaison



Requested Changes/Clarifications

Pg. 11: RESA Employees

- Please note that part time employees who are not "regular part time" are not listed or explained. This omission overlooks a significant aspect of the RESA employment situation. This is an error in that it does not address "what RESAs do in practice," and gives an incomplete picture of the scope of RESA services.

Pg. 14: RESA Studies

- Recommendations are listed from the historical reports that suggested changes to improve various aspects of the services that RESAs provide, but do not mention how each of those recommendations were addressed in response to historic reports. To point out an improvement recommendation and not comment that the recommendation was addressed implies that no actions were taken, and the situation remains unaddressed. This implies that there still remains a cumulative effect from unaddressed report recommendations, and that the responsible parties are unresponsive.

Pg. 21: The Chart –

- In regard to RESA 8, all Head Start funding items should be removed from the budget before calculating the TA/PD percentage. RESAs were not provided the opportunity to verify that the amounts calculated toward TA and PD services were accurate and reflected actual costs or percentages. Calculations completed by the RESAs do not yield the same percentages. Distinguishing TA and PD is difficult, and had the RESAs known that budgetary aspects of TA and PD would have been a prime focus, supplemental information could have been provided to ensure consistent accurate calculation of costs and percentages. The auditors used the numbers provided by RESA, but did not consult the RESAs to determine whether the numbers were accurately applied in relation to the auditor's conclusions.



Pg. 22: Bold Language – “Given that 18 percent of RESA expenditures on average were for TA/PD . . .”

- This percentage cannot be determined by the expenditures towards professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA). RESAs expend 100% of their funding to provide TA/PD by providing those services to the counties – at the counties discretion. Due to grant restrictions, funding is earmarked for particular programs. The only way for more money to be spent on PD and TA would be in increase in funding for RESAs to provide that service. This is mentioned in a small section in the middle of page 23 – however, on page 22 it has negative connotation.
- Most important, the majority of the TA/PD opportunities are cost-neutral in delivery absent provided costs outside of staff salaries.

Pg. 27: Last paragraph, starting – Nevertheless, there should be concern that RESAs spend as much time as they do on non-school system programs . . .”

- Regardless of how many “extra” programs at RESAs that do not singularly serve the K-12 system, if those programs were removed from the RESAs, the RESAs would not be able to provide more PD/TA to the counties until additional funds were made available for PD/TA.

Pg. 38: First Paragraph – Functioning as agencies, RESAS represent an unnecessary and costly organizational layer between the DOE and County BOE.

- This statement is not correct. If the services that RESAs provided were to be administered through the counties, it would cost approximately \$16.3 million (\$11.4 million if you exclude Head Start in RESA 8).
- We do not see evidence provided to confirm the statement that the “RESAs represent an unnecessary and costly organizational level between the DOE and County BOEs.” No explanation is given as to where DOE programs would be housed, associated costs for these programs, whether counties would be agreeable to house these programs, whether the DOE agrees that direct management of all regional DOE staff is efficient or viable, whether current resources that are shared between programs (copiers, phone systems, and secretarial staff) will continue to be shared, whether the DOE would have to increase all program budgets to compensate for the loss of shared resources or whether the DOE would continue to need a level of regional administration in order to facilitate regional programs. The RESAs do not see evidence that splitting the cost of regional administration between the counties and the DOE will result in lower overall costs. The legislative auditor presumes that RESAs provide no administrative functions that are necessary, that these functions can be handled with no additional resources required either in county or in the DOE. RESAs recognize that there are required functions that



would warrant an equal or greater level of cost if those administrative functions were performed by both the counties and the DOE.

Pg. 39: Bold Section in first paragraph, starting, "The Legislative Auditor determines that the State should consider relinquishing RESA services of coordinated county level functions to local control by having these RESA employees become county employees overseen by the lead county of the Region. This can be accomplished with minimal cost implications to the counties."

- Given the ability RESAs have to hire part-time employees, this would require significant funding from the counties in order to provide the same services in the counties for a comparable cost to what it costs a RESAs to provide those same services.

Pg. 42: Summary and Conclusions:

1. Using expenditures to determine amount of programming will not work due to grant restrictions
2. In order for the RESAs to provide more TA/PD, more funding will be needed
3. Please see the recent WV Supreme Court ruling
4. The legislature has passed legislation to empower RESAs to be autonomous. This provides local control of programming to better serve the specific needs of the counties in the RESAs.

Pg. 44: Conclusion #3 – The West Virginia Supreme Court reversed the Monongalia County Circuit Court, holding that Pursuant to 126 W. Va. C.S.R. §§ 72-2.5.c & d (2015) and 126 W. Va. C.S.R. § 72-3.13 (2015), a county board of education may contract with its Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) for the provision of interventionist services to its students. In fact, the Court went so far as to say that, "[T]o summarize, the plain language of the foregoing statutes and legislative rules pertaining to RESAs demonstrate that the Legislature intended for RESAs to be enabled to provide, among other things, interventionist services to county boards of education through contracts with the county boards. *Monongalia Co. Board of Education v. American Federation of Teachers, et al.*, No. 15-0662, <http://www.state.wv.us/wvsca> (W. Va. November 2, 2016), linked here for convenience: <http://www.courtsww.gov/supreme-court/docs/fall2016/15-0662.pdf>.

This recent decision both negates the portion of the report which suggests the matter awaits argument, and decisively clarifies the contracting scheme is aligned with legislative intent, which the WVBE and RESAs fully supports.

Pp. 44-45: Conclusion #4 –

- The diverse programs mentioned at pg. 45 are a result of the WV Legislature giving more power of the RESAs to the Regional Council. In the current structure, counties are responsible for a large majority of RESA programmatic offerings. This provides local control and ensures programming meets the needs of the RESA member counties.

Pg. 45: Second Bolded Statement at Bottom of Page, starting, “The fallacy of this assumption is that without RESAs, counties with shared service agreements with RESAs . . .”

- This is not a fallacy. If the counties were to take on the task of providing some services, it would cost significantly more funding to the counties. RESAs are able to hire part-time and temporary employees – which save the counties thousands of dollars for each employee shared. Additionally, if the RESAs were not able to share services among the counties, only contiguous counties could share services and would eliminate shared employees throughout the region.

Nick Fewer

Rebuttal of the RESAs

The Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), in accordance with legislative intent of W. Va. Code §18-2-26 utilize a performance based accountability model that relies on measurable criteria to evaluate performance. Accordingly, RESAs are accustomed both to accumulating and reviewing data to assess performance, and making recommendations from that review. Having extensive experience in the area of assessment, we find it disheartening that the PERD Audit ("Audit") was completed outside proper assessment protocol. The Audit did not establish an appropriate gauge to measure or evaluate the level of Technical Assistance or Professional Development delivered by and through the RESAs. The Audit did not properly assess the WVBE's required strategic planning process that aligns goals, objectives, and resources to ensure the proper use of resources at the WVBE's disposal. The Audit misinterpreted legislative intent and key interpretations are opposite of the recent West Virginia Supreme Court decision regarding RESA employment practices. Additionally, the Audit provided no quantifiable or verifiable data to support any of the report's recommendations or conclusions.

