

The Growth of English Learners in Rural Areas

Research on Challenges and Promising Practices in Schools

May 9, 2019

Webinar Goals

- To provide an overview of demographic changes in rural areas, particularly the increase of English learner (EL) populations.
- To review current research on the challenges that rural schools face in meeting the needs of ELs, including teacher development and family engagement.
- To highlight promising strategies identified in the research to help rural schools meet the needs of ELs.

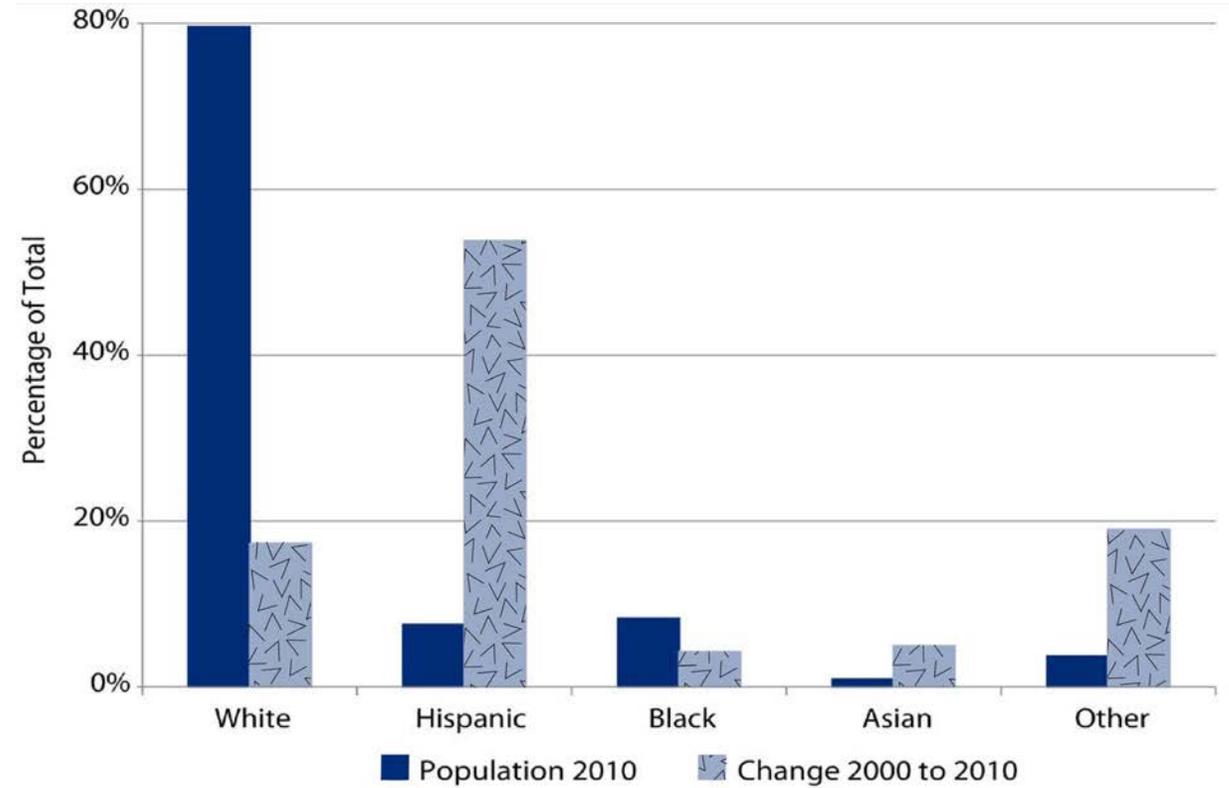
Presenters

- Douglas Gagnon
 - REL Central (facilitator)
- Douglas Van Dine
 - REL Central (webinar coordinator)
- Holly Hansen-Thomas
 - Professor and Program Coordinator of ESL and Bilingual Education, Texas Woman's University
- Maria Coady
 - Advanced Associate Professor of ESOL and Bilingual Education, University of Florida

Demographic Change in Rural America

- Between 2000 and 2010, the minority population accounted for 83 percent of the nonmetropolitan population gain, amounting to 1.8 million more minorities in rural areas as opposed to only 380,000 more white individuals (Johnson, 2012).

