

Keystone Funding Part II The Service Center

A Kansas educational Service Center provides . . . well, educational services! The state does not provide any money directly to service centers, but service centers may sell services they provide to other education agencies.

There are seven state-recognized service centers in Kansas. Two of them are different because they also provide special education services. These two are [Keystone \(Northeast Kansas Education Service Center\)](#) and [Northwest Kansas Education Service Center](#) in Oakley. The other five service centers are located in Girard ([Southeast Kansas Education Service Center or Greenbush](#)), [Smokey Hills](#) in Salina, [South Central](#) in Clearwater, [Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas](#) (ESSDACK) in Hutchinson, and [Southwest Plains](#) in Sublette. Even though these seven centers work with schools in their geographic region, there are no state mandates regarding where schools purchase support. Anyone can sell their services to any Kansas district.

Keystone is not a big provider of staff training because our focus has been special education services. The majority of the work done by the service center is fiscal support for grants. Most of those grants are federal grants that come through the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). We believe Keystone is uniquely suited to provide support for these federal grants because they are all focused on helping students learn at higher levels.

One of these grants supports the state autism team, [Autism and Tertiary Behavior Supports](#). This team provides support to Kansas schools with individual students that they are having a difficult time providing services for. A second grant has branched off of this grant to allow the autism team to serve any high-needs student, regardless of their disability. Keystone's part in the process is to serve as employer for these team members and pay their bills. These are some of the best experts in the state as well as the nation, and we feel honored to be part of the grant.

Another such grant is the [Multi-Tiered System of Supports team \(MTSS\)](#). MTSS also has deep roots in special education. This team provides support for training across the state to schools that want to better determine individual students' learning needs and address those needs. From that grant, another project called co-teaching has begun. This project is training teachers locally and across the state to help both

special and regular education teachers work together to improve learning for all students.

Not all of our projects come from grants. Keystone is the fiscal agent for the non-profit consortium, [Kansas Individualized Data System for Students \(WebKIDSS\)](#), which markets a web-based program for students' individual education plans (IEPs). Keystone was the leader of this project years ago when it was developed through grant funds and has remained involved as fiscal agent. Today, over half of the special education students in Kansas use this web-based IEP system. Districts using this service can maintain their own files locally, or can purchase web-hosting services through Keystone. This responsibility is one of the reasons why Keystone requires the best, most reliable internet service. Teachers need to have access to students' records 24 hours a day and security and reliability must be first priority.

How does all this translate to dollars? These projects and others push over \$3 million annually through our service center budget. Of that, we take a small part to pay for the services we provide. That money is used to employ the staff who provide the teaching services, but this is a case where bigger is better. A strong business office, human resources, technology, and support staff all contribute to providing special education services. The revenue generated from the service center allows us to subsidize pay for those employees allowing us to work more efficiently and effectively.

The service center carries over a small amount at the end of each year and we are attempting to grow that amount each year. Several years ago, Keystone hired a full-time person to provide staff development. We knew it would take three or four years for this position to be able to pay for itself. Unfortunately, we took this step just as the economy was faltering and school district budgets were significantly cut. As districts were recovering from those cuts, one of the things they would have to minimize would be staff development, so we stopped this project.

Last year's carry-over in the service center fund was about \$350,000 and this year we are projecting around \$370,000. We believe that the extra we are able to save will give us the opportunity and privilege to be of even more benefit to our local schools and the state by giving us the flexibility to try new projects.

Dr. Tim Marshall, October 2013