If we provided a rebuttal that explained point by point each error or omission in the report, and then provided documentation to refute each error, it would require the time and effort to perform a complete audit. We emphasize that the Audit did not utilize appropriate data to assess performance, misinterpreted, ignored or marginalized legislative mandates, and as a result, provided no accurate basis for any of the recommendations or conclusions. The following addresses each finding and demonstrates the Audit's failure to perform its own charge to determine: 1) What RESAs do in practice; 2) What are RESAs mandated to do; 3) To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated; and 4) Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

It is challenging to articulate disagreement with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations, because of compromise data, incomplete interpretation of legislative mandates, and overlooking constitutional charges.

Enacting legislation of RESAs, which dates to 1972, forecasted the need for a flexible organization that would build capacity, provide services at an appropriate economy of scale, encourage cooperation, and provided a cost effective vehicle for implementing programs in the ever changing educational environment. Subsequent revisions to the enacting legislation have modified the structure, funding, and focus, but have never been interpreted to restrict the flexibility, capacity building, or cooperation originally intended for the organization, and no language exists to restrict RESAs from implementing educational programs for which all stakeholders agree the capacity exists. In the light of our legislative mission, we ask the joint House and Senate government committees to consider a more accurate, comprehensive, and fair audit that seeks to assess the total body of work RESAs are mandated to perform, provides

a real basis for decision making concerning the RESAs, and provides an accurate assessment of the outcomes and residual effects of alternative structures. The RESAs request that an incomplete and flawed report not be the basis for disrupting the delivery of vital services to the education system, the public service community, adult education participants, those seeking to enhance their job skills, or the myriad of others who receive the benefit of educational services provided through the RESAs.

Outline of Concerns for Each Finding

Below is the an outline that briefly details issues pertaining to each finding which demonstrates the legislative audit's failure to perform their own charge, which was to determine: 1) What RESAs do in practice, 2) What are RESAs mandated to do, 3) To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated, and 4) Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

Finding 1: By Law, Technical Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Professional Development are the most important responsibilities for RESAs, but these services are a relatively small percentage of total expenditure.

1) Audit was charged to determine > What RESAs do in practice

*The Audit did not audit or articulate the actual level of Technical Assistance (TA) and Professional Development (PD) provided through the RESAs, the Audit only established an inaccurate percentage in proportion to overall agency budget

- a) No assessment of the actual TA and PD work was conducted at any RESA
- b) All attempts by RESA Administration to showcase actual TA and PD efforts were rebuffed
- c) The expenditure level or proportion of expense to overall budget, does not and cannot measure the body of work or priority placed on TA and PD or any of the other programs
- d) The audit only assessed budget levels and extrapolated all budget levels to inaccurately reflect proportional levels of effort without any verification

*The Audit did not assess the level of administration time or effort devoted to TA and PD or other programs

- a) No request was made for relative documentation or explanation of Administration time and effort devoted to TA or PD or other programs
- b) The Audit makes no mention of a review of RESA minutes to determine the extent of the Regional Council focus on school improvement

2) Audit was charged to determine > What are RESAs mandated to do

*The Audit shows the RESAs are providing TA and PD, but the Audit does not provide a measuring stick that realistically shows the level of effort nor the priority placed on TA and PD

- a) The Audit overemphasizes the extent of legislative intent to focus on areas of service one and two, and marginalizes the other four mandated areas of service
- b) The Audit's interpretation of legislative mandates is out of step with recent State Supreme Court ruling on RESA employment and the State Supreme Court's interpretation of legislative mandates, the State Supreme Court did not marginalize legislative language
- c) The Audit does not include TA and PD services from programs like WVEIS and incorrectly excludes those efforts from providing TA and PD even though WVEIS is vital for effective school management

3) Audit was charged to determine > To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated

*The Audit leaves this completely indeterminable by using the inappropriate gauge of percentages in relation to overall budget

- a) The Audit provides no valid quantifiable assessment of the work or effort in TA and PD, only extrapolates the level of effort based on relation to the total budget
- b) Using the assessment logic of the audit which is [Relative Proportion of overall budget = Level of Effort and Priority], it would follow that if each RESA trained one person in a low performing school at a cost of over 2.5 million, RESAs would be putting greater effort and priority on areas of service one and two, and be more in compliance with legislative mandates.
- c) Using the assessment logic of the audit, to be considered successful, RESAs would have to expend and focus so much TA and PD on low performing schools that most teaching staff in those schools would be in training a significant (> 15%) portion of the school year, and cause teachers to be out of the classroom far in excess of legislative intent.
- d) Using the assessment logic of the Audit, RESAs, the Counties, the DOE, and the State Board, should limit large budget programs offered through the RESA, regardless of the minimal administrative capacity they require of the RESA, in order to increase the proportion of TA and PD to each RESA's overall budget

4) Audit was charged to determine > Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

*The Audit did not research or articulate the cost of providing the services by other means

- a) The audit only assumes that services can be provided by the DOE at a lower costs
- b) The audit provides no measurable evidence of increased efficiency or effectiveness

*The Audit does not articulate the potential problems or hurdles that are adverse effects if the RESAs did not exist

- a) No consideration is explained of the impact on federal funding or program capacity with the elimination of a Local Regional LEA
- b) No explanation is given as to why the DOE houses and/or implements programs through the RESAs, nor is any consideration given that this may be the most cost effective and efficient method for program success

Finding 2: A relatively large share of RESA's resources do not serve the county school systems.

1) Audit was charged to determine > What RESAs do in practice

*The State Board, and the RESAs take exception to the concept that ABE, PST, SPOKES and many job readiness programs are outside the purview of an educational agency as the bulk of the services provided by these programs are performed by educators and require educational techniques and expertise that is effectively and efficiently managed through the existing educational framework

*The Audit did not thoroughly audit the actual level of services in the various programs, only the level of expenditures and again extrapolates that information to infer a consumption of administrative capacity merely based on funding levels

2) Audit was charged to determine > What are RESAs mandated to do

*The Audit misinterprets mandates to the extent of excluding or marginalizing various mandates that neither the State Board or RESAs are free to exclude or marginalize

*The Audit restrictively interprets various legislation and assumes that by stating a legislative priority for area of service one and two, that all other mandates are to be marginalized

*RESAs are mandated to do programs like ABE, PST, SPOKES and many job readiness programs by 18-2-26 (b) Purpose (5), and (6), and (d) and by incorporation in strategic plans with the State Board

*The audit ignores 18-2-26c State Board Rule, that allows for "greater latitude in the development and implementation of programs"

3) Audit was charged to determine > To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated

*The Audit does not review the effectiveness or the volume of work by excluding any assessment other than amount of expenditure

*Since the Audit misinterprets and/or marginalizes mandates, it categorizes mandated activity as outside the scope of services for the RESAs

4) Audit was charged to determine > Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

*The Audit did not research or articulate the cost of providing the services by other means

- a) The audit only assumes that services can be provided by the DOE or other departments at a lower cost

- b) The audit provides no measurable evidence of increased efficiency or effectiveness

*The Audit does not articulate the potential problems or hurdles that are adverse effects if the RESAs did not exist

a) No consideration is explained of the impact on federal funding or program capacity with the elimination of a Local Regional LEA

b) No explanation is given as to why the DOE houses and/or implements programs through the RESAs, nor is any consideration given that this may be the most cost effective and efficient method for program success

Finding 3: RESAs are mandated to coordinate shared services to counties; however, many county level services that RESAs provide are exclusive to specific counties and may create questionable employment arrangements.