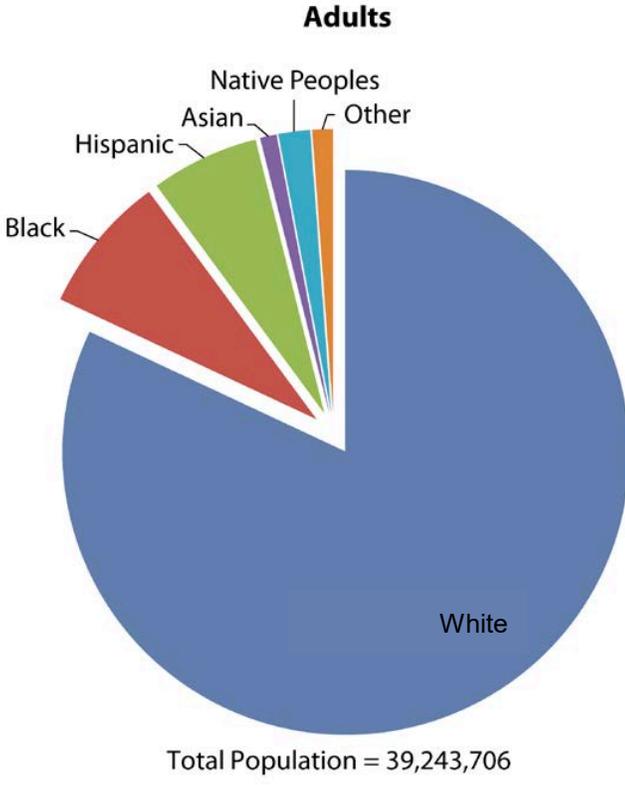
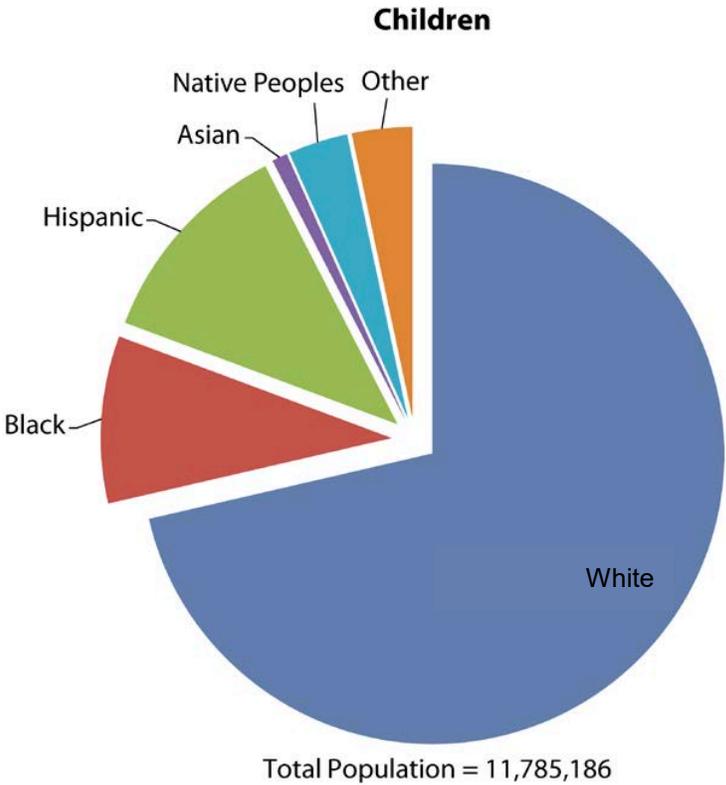
Percentage of nonmetropolitan population and population change by race and Hispanic origin, 2000 to 2010



Demographic Change in Rural America

- These changes are most pronounced in the child population.

Nonmetropolitan population by race and Hispanic origin, 2010



Demographic Change in Rural America

- Hispanic immigration has provided a demographic lifeline to many rural communities, countering trends of outmigration and natural decrease and providing an important economic engine (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2016).

Demographic Change in Rural America

- Hispanic immigration also creates challenges:
 - 71.6 percent of rural immigrants speak English well (Schaefer & Mattingly, 2012).
 - Many rural schools lack existing infrastructure for educating ELs, and, owing to size and remoteness, rural schools may find it more difficult to develop and sustain new supports.
 - Limited resources may compound these structural challenges: rural locales are more likely than metropolitan areas to experience higher rates of poverty, concentrated poverty, and intergenerational poverty (Mattingly, Johnson, & Schaefer, 2011).

