

SCHOOL BOARD

JANET BERGMAN  
NEIL BOERGER  
MARK GOUBEUX  
REBECCA HOELSCHER  
JACK KOENIG

# *Botkins Local School*



Ladies and gentleman, my name is Connie Schneider, I am the Superintendent of Botkins Local Schools in Botkins, Ohio—Shelby County. I have been the Botkins Superintendent for 15 years and before that served the district as a Principal and Teacher. I live in the district and I can tell you emphatically that Botkins has a long tradition of being a high performing school. Under the old local report card system, our district was rated Excellent 7 years in a row. We have a K-12 population of 685 students. Our district success is highly supported by our local ESC.

Governor Kasich's new executive budget proposal contained within HB 64 and Senate Bill 3, sponsored by Senator Cliff Hite, contain concerning statutory changes related to Educational Services in the name of "regulatory relief." Additionally, ESC funding is reduced by 25% over the biennium, thereby undermining the cost-effectiveness and quality of educational programming.

While we are a high performing district and certainly appreciate regulatory relief, I assert that aligning to an Educational Service Center is NOT a regulatory burden. To the contrary, ESC services are a cost-effective and quality solution for our district and many others. One example of this is our special education consortium classrooms. Our district hosts the two Shelby County classrooms of students with multiple disabilities. Some districts in our county may only have one or two students that fit this classification. Therefore a consortium with the ESC is invaluable to our 7 local districts to keep the costs at a minimum. It would be highly impractical for each district to run their own unit. If small districts such as ours attempted to support these students' needs on our own, it would be nearly impossible. Consider if I had two of these students at Botkins Local Schools and had to hire a full-time teacher and all of the support staff such as a school psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist and physical therapist to provide the needed support to these students, it would be extremely expensive at best and the support staff would be unavailable at worst. Utilizing the Educational Service Center allows our district to provide our students with a highly qualified, full-time teacher and each of the other support staff and share the costs with other districts our size. We rely on the ESC to employ and contract out these staff members.

Another example of how working with our local ESC is a positive and not a burden is that districts such as ours are able to hire other high quality specialists by utilizing the Educational Service Center consortia model. Through this relationship we receive support from specialists we could not otherwise afford to hire on our own. Consider this—for \$34,994.60 the Botkins Local School District utilizes the expertise of six Educational Service Center administrators. We receive professional, high quality support in the areas of gifted education (which requires gifted licensure), professional development, special education (which again requires specific licensure), grant writing and curriculum support.

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These dedicated professionals work closely with our administrative team and provide support and guidance to our faculty. With all of the mandates, responsibilities, and expectations that our principals deal with on a daily basis, they rely on the expertise of the support services that have been provided by our ESC. As I stated earlier, our district student population is 685. We have a small and very supportive community. We would not be fiscally responsible if we added the staffing needed to provide the services that are currently provided by our ESC. These services both enhance and support us so that we are able to continue to provide our students with the quality education that they currently receive. We could not hire even one additional administrator to cover one of these areas for what we are paying the Midwest Regional Educational Service Center for all of them.

Educational Service Center funding is less than 1/2 of 1 percent relative to the overall K-12 education budget (GRF & Lottery Profits). It is about 0.6% of the foundation funding line item. Yet, the support is critical to supporting the ESCs and the support they provide districts. And, the return on investment is substantial. On average, for every \$1 invested by the state in the Midwest Regional ESC operating subsidy, the ESC identifies, secures and leverages an additional \$3.90 in competitive grants for client school districts. This does not even include the impact of shared services savings that, when added, take the average per pupil return on investment over \$5.00 for every \$1 dollar invested. Allowing districts to opt out of alignment and/or reducing state funding to an ESC would only raise the costs of these vital services to the remaining districts.

Our community expects us to make fiscally sound decisions and contracting with the Midwest Regional Educational Service Center meets that expectation. Please consider this before you allow districts to opt out of alignment and/or cut ESC funding.