1) Audit was charged to determine > What RESAs do in practice

* RESAs do employ shared by county employees

* RESAs do employ non-shared employees

2) Audit was charged to determine > What are RESAs mandated to do

*RESAs are mandated to do both shared and non-shared

a) RESAs are mandated to Install, maintain and repair computers and there is no mandate to do this "only through shared personnel"

b) The Audit mentions that the bulk of non-shared personnel is for computer repair, but ignores the practical requirements of meeting area of service four

*RESAs are mandated to operate programs for exceptional children, which also make up the significant portion of non-shared employees

*RESAs are mandated to employ and provide services in 18-2-26 (b), (3), (4), and (6)

*The recent State Supreme Court decision concerning the Monongalia County BOE and the AFT, articulates a completely different interpretation on various aspects of legislative intent pertaining to employment at RESAs

3) Audit was charged to determine > To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated

*The Audit interprets RESAs employing as mandated to assist in the delivery of a thorough and efficient education system as problematic

*The Audit acknowledges the employment practices, just interprets that employment as out of compliance with legislative intent, in direct opposition to the State Supreme Court interpretation of employment at RESAs

4) Audit was charged to determine > Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

*The Audit report does not articulate the cost of providing the same services by other means, or in any way provides a measurable basis for more efficient or effective delivery by other means

*The Audit did limited research into the reasons for employment through the RESA versus through the county, and provides no assessment of cost to the county for direct employment

*The Audit did not examine the ramifications on the counties for direct employment, nor the potential difficulties for employment of unique personnel due to the constraints of 18-A

*The Audit did not examine if employment of some personnel would not be possible due to 18-A and if more expensive contracts for service would be required for delivery of service

*The Audit did not examine the cost implication for the DOE to absorb all non-county positions, and additionally discounts the hurdles by not including the extent of part time employment at RESAs

Finding 4: The regional service purpose of providing educational services to public school systems is needed, but carrying it out through the concept of autonomous agencies is inefficient.

1) Audit was charged to determine > What RESAs do in practice

*The Audit does not recognize that the State Board has a legislative mandate to promulgate the rules for establishing the agencies

*The Audit provides no review of the strategic planning process that is designed and intended to avoid overlap and inefficiencies

*The Audit articulates statistics of the Master Plan, but does not articulate that in the early years RESAs were only required to list one item in the Master Plan to meet a participation requirement, and that the bulk of all RESA training that would relate to the Master Plan was not included

*The Audit misinterprets and discounts extent of effort and focus required to align policies, programs and services between various legal education entities from the State BOE, the DOE, RESAs and County BOEs, and assumes that more efficient alignment can occur without the RESAs, without providing evidence to that assumption

*The Audit misinterprets that various stakeholders having the singular goal of improving education causes disjointed interests instead of causing a unified interest

2) Audit was charged to determine > What are RESAs mandated to do

*RESAs are mandated to have regional councils to provide input and customization of program delivery at the county and regional level as well as inclusion of a representative from the DOE

*RESAs are mandated to have executive administration and for that administration to be accountable to both the State Board and the regional councils

*It follows that RESAs are mandated to provide a regional administrative trust that respectively incorporates local, county, regional, and State interests in its decision making process, and the mandated intent is not to have a top down approach with a marked absence of collaboration,

nor is the mandated intent to have County BOE's operating regional programs without participation and knowledge of State interests

3) Audit was charged to determine > To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated

*The Audit interprets RESAs maintaining compliance with legislative intent by functioning as agencies in which local, county, regional and state interests collaborate for educational betterment as problematic

*The Audit indicates fragmented interests between stakeholders, but provides no evidence of fragmented interests

*The Audit does not give any credence to the strategic planning process that aligns goals, responsibilities and resources that are designed and intended to maintain focus, avoid fragmentation, and efficiently marshal resources

*The Audit used Master Plan statistics that were never intended to capture or document the level of TA and PD RESAs perform in relation to the Master Plan, and were never intended to document the multitude of county requests for TA and PD

4) Audit was charged to determine > Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

*The Audit report does not articulate the cost of providing the same services by other means, or in any way provides a measurable basis for more efficient or effective delivery by other means

*The Audit ignores the mandated intent of a broad mix of local, county, regional, and state participants serving on a regional council, and implies that top down implementation from the state DOE, and County superintendents working in isolation, is an acceptable alternative

*The Audit interprets coordination and collaboration negatively and specifically states as much on page 39 of the Audit, whereas the legislative intent of the regional council is for coordination and collaboration

*The Audit does not appear to be able to comprehend that professional staff, working with a singular mission to improve education, can avoid duplication of effort, manage a program from different administrative levels and complement each other's effort without overlap.

The RESAs have shown that the PERD Audit failed to meet their own charge which was to determine: 1) What RESAs do in practice, 2) What are RESAs mandated to do, 3) To what extent are RESAs doing what is mandated, and 4) Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?

Inaccuracies/Inconsistencies within PERD Audit

Top 9 Inaccuracies/Inconsistencies

1) Pp. 19-23: Finding 1: By Law, Technical Assistance to Low Performing Schools and Professional Development are the most important responsibilities for RESAs, but these services are a relatively small percentage of total expenditure.

- Finding 1 cannot be determined based exclusively on monetary expenditures towards professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA). Often, grant expenditures are earmarked for particular programs. The only way to increase spending on PD and TA would be through increased funding for RESAs to provide that service. RESAs secure grant funding from additional sources to provide supplemental PD and TA to the counties. This finding correlates cost to value, and assumes that because TA and PD are a “small percentage of total expenditures,” the RESAs must not be completing the tasks effectively. The amount and value of PD and TA provided should be calculated on man-hours spent on duties as opposed to expenditures. PD and TA require little funding and most funding of these services is directed towards salaries. Additionally:
 - In prior reports RESAs were cited as one of the lowest cost effective providers of TA and PD; the WVBE and WVDE have responded by increasing the amount of funds at RESAs for school improvement related to TA and PD. It only follows that the goal was to have effective low cost TA and PD. To evaluate this function exclusively by cost factor ignores that the RESAs were given the task due to their ability to deliver TA and PD effectively and at a low cost.

Pg. 25: Figure 8, Non-County School System Services as a Percent of Total FY2015 Expenditures

- In this instance, ABE is not entirely limited to traditional adult students. Many students under the age of 21 participate in ABE. The information should be recalculated including a percentage of students without a high school diploma or equivalency that are under age 21 but participating in the program. The Legislature may envision certain areas where RESAs can best assist the WVBE, and that may be in implementing standards based accountability; however, since programs like ABE and PST require minimal administration, and the WVBE, the WVDE, and the RESAs are all well aware of that fact, we consider it an error to conclude that by offering these programs through the RESA they consume significant capacity. The auditors make no distinction between programs or budgets that are housed at RESA versus those that the RESA is actively engaged in implementing. We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to disregard the six areas of focus articulated in Code, and to focus priority on two areas of service, causing marginalization of the other four areas of focus.

