

Michigan's Intermediate School Districts



Leaders for Educational Excellence

The Mission, Role, and Essential Services of
Michigan's Intermediate School Districts

May 2001

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Michigan’s educational service agencies (ISDs, RESAs, RESDs) is to provide visionary leadership and quality services to strengthen teaching and learning for all citizens.

INTRODUCTION

Educational service agencies (ESAs) throughout America are sometimes referred to as “invisible partners” as they are little known to the public, however, their traditional clients – school districts – know them well. Many research studies have shown that local school districts consider ESAs to be essential in providing quality education. By aggregating talented staff, they are able to provide leadership, programs, resources and services to local districts that many could not afford on their own. By initiating, delivering and facilitating collaborative efforts, they are able to reduce costs and improve quality. In recent times, service agencies

have taken on new roles and are making significantly larger contributions to help coordinate programs and services to Michigan children and their families.

They are able to facilitate partnerships

with other public and non-profit agencies, as well as business and industry, to provide high quality services to children and their families with efficiency and effectiveness.

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In April, 1990 the Michigan Association of Intermediate School District Administrators (MAISA) released a document entitled “Michigan Intermediate School Districts: The Mission, Role and Essential Services.” It was designed to summarize, to the extent possible, the common roles of service agencies and to suggest the many programs that were available through ISDs. The latter task was not easy since ISDs pride themselves on being responsive to local needs. All offer basic educational support programs of high quality, but there is still considerable variety in programming from one ISD to another. This flexibility in responding to local needs is a fundamental strength of regional service agencies. However, in light of rapidly increasing demands for new programs and services and the growing impact of technology on how everything was being provided, MAISA revised the document in 1993.

In 1999 MAISA concluded that the pace of change - in education and in society and ultimately on the mission and roles of service agencies - was so great that the document needed to be redesigned, both to take into account the changes that were occurring at ISDs and to recognize how future trends would likely affect service agencies. It seemed likely their responsibilities in supporting quality education programs and services and in catalyzing regional responses and solutions to pressing human service problems in each service region would increase.

MAISA offers this document to help inform the public about where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going in the foreseeable future.

ISDs accept several responsibilities that are embedded in many educational improvement efforts going on across America.

ISDs help improve student achievement. This responsibility is carried out whether working with students directly in such areas as special education and career education or indirectly when working with district staff, students, and parents.

ISDs lead. They have both the responsibility and the expertise to “look around the corner,” to anticipate future needs before they become apparent and to design timely and relevant solutions, in collaboration with their constituents.

ISDs create and share knowledge. One of the major trends in teacher preparation is the development of the “teacher as researcher” in his/her classroom and school. ISDs must also be researchers in developing practitioner knowledge and helping teachers and administrators share their learnings about best practice.

ISDs are catalysts for change and are expected to play a leadership role in this regard. They can and do, partner with business, unions, non-profit agencies, the courts, police, human service agencies, and other entities to leverage resources on behalf of youth and their families.

ISDs are tireless in their pursuit of excellence. They must advocate for, offer, and achieve high quality programs and services.

ISD are responsive. All of the services listed in this publication can be made available to all school districts in the state. Some programs and services are made available directly. Others are provided through partnerships with other ISDs and/or agencies. In still other situations, services may be provided by using technology to create a network of providers. Occasionally needed services are brokered through other providers such as higher education institutions, businesses, or other institutions.

ISDs are accountable. They must constantly monitor the effectiveness of their work in helping students increase their learning and in helping districts improve their services. They must know to what extent their leadership role in the region is recognized and valued.

The educational service agency function is increasingly valued across the country. It is the intention of this publication to demonstrate why this assertion is true.

SECTION I

How are ISDs Operated?

Michigan intermediate school districts are governed by boards of education. Intermediate board members typically serve six-year terms and are elected by representatives of their constituent district boards of education.

Intermediate districts are funded through a combination of local, state and federal funds. They are statutorily authorized to seek public approval to levy taxes for special education, career-technical education, general operations and other specific uses, and they may also charge fees for certain services.