Discussion

- Have you had experience with these demographic changes in your work with states in your region?
- Have your partners experienced any of these challenges?
- How are your partners working to address the needs of ELs in general? ELs in rural settings?

Meeting the Needs of Rural ELs

- The presenters will discuss the challenges faced by rural schools in meeting the needs of their EL populations, as well as some promising approaches to meeting these challenges.
- **Dr. Holly Hansen-Thomas** will focus on the role of the teacher.
- **Dr. Maria Coady** will examine family engagement.

ELs in Rural Settings

**Holly Hansen-Thomas,
PhD**

Teachers' needs, challenges,
and promising practices



Agenda

Definitions

Numbers

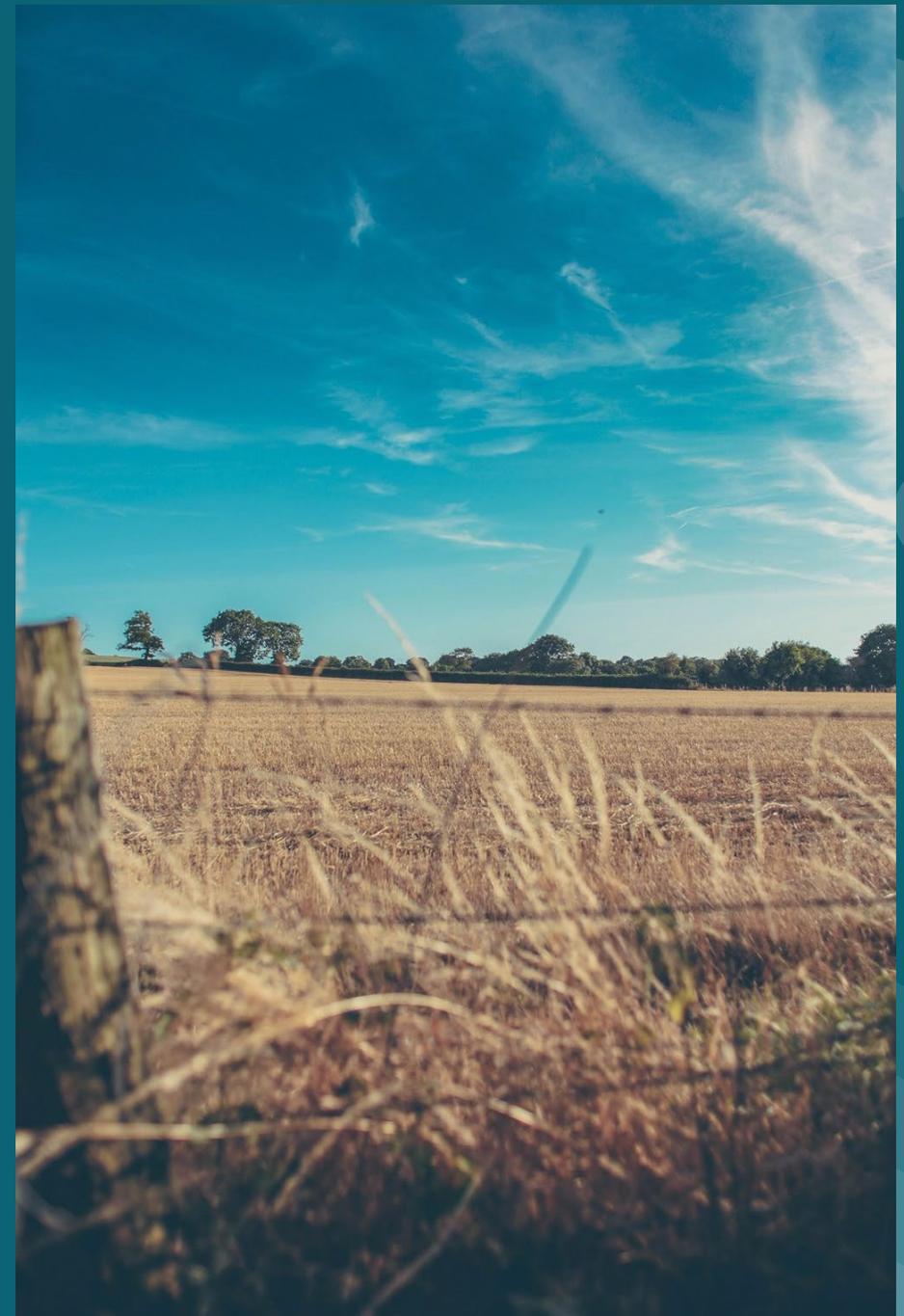
Who are ELs in rural areas?