Pg. 30: Paragraphs 2 and 3

The West Virginia Supreme Court reversed the Monongalia County Circuit Court, holding that Pursuant to 126 W. Va. C.S.R. §§ 72-2.5.c & d (2015) and 126 W. Va. C.S.R. § 72-3.13 (2015), a county board of education may contract with its Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) for the provision of interventionist services to its students. In fact, the Court went so far as to say that, “[T]o summarize, the

plain language of the foregoing statutes and legislative rules pertaining to RESAs demonstrate that the Legislature intended for RESAs to be enabled to provide, among other things, interventionist services to county boards of education through contracts with the county boards. *Monongalia Co. Board of Education v. American Federation of Teachers, et al.*, No. 15-0662, <http://www.state.wv.us/wvsca> (W. Va. November 2, 2016), linked here for convenience: <http://www.courtswv.gov/supreme-court/docs/fall2016/15-0662.pdf>.

This recent decision both negates the portion of the report, which suggests the matter awaits argument, and decisively clarifies the contracting scheme, is aligned with legislative intent, which the WVBE and RESAs fully supports.

Pg. 34: **First Full Paragraph**, starting, "These fragmented interests in delivering RESA services impose a significant amount of coordination to avoid duplication, redundancy and deficiencies."

The report mentions historic reports, but overlooks the extent of effort to address those reports, by establishing a comprehensive strategic planning process that is aligned to the WVBE's goals, considering the county strategic plans, and incorporating the information comprehensively into RESA strategic plans. We consider it an error to state that fragmented interests impose significant coordination burdens. A more accurate statement would be that coordinated strategic interests require thorough collaboration to efficiently implement effective educational programs to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Pg. 36: **The WVDE and RESA Executive Directors have overlapping functions over RESA programs**

- The RESA and WVDE do not have overlapping functions over RESA programs. RESAs acknowledge that the WVDE does have direction over some programs that operate out of the RESA. However, the report makes no distinction between a program that is housed at the RESA with minimal intended oversight by the RESA, and one that is primarily managed by the RESA. On one front, large budget programs like Adult Education, PST and SPOKES do not drain capacity from the RESAs because their budgets are more actively managed by the WVDE. RESAs have no need to overtly manage these programs, which leaves sufficient capacity to address other priorities. The WVBE, WVDE, and RESAs understand levels of supervision and coordination that each will exert toward the various programs, and work in conjunction to move programs forward.
- The report ignores that using a comprehensive strategic planning process can avoid overlapping functions and duplication of effort. In the planning process each entity understands the extent of effort to exert, and their particular role to play for success. This moves the entire educational organization forward without overlapping functions or duplicating effort.

We consider it an error to not take an account of RESA Executive Director time and effort toward TA and PD, cite that the RESA administration must be spending the bulk of their time on large budget programs like PST, Adult Education, and SPOKES, then turn around and say those same programs receive considerable direction from the State DOE, and therefore are not consuming the bulk of RESA Administration capacity, and then say that RESA Administration should be eliminated because no State programs need any administrative capacity at the regional level, inclusive of TA and PD efforts.

- The report gives no explanation as to why the WVDE utilizes RESAs for program operation, and overlooks that having regional connections and relationships that provide for two way communication greatly facilitates each program's success in implementation while also maximizing regional customization. In one part of this report it is suggested that a top down approach to program implementation is discredited, but in this section the Legislative Auditor suggests that all coordination from the WVDE will be more effective, because it will allow for a greater emphasis for top down management.

Pg. 37: The list of inefficiencies of the RESA Director is in error for the following reasons:

- We believe the report is minimizing the implications to the WVDE. LEA status for the RESAs affects the methodology the WVDE uses for allocating funds at the regional and local level. No examination as to the effects of eliminating a Regional LEA is explored. It should be noted that since the report does not articulate the number of part time employees at each RESA, and it follows that the burden of various program operations inclusive of purchases, time sheets, contracts (rents, professionals, etc.), and travel forms is significant, that a decent level of accommodation by the DOE would be necessary to absorb these personnel. Transition costs to properly employ regional personnel under DOE policies are not mentioned.

Pg. 40: Second full paragraph under Table 10, starting – The legislative auditor finds that having several autonomous agencies provide PD invites duplication and redundancy, and increases the difficulty for the State to coordinate PD for the public school system.

- We consider it a serious error that the Legislative Auditor includes a table of the Master Plan and does not articulate the history of RESAs' required input into that plan. Between 2010-2013, RESAs were only required/requested to provide one training that met the master plan parameters, merely to be in compliance with the requirement of being included in the Master Plan, and were not required/requested to document all training that met master plan requirements.

Pg. 41: First Partial Paragraph

- We consider it an error to indicate the WVDE can take over various budgets or programs without doing exhaustive research into the implications on federal funding without local regional LEAs.

Pg. 42: Summary 1

We consider it an error to say, "RESA's expenditures are on activities that do not serve county school systems." RESAs provide services in compliance with all mandates given to RESAs and in compliance with WVBE policy. We consider it an error to marginalize portions of legislative language that gives the WVBE authority to offer a wide range of educational programs through the RESAs, and the State Supreme Court in its recent decision provides evidence that the State Board has just that authority which nullifies a Legislative Auditor's interpretation.

Summary 2

We consider it an error to gauge only the level of work and effort toward TA and PD to low performing schools based on expenditure level. The opportunity to assess the level of effort was afforded to the auditors, and they denied the opportunity to undertake appropriate due diligence to make an informed assessment. Utilizing expenditure level as a basis for determining effort, when the RESAs were given the task of providing TA and PD because they had proven to be a low cost and effective vehicle to provide services, is unfairly penalizing the RESAs for being cost effective.

Summary 3

We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to include an interpretation of legislative intent that is completely opposite of the State Supreme Court's interpretation of legislative intent concerning employment issues at the RESA. Additionally it is an error to ignore the practical implication of meeting various legislative mandates and to interpret all mandates that involve county funds as only appropriate if employees are shared across counties.

Summary 4

We consider it an error to suggest that RESAs are autonomous agencies when appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that RESAs are in compliance with WVBE policy. We consider it an error to state the RESAs are cost inefficient, when no research or appropriate due diligence was undertaken to assess the costs for the alternatives suggested.

Full Listing of Inaccuracies/Inconsistencies by Page Number (inclusive of Top 9)

- P. 7: Insert newly revised matrix
- P. 10: RESA Core Organization Structure
- Clarify that RESA 1 provides ABE/PST for RESA 4 and RESA 3 provides ABE/PST for RESA 2 so that the service isn't non-existent, but effectively delivered through shared utilization
- Pp. 11-12: RESA Employees
- Please note the statutory changes in 2002 were made due partly to money embezzlement at RESA 1. At this time, the RESAs were under control of the Regional Councils.
- Pg. 12: "HB 4319 shifted the emphasis of RESAs from consolidating county school system educational and administrative services"
- Please note: The prior code language that was changed did not shift from "consolidating county school system educational and administrative services", but from "In order to consolidate and administer more effectively existing educational programs and services". RESAs were not previously charged with consolidating county school educational and/or administrative services.
- Pg. 14: RESA Studies
- The September 2013 HB 2940 Regional Discussions, Summary, Findings and Recommendations was not a study – it was a statutorily required report of the shared services meetings required

by HB2490 and Authored by the WV School Board Association. All references to this report, as a study, should be removed

Pg. 14: RESA Studies

- The October 2014 HB 2940 Regional Discussions, Summary, Findings and Recommendations was not a study – it was a statutorily required report of the shared services meetings required by HB2490 and Authored by the WV School Board Association. All references to this report, as a study, should be removed.