SECTION II

What Services do ISDs Provide?

Customized Services

Michigan's 57 regional educational service agencies continually seek to establish and maintain dynamic and responsive relationships with their communities, their constituent school districts and their business and agency partners. Because resources, demographics, geography and local needs vary widely among Michigan school districts, the manner and degree of regional educational service agency involvement varies as well. In fact, the variance in the unique needs of their customers actually determines the programs and services offered directly by each educational service agency.

Driven by their mission statement to enhance the educational effectiveness, efficiency and success of all learners, educational service agencies have

established a strategic focus designed to meet the unique and changing needs of the varied audiences with whom and for whom they work, whether as partners, customers, or learners.

Fundamentally, this strategic focus has a consistent theme across Michigan: customized solutions.

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Because educational service agencies are constantly adapting and responding to the market place, it is very difficult to develop a complete and precise list of programs and services available throughout Michigan. The description of services, which follows, characterizes many of the common programs and services provided by educational service agencies. However, what may be omitted from this list because it is uncommon may be just as important as what is described to those who benefit by such unique programs or services.

Instructional Services Provided by Intermediate School Districts

Many, perhaps most, programs and services delivered by regional educational service agencies provide direct assistance to local school districts. Through this delivery, ISDs have direct impact on students, and also impact the quality of curriculum and instruction through professional development offerings. Examples of instructional services provided by educational service agencies include the following:

General Education

- Support for the Michigan Curriculum Frameworks
 - Curriculum alignment
 - Instruction (teaching and learning standards)
- Professional development
- Assessment
 - MEAP analysis and consultation
 - Standardized testing
 - Program evaluation; school improvement and accreditation
 - Assistance in improving student achievement
- Technical assistance
 - Curriculum development
 - Grant writing
- School Improvement
 - Planning
 - Goal setting
 - Strategies/Implementation
- Parenting education
- Gifted and talented programs
- Enrichment programs
- Voice, video and data network development
- Alternative education collaboratives
- Accreditation assistance
- Early Childhood programs
- Adult education coordination
- Technology collaboratives
- Universal services fund – technical assistance
- Assistance in development of technology plans
- Math and science centers
- School safety

Career & Technical Education

- Career technology center classes
- Student & staff internships
- Apprenticeships
- Support and/or delivery of local school-based vocational classes
- Career information and training for students
- Specially designed training for an existing workforce
- Tech Prep
- Career Prep
- Work Force Development programs in conjunction with business, government (FIA), and non-profit agencies

Special Education

- Center-based programs for low-incidence students
- Higher incidence programs
- Technical assistance to LEAs
- Consultative services
- Early-On delivery systems
- Supervision of staff
- Placement of itinerant staff in LEAs
- Contracted services with vendors
- Community-based instruction
- Transition training
- Technical assistance
- Form development and distribution

Administrative/Support Services Provided by Intermediate School Districts

Programs and services in this category are designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local school district operations. By consolidating and coordinating activities, customers can receive improved services at a lower cost.

Examples of administrative/support services provided by educational service agencies include the following:

- Pupil accounting - audits, consultation on student attendance issues
- Student records/student scheduling - assistance in the development and management of student databases
- Payroll - centralized payroll and related services
- Finance services - data processing management and support
- Consultation services - leadership and support in services such as:
 - Professional negotiations – data collection and analysis, information sharing
 - Finance and accounting – investment, cash management and accounting services
 - Communications
 - Legislation – information sharing, alerts, lobbying and governmental relations

- ❑ Public relations, media relations and publications
- ❑ Transportation – bus routing, centralized purchasing, fleet operation
- ❑ Truancy – attendance services, court liaison work
- ❑ Conference and meeting facilitation – providing facilities and services for in-service and professional development
- ❑ Substitute teacher hiring, orientation and placement – centralized processing of new staff and orientation
- ❑ Purchasing cooperatives
- ❑ Liaison between Michigan Department of Education and local districts – including monitoring, data collection, reporting

Technology Services Provided by Intermediate School Districts

Services in this important area include both direct and indirect technological services. In some cases, educational service agencies provide Internet connections as well as distance learning and other network programs to school districts and their consumers. In other cases, educational service agencies serve as clearinghouses, consultants and/or brokers for these and other technological services.