What we know and what we don't know

Challenges

Highlighted studies

Going forward



Definitions

- Rural
 - Different rural designations:
 - fringe (5 miles or less to urban area)
 - distant (> 5, < 25 miles to urban area)
 - remote (> 25 miles to urban area)
- ELLs/ELs/EBs
 - English language learners
 - English learners
 - Emergent bilinguals
- Speak one or more non-English languages in the home

(NCES, 2006)

By the Numbers

- 10.4 percent of the 4.7 million identified ELs reside in rural settings, representing nearly 500,000 students (NCES, 2016)
- 2 percent of rural students were ELs (then classified as Limited English Proficient [LEP]) and had limited ability to “read, speak, write, or understand English” (Provasnik et al., 2007, p. 32). Today, the numbers are almost twice that.
- It is predicted that 1 in 4 public school students will be an EL by 2025 (NCELA, 2007).
- Dropout rates for ELs have increased and graduation decreased in some rural states, as ELs face social and educational challenges (Walker, 2012).

ELs in Rural Areas



Who Are ELs in Rural Areas?

- ELs in rural and small areas are a rapidly growing population.
- Families of workers in meat packing, dairy industries, ranching, and farming.
- Many are recent immigrants who generally have beginning proficiency in English.
- Rural areas are experiencing a rapid increase in racial and ethnic diversity of their students (Reed, 2010).

What We Know

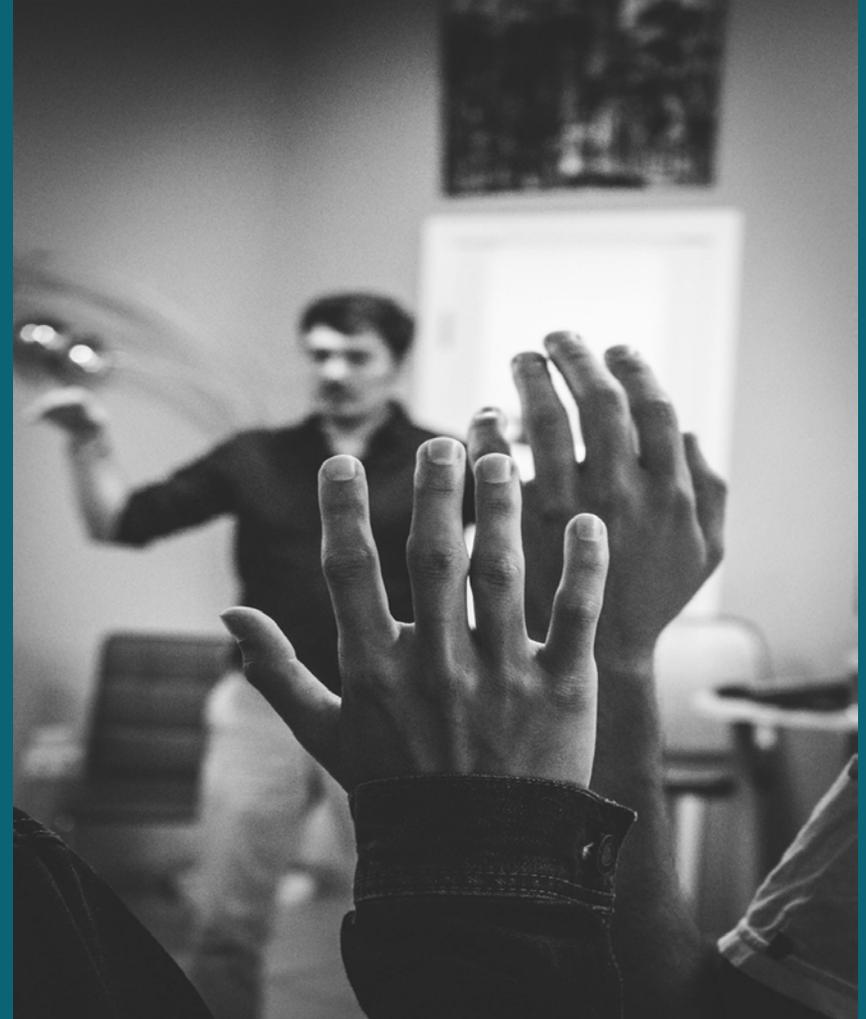
- Rural educators of ELs are less likely to use students' first language for language and literacy development (NCES, 2016; US ED, 2016).
- Rural high schools offer the lowest number of first language instructional programs or approaches to support ELs (NCES, 2016; US ED, 2016).
- The National Teacher and Principal Survey (US ED, 2016) provided data indicating that only 62.7 percent of ELs in rural settings participated in instruction specifically designed to address EL learning needs.