Pp. 19-23: – Finding 1

- Finding 1 cannot be determined by the amount of expenditures towards professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA). Due to grant restrictions, expenditures are earmarked for particular programs. The only way for more money to be spent on PD and TA would be in increase in funding for RESAs to provide that service. The amount of PD and TA provided should be calculated on man-hours spent on duties as opposed to expenditures. PD and TA require little funding and most funding of these services is directed towards salaries.
- Please note our suggestions to your calculations
 - Exclusion of the Executive Directors' time and effort toward TA and PD is not accurate as it discounts the extensive effort administration places on TA and PD. Additionally if TA and PD focus is the focus of the Legislative Audit, why was no attempt made to discern the extent of administration effort to TA and PD.
 - Financial Audits require the auditor to examine the minutes of the Regional Council in detail. Minutes were available to the Legislative Auditors, but no mention of the extent of documentation or focus on school improvement contained in those minutes is mentioned in the report. This information would give an indication as the extent that RESA administration and their respective Regional Councils focus on school improvement issues and/or low performing school issues.
 - Adult Education is required by AEFLA to be provided by the DOE and considerable TA and PD is part of the regional program.
 - Your report reads, "Nearly 61% of RESA 3 expenditures were for adult education, PST and WVEIS support". **PLEASE NOTE:** RESA 3 employs State Staff in addition to regional programs. The auditors make no distinction between programs or budgets that are housed at RESA versus those that the RESA is actively engaged in implementing.
 - Medicaid Billing Services TA and PD, (as well as other services) was not included in calculating TA and PD percentages. The auditor states the reason is because it is required by law and the counties are paying for the services. It is an error to in one instance cite the law that requires TA and PD on low performing school, and then say that because Medicaid is required by law that it should be excluded. As with WVEIS any TA and PD provided by the Medicaid specialist is intended to effectively manage schools in the current real world climate, TA and PD to reduce or improve teacher time on Medicaid details contributes to a schools efficiency
 - In prior reports RESAs were cited as one of the lowest cost effective providers of TA and PD, the State Board and DOE have responded by increasing the amount of funds at RESAs for school improvement related to TA and PD, it only follows that the goal was to

have effective low cost TA and PD. To only look at the cost factor, in relation to the total budgets, and not at the body of work done, ignores that the RESAs were given the task due to their ability to deliver TA and PD effectively and at a low cost.

- The Legislative auditors cite low performing schools as being a priority, but seem to struggle with programs like Adult Education and SPOKES being appropriate for the RESA, even though they target a population that for one reason or another did not perform educationally, and need additional educational resources to meet expected standards
- SPOKES is a ten-week career development program for TANF recipients. The goal of SPOKES is to teach the participants the skills and attitudes needed in order to obtain and retain employment. TANF and SNAP are separate DHHR programs TANF is cash assistance and SNAP is food stamps College Foundation of West Virginia; RESA works to encourage students to register for the website and use the services available to plan for post-secondary options. We consider it an error to not consider this a service to the schools.
- WVEIS Technical Assistance and Professional Development expenditures should be included in the TA and PD calculation reflecting effort toward school improvement. Much of the data collected becomes the basis for determining areas of need for improvement. WVEIS TA works to ensure all the various programs are up and running, ensure access of all staff to the information, assist staff in either inputting or retrieving information, assist staff with ensuring the integrity of the data, and ultimately much of the information is the basis for decisions on school improvement efforts.

Pg. 23: Starting, "for example, 21.8% of RESA 7's budget..."

- Utilizing the auditor's methodology, our calculation is 27.58%

Pg. 25: Finding 2

- Finding 2 should more accurately state... 25% of RESAs budgets are for Non-County School Age Programs and 75% are for County School Age programs. Finding 2 should be stricken or modified since part of the County School System does involve Adult Instruction.

Pg. 25: Last Paragraph

- WV no longer offers the GED; it was replaced by the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) in order to earn WV High School Equivalency Diploma.

Pg. 25: The Chart

- In this instance, ABE is not totally an adult function. Many students throughout the state, under the age of 21, participate in ABE. The information above needs to be recalculated including a percentage of students without a high school diploma or equivalency that are under age 21 but participating in the program. The legislature may envision certain areas where RESAs can best assist the State Board, and that may be in implementing standards based accountability; however, since programs like ABE and PST require minimal administration, and the State Board, the DOE, and the RESA are all well aware of that fact, we consider it an error to conclude that by offering these programs through the RESA they consume significant capacity.

Pg. 26: Table 5 and the subsequent paragraph

- In this instance, ABE is not totally an adult function. Many students throughout the state, under the age of 21, participate in ABE. The information above needs to be recalculated including a percentage for the percentage of students without a high school diploma or equivalency that are under age 21 but participating in the program.

Pg. 30: ¶¶ 2 and 3

- Based on the recent WV Supreme Court decision issued, the statement regarding contractual employees is inappropriate. It is both legally permissible and in the best interest of the state to allow flexibility. There is simply no requirement that individuals be given contractual rights and benefits, and the statements by the service personnel and AFT have no place in determining how these shared services are delivered. Further, the entire paragraph regarding AFT lawsuit must be rewritten as not only has the matter been heard by the Supreme Court, but overturned in the WVBE/RESAs favor.

Pg. 31: Table 8

- Citing the salary comparisons between two different organizations, while acknowledging that pay differentials exist due to year of experience and credentials, and then acknowledging there is not a case for concern, appears to be an error as to why include the pay scales if no concern exists. The legislative auditor again speculates there are risks, without detailing those risks and ignoring area of service 4. The legislative auditor also failed to take into length of employment (240 day employees vs. 261 day employees), as well as years of service. The full time computer technician mentioned in RESA 4 is within area of service 4, the audiologist in RESA 8 and 3 is a specialist, providing services for special needs students and is legitimate within area of service 3. We consider it an error to for the Legislative Auditor to question funding with State Aid for those services, which are in compliance with the areas of service.

Pg. 33: Finding 4 – first paragraph, halfway through the paragraph, starting – The State BOE exercises its general supervision over RESAs through its staff and through delegation to the DOE.

- The DOE has no jurisdiction or authority over the RESAs

Pg. 33: under “Extensive inefficiencies” section, there is a sentence that reads, “A legal opinion obtained from the Legislative Auditor’s Legislative Services Division ...”

- The WVBE relies on W. Va. Code §18-3-6, which indicates the State Superintendent of Schools is the individual who interprets any part of state law or West Virginia State Board of Education Policies; therefore, an interpretation of the West Virginia Legislative Auditor would not extend by law.

Pg. 34: First Full Paragraph, starting, “These fragmented interests in delivering RESA services impose a significant amount of coordination to avoid duplication, redundancy and deficiencies.”

- The report mentions prior reports, but fails to mention the extent of effort that has been done to address those reports, by establishing a comprehensive strategic planning process that is aligned to the State BOE goals, as well as takes into consideration the county strategic plans,

and incorporates all of that into RESA strategic plans. We consider it an error to state that fragmented interests impose significant coordination burdens. A more accurate statement would be that coordinated strategic interests require thorough collaboration to efficiently implement effective educational programs to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Pg. 34: Last paragraph, starting – At the state level, there are nine positions that spend some portion of their time as a RESA liaison.