Examples of technology provided by educational service agencies include these:

- ❑ WAN/LAN connectivity - Fast and efficient movement of information through voice, video and data transmissions
- ❑ Internet access - Direct high-speed connections, dial-up services for families, shared bandwidth, help lines, content filtering and other Internet services
- ❑ Media /library - Thousands of video selections, graphics and printing services, teacher work centers, and other assistance provided through a system of regional educational media centers (REMCs)
- ❑ Web site development - Direct assistance and consulting services to districts in web site development
- ❑ Technical assistance - On-site and dial-up repairs and consulting services, network engineering and consultation, standards development for hardware, direct programming and professional expertise
- ❑ Virtual programming - Virtual field trips, high school and university classes and enhanced learning experiences in content areas such as the arts and sciences
- ❑ Cooperative ventures - Group hardware and software purchases, use of Internet bandwidth, connectivity networks, telephone services and other cooperative ventures in technology

Partnership Services Provided by Intermediate School Districts

School/community partnerships are essential in responding to customer needs. Collaborative partnerships with families, other agencies, non-profit organizations, business/industry and governmental entities to support the work of local school districts are necessary functions of all regional educational service agencies. Such partnerships create effective systems for on-going participation/interaction between service providers and schools for maximum utilization of information and resources. Some examples of such partnerships that can be developed by regional educational service agencies to meet local needs include the following:

Economic and Community Development - Coalitions that focus on economic and community development for the region served are developing with increasing frequency. Work groups can focus specifically on priority areas such as job training and retraining programs, geographic information systems, development of cultural and recreational opportunities, and other collaborations with business and local and state government. Linkages which focus on strategic planning for business/education partnerships such as the Utility Business Education Coalition (UBEC) and REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning) are among the newest collaborations initiated or supported by ISDs.

Human Service and other Non-Profit Agencies - Human services coordinating bodies provide opportunities for multi-purpose collaborative partnerships to serve youth and families through a unified regional approach. Family Coordinating Councils and work groups provide the vehicle for implementation/evaluation of interagency initiatives, including helping to build capacity for families as they gain strength to deal with the problems they face.

In addition, non-profit organizations can be formed to promote the use of technology for educational, economic and personal growth in regional areas. Such organizations can serve as brokers, conveners, coalition builders and information resources to provide leadership to promote connected communities.

Educational Agencies - Specialized academic programming options in such areas as environmental education, career preparation, foreign languages and special education can be developed in partnership with other providers to prepare youth most effectively in application-oriented learning experiences.

Charter/Home/Non-Public Schools - As more educational options develop, ISDs may develop partnerships with charter and/or home schools to focus on student achievement, assessment, accountability and staff development. Most ISDs have had long-standing partnerships with non-public schools as a result of the Auxiliary Services Act and standing invitations to such entities to participate in staff development programs. As learning opportunities become more individualized in a digital economy, ISDs will respond to the changing venues for offering educational services.

Higher Education - Personnel preparation, professional development programs and research initiatives can be enhanced through partnerships established by regional educational service agencies with colleges/universities.

It is clear that partnerships can increase program options, promote collaboration within community decision-making processes, and expand opportunities for all learners.

Research and Development

ISDs were originally created to provide school districts with programs and services too expensive or too extensive to be offered individually. Research to discover methods to improve and expand learning opportunities and choices for students and adults is therefore an essential role for the ISD. Local district priorities revolve around the day to day requirements of running a school district. The ISD can provide a constant focus on finding better approaches to teaching and learning for the future and share and model the findings of this research.