What We Know (cont.)

- Only 5 percent of rural U.S. high schools offered bilingual instruction in content classes for ELs versus 14 percent in urban ones (Lewis & Gray, 2016).
- Only 26 percent of rural high schools offered a bilingual paraprofessional whereas such supports were available at a rate of 55 percent in urban schools.
- Only 32 percent of rural high schools offered sheltered English instruction as compared to 81 percent in urban high schools (Lewis & Gray, 2016)

What We Don't Know

A lot!



What We Don't Know

Who are ELs in rural schools?

How are they doing in school?

How we can best serve
students and their teachers?



Challenges in Rural Schools (NREA, 2016)

- High poverty rates
- Transportation difficulties
- Lack of access to educational resources
- Dearth of certified ESL professionals
- Need for professional development for teachers and leadership

Research Helping to Address Challenges

- Study 1: ELs and Rural Teacher Preparation
- Study 2: ESL Mentoring for Secondary Teachers

Study 1: ELs and Rural Teacher Preparation*

- What is the experience and or preparation of teachers of ELs in rural areas?
- Is there a correlation between prior education, training, or experience with regard to the teachers' knowledge regarding ELs?
- What are the teachers' greatest challenges in their work with ELs?

*Hansen-Thomas, H., Grosso Richins L., Kakkar, K., & Okeyo, C. (2016). "I do not feel I am properly trained to help them!" Rural teachers' perceptions of challenges and needs with English language learners. *Professional Development in Education*, 42(2), 308–324.

Teacher Findings – Quantitative

Frequencies:

- 77 percent had less than 10 percent ELs in their classes.
- 15 percent had no ESL training.
- 50 percent were ESL certified.

Regarding Competencies:

- 25 percent indicated lacking knowledge in literacy strategies for ELs.
- 28 percent perceived themselves as *not at all competent* at understanding ESL assessments.
- 25 percent believed they lacked the ability to understand and interpret ESL-related research.
- 33 percent indicated lack of knowledge in historical, theoretical, and policy foundations of ESL.

Findings – Competencies vs. ESL Training

Teachers with two or more college courses:

- Perceived themselves as effective in applying instructional methods and teaching strategies in ESL.
- Perceived themselves as efficient in helping students transfer their knowledge from L1 to L2 and, thus, facilitating ESL students' cognitive academic language development and content area learning effectively.
- Understood the cultural and language diversity seen in the ESL classroom better than those who did not have ESL training.

Findings – Qualitative

The greatest challenges for EL teachers:

- Lack of academic vocabulary
- Communication issues with students and parents
- Lack of time

Training Is Key!

- EL teachers feel inadequately trained to serve ELs.

Findings – Discussion & Conclusions

What does this mean?

- Teachers who have inadequate preparation indicate wanting and needing professional development.
- There is some consensus with regard to rural teachers' needs in their work with ELs; this can facilitate our crafting of specialized training for these teachers.
- Teachers whose certification was obtained only by examination lack skills.
- Rural teachers want to have a grounding in Spanish to help them communicate with their students.