- Although the WVDE does send participants to RESA Regional Council meetings, it is for the support to the Regional Councils. The WVDE participant to the RESA Regional Council meetings carry messages to the Regional Council (not the RESA) from the WVDE.

Pg. 35: Reimbursement of RESA Staff

- RESA staff are only reimbursed travel when warranted, in accordance with the rules of the office of travel management. Only the executive director attends county board meetings in each county, other staff do not attend unless warranted. We consider it an error for an auditor to estimate the time and cost of state level RESA liaisons without doing the appropriate due diligence to assess that cost.

Pg. 35: Last (only) Paragraph, continuing onto page 36, starting – Given the salaries of other state-level RESA liaisons, the amount of their time addressing RESA coordination tasks would likely be tens of thousands of dollars. It would be a fair estimate that the total annual cost to coordinate RESA activities is approximately \$100k - \$200k.

- This statement is speculative and incorrect. Most of the WVDE “liaisons” may spend one day per month in their “coordination” of RESA tasks. This would not equal \$100k - \$200k.

Pg. 35: Figure 9

- Sterling Beane and Joe Panetta are no longer employees of the WVDE. Mr. Beane’s position is currently vacant and Mr. Panetta was replaced by Terry Harless

Pg. 36: Under “The DOE and RESA Executive Directors have overlapping functions over RESA Programs.

- This statement is incorrect. The only “overlap” of functions is in the area of school support. The only time their duties would overlap is if they were both providing technical assistance to a particular school at the same time. In this instance, each entity would be presenting different trainings to different target groups.

Pg. 36: Last Paragraph, starting – Eleven (11) of those positions are in addition to the 9 state-level RESA Liaisons.

- Although the WVDE does send participants to RESA Regional Council meetings, it is for the support to the Regional Councils. The WVDE participant to the RESA Regional Council meetings carry messages to the Regional Council (not the RESA) from the WVDE. Other than the duty of reporting, the WVDE has no oversight in the administration of programs at the RESA level.

Pg. 36: The DOE and RESA Executive Directors have overlapping functions over RESA programs

- The RESA and DOE do not have overlapping functions over RESA programs. RESAs acknowledge that the DOE does have more or less direction over some programs that operate out of the RESA. However, the report makes no distinction between a program that is housed at the RESA with minimal intended oversight by the RESA, and one that is primarily managed by the RESA. On one front large budget programs like Adult Education, PST and SPOKES do not drain capacity from the RESAs because their budgets are more actively managed by the State DOE. RESAs have no need to overly manage these programs, which leaves sufficient capacity to deal with other priorities. The State BOE, DOE and RESAs all know the levels of supervision and coordination that each will exert toward the various programs, and work in conjunction to move programs forward.
- The report ignores that using a comprehensive strategic planning process can avoid overlapping functions and duplication of effort. In the planning process each entity knows the extent of effort to exert, and their particular role to play for success. This moves the entire educational organization can forward without overlapping functions or duplicating effort. We consider it a manipulative error to not take an account of RESA Executive Director time and effort toward TA and PD, cite that the RESA administration must be spending the bulk of their time on large budget programs like PST, Adult Education, and SPOKES, then turn around and say those same programs receive considerable direction from the State DOE, and therefore are not consuming the bulk of RESA Administration capacity, and then say that RESA Administration should be eliminated because no State programs need any administrative capacity at the regional level, inclusive of TA and PD efforts.
- The report gives no explanation as to why programs operate out of the RESAs by the DOE, and nowhere notes that having regional connections and relationships that provide for two way communication between that state and the region greatly facilitates each programs success in implementation while also incorporating vital regional customization. In one part of this report it is suggested that a top down approach to program implementation is discredited, but in this section the Legislative Auditor suggests that all coordination from the State DOE will be more effective, because it will allow for a greater emphasis for top down management.

Pg. 37: The list of inefficiencies of the RESA Director is in error for the following reasons:

- The position is not autonomous, through the Regional Council and the Strategic Planning process, as well as the evaluation process Executive Directors are required to perform their function in alignment with State Board expectations. The report provides no evidence of detrimental activity, nor any evidence of counterproductive activity. We consider it an error for the auditor to speculate or use past reports or studies that have since been addressed, without providing evidence based examples of data to back up their arbitrary conclusions.
- The report has provided no accurate information indicating any programs are outside of the mandated constituency, when the entire mandate is considered. We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to consistently ignore the entire scope of legislative language pertaining to RESAs, and to interpret a priority for two areas of service to cause all other areas of service to be marginalized.
- The programs housed at RESA and more directly overseen by the State DOE reside at the RESA because it is the most cost effect means of effectively administering those programs. We

consider it an error for the report to ignore the cumulative positive effect of housing education based regional programs at the RESA, and for ignoring the extent of benefit each of these individual programs receive in the current arrangement.

- No statistical data is provided to reasonably explain the extent of effort by either the DOE or the RESA to accurately assess the extent of involvement in various programs. We consider it an error for the report to cite the “significance” of involvement without having compiled actual data that in some way illustrates this opinion.
- The report suggests that Lead counties can coordinate county level functions at a lower cost, but no evidence is provided that indicates which counties would choose to be a lead county, or how that would reduce costs. We consider it an error for the report to suggest lead counties without doing adequate due diligence pertaining to the auditor’s original charge too: Assess and evaluate “Can mandated services be provided more efficiently, effectively, and without significant adverse effects if RESAs did not exist?” The RESAs see no tangible information provided in this report that indicates increases in efficiency and effectiveness, and only minimal adverse effects would occur if lead counties performed regional functions. The RESAs see no evidence in this report that the Legislative Auditor did any exhaustive effort, other than a sequence of assumptions to reach their conclusion. Additionally there is no close examination of how 18-A may restrict or prevent the smooth operation of regional personnel operating out of a lead county.
- We believe the report is minimizing the implications to the DOE. LEA status for the RESAs effects the methodology the DOE uses for allocating funds at the regional and local level, no examination as to the effects of eliminating a Regional LEA are explored. It should be noted that since the report does not articulate the number of part time employees at each RESA, and it follows that the burden of various program operations inclusive of purchases, time sheets, contracts (rents, professionals, etc.), and travel forms is significant; that a decent level of accommodation by the DOE would be necessary to absorb these personnel. Transition costs to properly employ regional personnel under DOE policies are not mentioned.
- We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to indicate that county level functions can continue with less overhead costs and that the DOE can absorb additional administrative functions without increased costs, when there no examination as to the actual cost redistribution that would occur if the RESAs are eliminated, nor any comment on the effect of federal fund distribution in the absence of a regional LEAs.

Pg. 39:

- The RESAs feel it is an error to only list full and regular part time personnel, and exclude occasional part time personnel, particularly when speaking to the level of administration effort required to operate programs. We consider it an error to assume that fiscal agents will be willing to continue to processing shared personnel without the administrative oversight provided by the RESAs. We consider it an error to assume “minimal cost implications to the counties” when no input from the counties or tabulation of their expect costs was performed.

Pg. 40: Second full paragraph under Table 10, starting – The legislative auditor finds that having several autonomous agencies provide PD invites duplication and redundancy, and increases the difficulty for the State to coordinate PD for the public school system.