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ISD leadership in stimulating the change process through research and development is critical. Current focal points in this process include the following:

- Designing models for educational planning, programming and decision-making
- Maximizing the effective use of technology for instruction and administration
- Identifying and expanding educational best practices
- Investigating and piloting non-traditional forms of instruction and delivery of educational services
- Identifying programs, services, practices which should be changed, replaced or eliminated
- Creating access to a broader range of proven ideas and possibilities
- Building awareness of opportunities to improve
- Designing models for continuous improvement

By constant attention to testing new ideas and assessing their effectiveness, by modeling the results to the educational community, and by focusing on continuous improvement as the basis for the educational process, ISDs can assist all schools in gaining access to the finest, most effective educational tools in support of learning for all.

SECTION III

Are ISDs accountable?

The system of Michigan Intermediate School Districts is required, under MCL 380.1277, to be accountable regarding services to constituent districts and students. This statute stipulates the areas in which ISDs are held accountable in terms of programs and services. Because of the constantly changing educational environment, ISDs must be flexible enough organizationally and programmatically to respond to the needs of those they serve. ISDs are accountable to their customers by assuring that processes are in place to do the following:

- ❑ Have an accurate assessment of the priority needs of customers
- ❑ Design programs and services which meet those identified needs
- ❑ Perform continuous assessment and realignment of programs and services to assure that customer needs are being met

In essence, ISDs must have the capacity to regularly and systematically identify priority needs and to determine when and where gaps exist between needs and services. Such a “gap analysis” can be accomplished through a variety of methods. Those methods range from very informal processes (a telephone call or a meeting) to more detailed, research-based methods. Gathering performance data about student learning and demonstrating rising achievement represent the ideal forms of assuring customer satisfaction.

Measuring customer satisfaction is an essential component of meeting the identified needs of those the ISDs serve. Aggressively addressing findings of misalignment between customer needs and agency programs and services is an indicator of an ISD’s commitment to being held accountable and helps assure the creation of trust and cooperation.

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SECTION IV

What will ISDs do in the Future?

As educators know too well, not all school districts are created equal and not all children have equal opportunities. ISDs currently provide high levels of support for categorical programs such as Special Education and Career and Technical Education. However, in the future, increasing importance will be placed on the ability of ISDs to help districts whose resources are limited, whose socio-economic status is low, and whose children are at-risk.

Leadership and support for at-risk districts will increase in the area of strategic planning, school improvement, staff development, curriculum development, technology utilization, teaching and learning, and community collaboration. ISDs must become one with local districts in solving the educational problems getting in the way of success for all students. Students and communities are becoming more diverse racially, ethnically, and economically. Every alternative must be considered in striving to assure the academic success of all children.

As the school environment becomes more diverse, ISDs will support families who have chosen alternatives to the public schools. In order to keep students and families connected to the public schools, ISDs will need to be teachers and leaders in the area of virtual learning, interactive television, and distance learning. No child can be left behind in the technological transformation affecting all society.

Education does not exist in isolation. ISDs must continue to forge more extensive partnerships with business, community, legislators and other agencies to support families and

children from birth forward to ensure that Michigan children reach the national goal: Every child comes to school ready to learn. ISD programs and services for schools are driven by the goal of affecting learning. Only when all children are connected to the world beyond their neighborhood will the social stratification of the “haves” and “have nots” be broken.

ISDs must become one with local districts in solving the educational problems getting in the way of success for all students.

ISDs will focus on the following areas in the future. They will:

- ❑ Constantly seek creative solutions for both old and new problems
- ❑ Pursue equity for all children in access to technology
- ❑ Actively collaborate with each other and with other educational institutions, business partners, community agencies, and parents in the mutual endeavor to meet customer needs
- ❑ Continue efforts to maximize achievement for all learner
- ❑ Serve a widening audience of learners
- ❑ Move toward making learning available to students, teachers, and community in an anytime, anywhere mode
- ❑ Improve evaluation of student learning with an emphasis on individual growth
- ❑ Create cooperative and consolidated administrative services that increase efficiency
- ❑ Create meaningful partnerships to promote and encourage safe and effective school environments
- ❑ Increase early intervention efforts to promote student success
- ❑ Develop capacities and systems to confront whatever problems the future may bring

ISDs must preserve programs and services that work while offering new initiatives, recognizing that better education depends on aligning agency offerings with identified needs, utilizing technology to expand opportunities for teaching and learning, taking on new roles and responsibilities, and asserting leadership, the critical element without which very little is likely to happen to improve schools.