Study 2: ESL Mentoring for Secondary Teachers

- Mentoring program between science and math teachers with ESL professional development training and teachers who teach ELs but who had not had professional development.
- 16 teachers had biweekly meetings with peers.
- Peer mentoring focused on collaboration, dialogue, and reflection.
- The predominant model of collaboration was co-mentoring or co-learning.
 - Reciprocal learning
- Teachers worked together to identify “our” students’ struggles.
 - Poverty
 - Racism among students and staff
 - Monolingualism and monoculturalism
 - Paucity of trained teachers

Findings

Misidentification of ELs in school

- “We never even considered that our ELLs might be misidentified in their proficiency levels of English language development.” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 770).

First language maintenance

- “We definitely believe preserving their primary language is always going to be a good practice to uphold. We are not as sure about how to help aid . . . due to limited . . . bilingual teachers” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 770).

Findings (cont.)

Technology is important

- “Using technology helps us differentiate instruction according to our ELs’ academic needs” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 770).

Integrate language objectives

- “We are both aware how important it is for students to understand what and why they are doing, which is the reason we write our objectives for them in language they will understand” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 771).

Findings (cont.)

Identity shifts and lessons learned

- Teachers gained knowledge to share:
 - “After everything that I have learned from the courses so far, I feel fully equipped to successfully teach ELLs and to mentor other teachers” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 772).
 - “Working with a mentee has made me understand that just because I am a younger, less experienced teachers doesn’t mean I don’t have knowledge to share. I also understand I don’t have all of the answers” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 772).
 - “Since being part of this program, I think the thought that haunts me most is: Ignorance is bliss. Now I have turned the corner and I can’t be ignorant about the expectations for the ELL students, and from that comes the necessity to use the knowledge I have gained to be proactive about moving forward as a teacher and taking my rural district with me!” (Hansen-Thomas & Grosso Richins, 2015, p. 773).

Issues in the Research and the Field

- Necessary to build capacity to meet the needs of diverse and special populations in “isolated, understaffed, and overwhelmed” areas (Lee & Hawkins, 2015)
- Local contexts of reception
- Discourses of illegality and racism; deficit perspectives
- ELs low priority for district administration funding
- Low income literacy development
- Access to professional development
- Comprehension of families’ challenges
- Family engagement

Going Forward



Questions?

Connecting School and the Multilingual Home

Theory and Practice for
Rural Educators

Maria R. Coady



Engaging Rural Multilingual Families

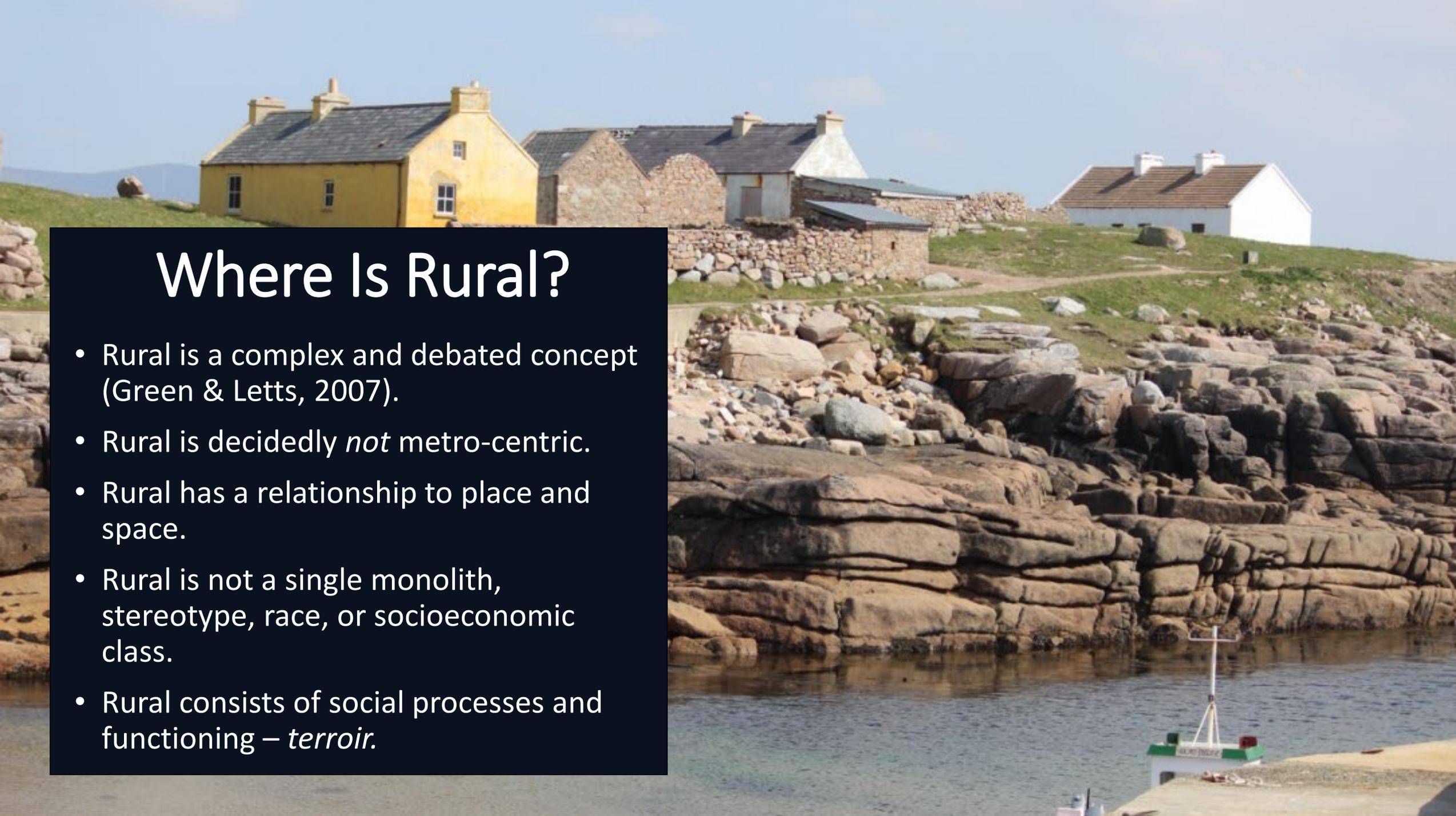
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Where Is Rural?