- The State WVDE moved away from statewide PD offerings. The counties inform the RESAs what type of PD their counties need. This gives the counties the local control needed to find the PD that best suits the individual county's needs. A one size fits all approach does not work to suit the needs of the counties – which is why the WVDE moved away from that approach.
- We consider it a serious error that the auditor includes a table of the Master Plan and does not articulate the history of RESAs required input into that plan. During Year 2010 through 2013 years RESAs were only required/requested to provide one training that met the master plan parameters, merely to be in compliance with the requirement of being included in the Master Plan, and were not required/requested to document all training that met master plan requirements.
- We consider it an error to say that the county requested training “do not address specific educational goals of the Master Plan”, when in fact many of those trainings did address the Master Plan; however RESA were not required/requested to report that information for the following reason. As already indicated RESAs were only required to report one training to be in compliance with the requirement of being part of the Master Plan, and only those trainings that were pre-planned in the prior year were allowed to be part of the Master Plan, all the multitude of trainings that were requested of a RESA during the course of the year, that were part of the Master Plan, but not pre-planned were not documented.
- We consider it a grievous error for the Legislative Auditor to be charged with a focus on TA and PD provided through the RESAs, not take the time to research the Master Plan reporting expectations, and then include Master Plan statistics that in no way reflect the level of TA and PD provided by the RESAs that was in alignment with the Master Plan.
- We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to state, “several autonomous agencies provide PD invites duplication and redundancy”. Again the auditor ignores the strategic planning process that is designed to eliminate duplication and redundancy, and provides no evidence of duplicated PD or redundant services.

Pg. 41: First Partial Paragraph

- The RESA 6 business official is the CFO
- We consider it an error to indicate the cost saving from elimination of RESA finance officials without providing evidence of the cost the counties will incur to perform additional financial functions and/or oversight, and without exploring whether the counties would feel a need to maintain the positions in order to properly manage the details associated with regional programs.
- We consider it an error to indicate the DOE can take over various budgets or programs without doing exhaustive research into the implications on federal funding without local regional LEAs.
- We consider it an error to cite the elimination of cost for audits, when those costs would be shifted to the fiscal agent in increased costs for the performance of a larger audit due to the inclusion of regional funds as part of the county audit. Audits are partially priced based on level of funds audited.

Pg. 42:

Summary 1

We consider it an error to say, "RESA's expenditures are on activities that do not serve county school systems." RESAs are provided mandated services in compliance with all the mandates given to RESAs and in compliance with State Board policy. We consider it an error to marginalize portions of legislative language that gives the State Board authority to offer a wide range of educational programs through the RESAs, and the State Supreme Court in its recent decision provides evidence that the State Board has just that authority which nullifies a Legislative Auditors interpretation.

Summary 2

We consider it an error to only gauge the level of work and effort toward TA and PD to low performing schools based on expenditure level. The opportunity to assess the level of effort was afforded to the auditors, and they denied the opportunity to do appropriate due diligence to make an informed assessment. Utilizing expenditure level as a basis for determining effort when the RESAs were given the task of providing TA and PD because they had proven to be a low cost and effective vehicle to provide services.

Summary 3

We consider it an error for the Legislative Auditor to include an interpretation of legislative intent that is completely opposite of the State Supreme Court's interpretation of legislative intent concerning employment issues at the RESA. Additionally it is an error to ignore the practical implication of meeting various legislative mandates and to interpret all mandates that involve county funds as only appropriate if employees are shared across counties.

Summary 4

We consider it an error to state autonomous agencies when appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that RESAs are in compliance with State Board will. We consider it an error to state the RESAs are cost inefficient, when no research or appropriate due diligence was undertaken to assess the costs for the alternatives suggested.

Pg. 45: Second Bolded Statement at Bottom of Page, starting, the fallacy of this assumption is that without RESAs, counties with shared service agreements with RESAs..."

- This is not a fallacy. If the counties were to take on the task of providing some services, it would cost significantly more funding to the counties. RESAs are able to hire part-time and temporary employees – which save the counties thousands of dollars for each employee shared. Additionally, if the RESAs were not able to share services among the counties, only contiguous counties could share services and would eliminate the shared employees throughout the region. Shared services save county school systems approximately \$16.3 million annually.

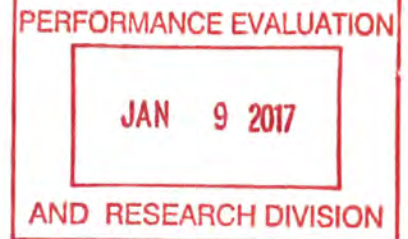
Pg. 46: First Full Paragraph, starting – Also, the cooperative purchasing agreement that RESAs have with AEPA can be continued..."

- In regards to the AEPA program, the only exceptions to an education service agency serving as the lead agency are in California and Michigan. Shared services organizations in those two states are configured very differently than in West Virginia. It is certainly not common practice for the AEPA to allow programs to be administered in a state through a non-shared service

agency. West Virginia's AEPA program is one of the most important cost savings operations in the state.

- WV's AEPA program consists of a part-time data clerk costing approximately \$2k-\$4k a year, plus a part-time director and finance clerk which has cost the state ZERO dollars. Several AEPA state programs hire more than ten employees in order to administer their programs.

**West Virginia Board of Education
Michael I. Green, President**



The West Virginia Board of Education (Board) is grateful for the effort put forth by the PERD Auditors. Let it be clear that we do not agree with many of their findings, conclusions and recommendations but we do respect the process and the professionalism of Mr. Sylvia and his staff. And although we disagree with much of the report, the auditors were absolutely correct in pointing out and emphasizing the core mission of the RESAs and the primary responsibilities of the Board, the West Virginia Department of Education (Department), and I might add, the legislature and that is to provide a world class education system for our students and for us to focus on student achievement and school improvement. I assure you that this Board is focused on these two missions.

We would also like to add our gratitude to the hard-working men and women who work tirelessly, every day at our eight RESAs. The auditors presented some very harsh criticism of RESAs in their report. We want to assure these folks that their efforts every day are sincerely appreciated by the Board and their customers - the thousands of students, teachers, administrators and citizens they serve every day.

Again, the Board agrees with the audit that the primary function of the RESA is to improve student achievement. We also agree that periodically it is wise to evaluate any government entity for effectiveness and adjust goals of such organization accordingly. With reduced resources (human and financial), declining student enrollment, and smaller county board office configurations, RESAs serve a distinct purpose in providing services closer to the need than from a singular remote area such as Charleston. In attempting to address all educational aspects and serving multiple entities with good intentions, RESAs perhaps have been distracted, and even removed focus, from PreK-12 school improvement and student achievement. To its credit, the audit report initiates a conversation as to how RESAs can get refocused to meet their obligatory and primary function. Although the Board agrees with this premise, there remain questions regarding the specific structure, priorities and funding to best accomplish that goal.

Let's take a minute to review exactly what a RESA is: it stands for Regional Education Service Agency. Let's break that down and start with the word "Education". As already stated, the core mission of the RESA is and must be indeed education. In order to provide the education ecosystem our kids deserve, it is critical that all parties buy-in and accept the fact that education in our State is composed of four basic parts: standards, assessments, accountability and capacity building.