Conclusion

It should be evident that the mission, roles and services described in this document demonstrate the dynamic nature of ISDs and the value they will continue to add to Michigan's educational and human services delivery systems in the twenty-first century.

SECTION V

Intermediate School District Services / Responsibilities

The following list of Michigan statutes is meant to summarize legislation that either provides authority or requires Intermediate School Districts to offer programs and/or services, directly or indirectly, to local school districts (LEAs) or their students. The Revised School Code of 1996 represents a major shift from implied, prescriptive powers to general powers. While there are still many sections of Michigan law that stipulate specific requirements, where the law is silent, School Boards have general powers relative to authorization and/or requirements for programs and/or services.

SSAA 388.	Code 380.	Related Laws	Definition
Sec. 81 (\$)	Sec. 4, 601		ISD authority defined, sets power
Sec. 162	Sec. 601a		Statement of general power authority for ISDs; Sec. 162 stipulates requirement to file requested forms, audits, etc.
	Sec. 604		Identification as corporate body; choice of name
	Sec. 605	388.681 - .721	Methods for reorganization of constituent school districts; transfer to other ISD; assumption of bonded debt; voting re: special education and area voc-tech centers [Sec. 701-703 = ISD Annexation; Sec. 851-871 = LEA Consolidation; Sec. 941-949 = LEA Annexation; Sec. 951-976 = LEA Property Transfers]
	Sec. 611		ISD Board of Education and number of members
	Sec. 5, 612		Process and Board involvement for attachment / detachments

	Sec. 613		Annual Meeting; officers' election and duties; treasurer's bond
	Sec. 614		Election of members; term of office; filling of vacancies; nominating petitions and affidavit; board of canvassers [Sec. 380.1103-04 stipulates filling LEA Board vacancies]
	Sec. 615		Popular election of ISD Board of Education (under certain conditions)
	Sec. 616		Method of providing for popular election of ISD Board of Education; terminating popular election

Key: MCL = Michigan Compiled Law
 380._____ = Michigan Revised School Code
 388._____ = Michigan School Aid Act

SSAA 388.	Code 380.	Related Laws	Definition
	Sec. 617		Candidacy of persons for ISD popular elections; nominating petitions and affidavits; process to conduct election; initial terms of members; filling vacancies
	Sec. 621		Compensation / expenses of ISD Board of Education [Sec. 380.1254 requires prior approval of expenses in certain circumstances]
Sec. 168	Sec. 622, 1221-2	129.111-118	Depository (pools) for school funds; audit requirements
	Sec. 623		Duties of ISD Board, employment, superintendent contract [Sec. 1236 = sub teacher requirements; Sec. 1525 = mentor teachers; Sec. 1527 = PD requirements]
	Sec. 623a, 1267, 1274		Requirements relative to procurement (bid purchasing)
Sec. 168	Sec. 623b		Indemnification for persons involved in asbestos abatement; process
	Sec. 624	141.411-415	Annual General Fund budget, hearing, notice to LEA's [Sec. 1725 = special education budget requirements]
	Sec. 625	137.1 - .8	Taxes; assessment, levy, collection; delinquent taxes
	Sec. 625a		Operating millage, levy [Sec. 1211c = enhancement millage; Sec. 1716-24c = special education millage]
	Sec. 626, 933, 954		ISD map requirements, process, filing
Sec. 18	Sec. 627		Cooperative programs and/or services that ISD shall provide to LEA(s) [upon request]
Sec. 109	Sec. 627a		Coordination of programs/services to hospitalized homebound