Our strategic plan views this as a coordinated system and one in which all four parts must stay intact or else the entire educational system falls apart. The RESAs are an integral part of this system and specifically and especially as it relates to the last part - capacity building, which is the cornerstone of student achievement and school improvement. Every day, the RESAs are engaged in Professional Development [PD] (for our teachers, principals and administrators) as well as providing day-to-day technical assistance [TA] to a variety of constituents. In particular, the RESAs play a major role in providing PD and TA to those schools designated as "Low Performance Schools". Let it be clear that the RESAs are required by statute to provide services to Low Performing Schools. In many cases, the counties neither have the personnel, time or expertise to provide these services. Let me assure you that RESAs spend 100% of the dollars appropriated for PD and TA, on PD and TA.

Let's examine the first word in the name: "Regional". There is a good reason why the RESAs were set up as regional entities. I think we would all agree there is no "one" West Virginia and one size does not fit all in The Mountain State. Therefore, let it be clear that there are good reasons why by necessity, each RESA provides different and unique services. Regional also implies "local" and having local involvement and in fact local control, is one thing the Board strongly believes in and supports. For a system to work effectively, local relationships, local communication, local community engagement matters. RESAs provide "on the ground" support on a daily basis in our local communities. We disagree with the auditor's recommendation that control should come from Charleston. We believe in just the opposite. The local communities know their issues and priorities and thus are quite capable of dealing with their local challenges. Furthermore, the auditor's recommendation that services be administered by regional personnel from the Department makes no sense. The Department has been decimated over the years by drastic budget cuts and simply does not have the personnel or the capacity to provide such services. We also strongly disagree with the auditor's recommendation to reduce the number of stakeholders on Regional Councils. At the local level, we see great value in understanding and respecting the views and opinions of local school board members, teachers, principals, superintendents and central office personnel.

Finally, let's examine the word "Service". The auditor's report went into great detail describing the vast variety of services that are provided by the RESAs. We acknowledge and agree with the auditor that many of the services provided by the RESAs are "contradictory to RESA's statutory purpose" but we disagree that the RESAs "ignore the improvement needs of many schools in these regions".

In fact, the RESAs spent approximately \$4.9 million for PD and TA in CY2016. This expenditure is extremely helpful to counties particularly when counties are finding it

necessary to cut their PD budgets in order to meet mandated budget cuts. The costs of outside consultants normally runs \$400-\$900 a day. Without the RESA regional PD model, many educators would not receive necessary ongoing training. The truth is that the statutory responsibilities of the RESAs are delivered and fulfilled every day in every RESA by RESA professional personnel. What is also true is that the income provided by the so-called "non-statutory" services provided (such as Medicaid reimbursement, bus operating training, energy management services, etc.) by the RESAs supplements the funding provided by the legislature and in fact adds to the capacity of the RESAs to provide statutory services. This is just one of the reasons the RESAs provide "non-statutory" services. The other reason is because, "somebody has to and the RESAs can". Although claims are made that RESAs are an extra layer of administration, they are in fact an effective layer of administration that facilitates a reduction in overall administration due to being the appropriate economy of scale. Programs like Adult Education and Public Service Training, serve one or potentially two regional areas because the workload warrants less administrative capacity than one administrator per region. Programs like Regional Wellness, Adult Education, WVEIS support, and Medicaid Billing manage so many of the details relating to their programs that it frees the counties from having to provide additional administrative capacity to maintain compliance and operate successful programs.

From inception, the RESAs have been and have continued to be the "poster child" for entrepreneurship in West Virginia. There is no other agency in State government that can claim they provide nearly 15 times the services over its budgeted and allotted funds. On a daily basis, RESAs are called upon by individual schools to provide necessary, personalized services; services that their local county cannot provide. The most recent Matrix of Services listed 148 programs that operate out of the RESAs. It is doubtful that most counties have the capacity to add even half of these programs without significantly increasing administration and cost.

In addition, since the RESAs joined the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) in FY13 to secure national discounted pricing for schools and non-profit organizations; annual sales have risen from \$5,642,691.72 with \$1,455,355.65 in savings in FY13 to sales of \$16,404,408.31 and \$4,166,308.00 in savings in FY16. \$12,224,850.32 in documented discounts have been realized by schools, agencies, and other governmental units by utilizing WV AEPA pricing for products and services over the past four fiscal years. Additional tangible savings are realized due to the entire administrative burden of bidding being removed from school systems when purchasing through WV AEPA.

The discussion of "Service" would not be complete without mentioning the creative approach the RESAs have taken in regard to "shared services". The very nature of how

and why the RESAs are organized and managed today is a testament as to why the concept of shared services across RESA boundaries has saved the State millions of dollars. In FY16, counties who chose to use RESA shared services saved the system approximately \$7M (which ironically is twice the total budget allocated to RESAs) and eliminated the need for approximately 113 employees. These savings, along with other savings generated by RESA services, take effect in the counties and free up revenue for the classroom and student improvement. If these savings are lost, then classrooms, teachers and students will be the ones to suffer that loss. In addition, the RESAs have developed unique grant writing skills and have secured millions of dollars over the years to again supplement funding to achieve their mission.

In conclusion, we are indeed grateful to the auditors for a number of reasons. Stated again, we agree that periodically it is wise to evaluate oneself for effectiveness and efficiency - but then, promptly make appropriate adjustments. We are dealing with a significant reduction in resources, our budgets continuously get cut and we are asked to always do more with less. This is an opportune time for us, the Board, to reevaluate, make adjustments and propose a new course of action. Therefore, here are some ideas we are prepared to discuss at the Board level in general and in particular issues specific to RESAs:

1. School Improvement Process

- Emphasize and establish the primary role of RESAs and buy-in from the Regional Councils to focus on school improvement and student achievement, including greater emphasis on low performing schools.
- Work more closely with the State Superintendent of Schools and his staff and assign appropriate Department personnel to be held accountable to the Board for developing and implementing a school improvement process that all RESAs use in a consistent manner.
- Develop a comprehensive process, which ensures more collaboration and cooperation between the RESAs, the Department and the counties.
- Within each RESA, propose a Project Director for school improvement to oversee all functions of school improvement. For maximum effectiveness this position must be an educator with school improvement administrative experience.
- Create a working group populated by all the RESA Project Directors for school improvement and the comparable officers at the Department and task them primarily with coordinating the efforts to assist low-performing schools.

2. Policies: Review, Reflect, Revise, and Solidify West Virginia Board of Education Policy 3233, Establishment and Operation of Regional Education Service Agencies

- Revision may be necessary to align new federal regulations related to the “The Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) requirements and expectations as it relates to standards, assessment, accountability, and school improvement . . . and how this affects the operation of the RESAs.

3. Coordination of County Level Functions

- Identify in detail county coordinated services that exist and to what extent.
- Thoroughly review current county coordinated services and determine if returning functions to the counties would be a cost savings or be cost prohibitive.
- Identify additional areas where shared services can save even more money.
- Determine which, if any, functions and services currently provided should be transferred to other State agencies.

4. Services Not Directly Related to Education

- Require RESAs to demonstrate and document that any services performed that are not directly related to education, do not depend on appropriated dollars and do not detract or take funds for educational services.

We would be happy to answer any questions at this time regarding the audit or our response.