(\$)			pupils
Sec. 24 (4)	Sec. 628		Authority for operation of programs for juvenile delinquents
	Sec. 629, 1351-56	134.1, 135.1	Borrowing powers and limitations; also on behalf of LEA [Sec. 1731 = special education borrowing]
	Sec. 630		Oaths – power to administer
	Sec. 632		Employee benefits; sabbatical leaves
	Sec. 652		ISD Superintendent, surety bond

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SSAA 388.	Code 380.	Related Laws	Definition
	Sec. 4, 653, 654		Duties of ISD superintendent to Board, LEAs, and SBE
	Sec. 661		Elections, designation of election officer, eligibility of electors
	Sec. 662		Special elections; propositions; expenses of election; returns and canvass
	Sec. 4, 671		Regional Educational Media Centers; defines service areas
	Sec. 673		Recreational programs
Sec. 61a, 62	Sec. 3, 681-88,	395.1-10, 395.31-34	Area Voc-Tech Centers, millages, etc.
	Sec. 1103-4		Filling vacancies on LEA Boards
Sec. 167	Sec. 1177	333.9203- .9209	Immunization requirements; filing requirements
	Sec. 1263, 67	388.851- .855	Requirements re: property, construction, leases
Sec. 94 (\$)	Sec. 1277		School Improvement Plans, ISD Technical Assistance
Sec. 19	Sec. 1277a, 1280		Requirements re: Accreditation, Annual Report, assistance to LEA's
Sec. 8, 101	Sec. 1284		Requirements for programs re: days, hours, attendance
Sec. 74	Sec. 1296, 1323, 1325		Auxiliary services to non-public pupils, transportation, contracts with others
	Sec. 1561,		Compulsory Attendance Act, requirements for ISD Attendance

	1571-1589		Officers, process, duties
	Sec. 1711		Duties of ISD re: special education
Sec. 6(1)	Sec. 6, 1701-1766		Definition of special education programs and services
Sec. 51a (\$), 56, 105c	Sec. 1741		Determination of ISD special education memberships, added cost agreements
Sec. 36 – 39			Funding and requirements for early childhood education Programs

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SSAA 388.	Code 380.	Related Laws	Definition
		15.231 - .246	Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
		15.261 - .275	Open Meetings Act (OMA)
		15.401 - .407	Political activities by public employees
		38.1301 - .1412	Public School Employees' Retirement Act of 1979 as amended (MPSERS)
		129.11 - .118	Depositories for public moneys; Surplus Funds Investment Pool Act
		131.1 - 139.3	Municipal Finance Act (tax anticipation notes, refunding bonds, tax levies, debt retirement, sinking fund)
		141.411 - .415	Budget hearing requirements
		141.421 - .440	Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act
		168.24 - .975	Michigan Election Law (excerpts for school elections)
		211.7 - .217	General Property Tax Act (assessment role, taxes certified, taxes assessed, tax roll, collection of taxes, return of delinquent taxes, tax settlements, tax limitation)
		257.57 - .961	Michigan Vehicle Code (licensing, suspension of license, signs, speeds, vehicle inspection, regulation of vehicles on school property)
		257.1801 - .1877	Michigan Pupil Transportation Act
		257.306, .309, .1851	Bus driver training, bus safety education programs, stipulates violations
Sec. 166a,		333.9101	Process for school-based health services, reporting

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167			
		388.551 - .558	Non-public school code
		388.811 - .985	Emergency financial assistance for certain school districts; state loans
		390.1421 - .1444	Michigan Education Trust Act (MET)
		395.1 - .90	Federal and state aid to vocational education
		408.551 - .558	Prevailing Wages on State Projects Act
		409.101 - .124	Youth Employment Standards Act
		423.201 - .217	Public Employment Relations Act (PERA)
		423.501 - .512	Bullard – Plawecki Employee Right to Know Act

(\$) Denotes that statute allocates funds to ISDs.

MAISA Essential Services
Document Revision Committee

MAISA is deeply indebted to **Bill Keane**, who served as Project Coordinator for this important document revision. Dr. Keane, a Past President of MAISA and AESA, was a valuable resource, skilled facilitator, and capable editor producing a finished product.

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