- Rural is a complex and debated concept (Green & Letts, 2007).
- Rural is decidedly *not* metro-centric.
- Rural has a relationship to place and space.
- Rural is not a single monolith, stereotype, race, or socioeconomic class.
- Rural consists of social processes and functioning – *terroir*.

Who Are Multilingual Families?

- Multilingual families speak two or more languages in the home and/or community.
- In the United States, multilingual families may be immigrant, refugee, or nonimmigrant U.S. born.
- Multilingual families have knowledge of languages, cultural roles and views, funds of knowledge that might differ from mainstream languages, cultures, and knowledge.

Factors Affecting Multilingual Families

Distance is a factor in family *physical access* to schools (place).

Language is a factor in multilingual family *communication access* to monolingual schools (language).

Culture is a factor in *family orientation* to school, and educator and family roles and responsibilities (culture).

What Educators and Multilingual Families Say About Home–School Communication in Rural Settings

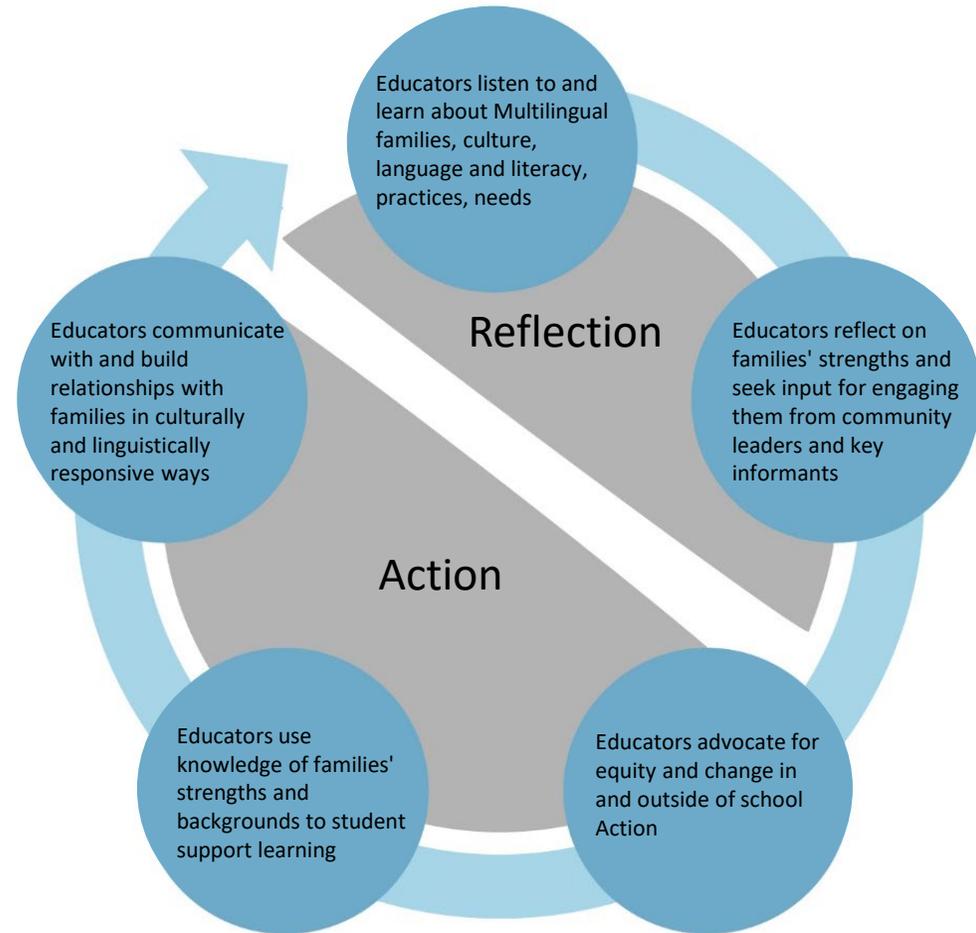
Challenges educators face:

- Language and culture barriers, earning family trust.
- Fear of the school environment and a sense of inability to help their children.
- Fear of deportation (for undocumented families).
- Predetermined misconceptions of one another and language barriers.
- Lack of interpreters.

Challenges families face:

- Difficulty supporting children’s education.
- Feeling safe (including immigration).
- Not being able to communicate with people in a new community.
- Trust.
- Providing essentials (food, clothes, and medical).
- Lack of transportation, stable jobs, money.

Five Components of Rural Multilingual Family Engagement



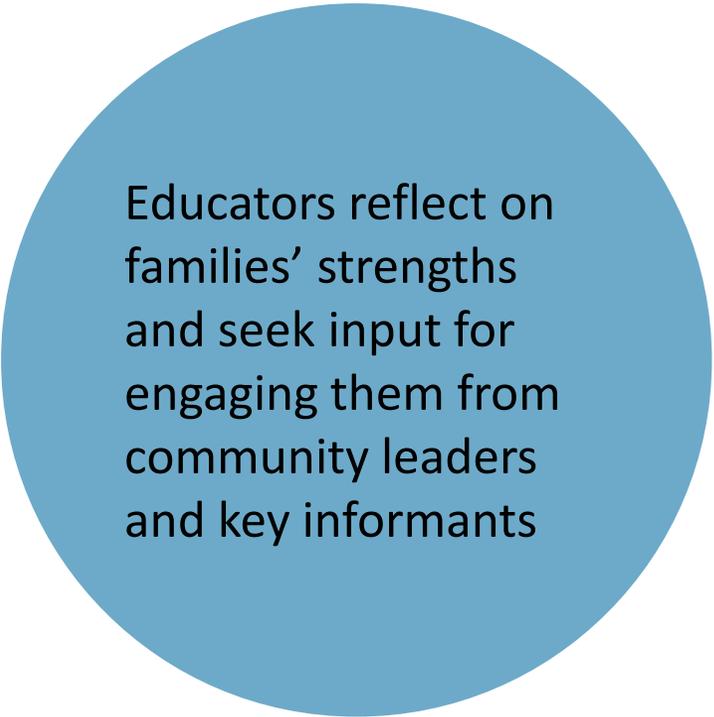
Educators Learn About Families' Languages, Cultures, and Stories

Educators listen to and learn about multilingual families, culture, language and literacy, practices, needs

What do families in rural settings say that they need?

- Support for immigration.
- Understanding of how schools work and who families can talk and network with.
- Building relationships and trust.

Educators Reflect on Families' Strengths and Resources and Seek Community Input



Educators reflect on families' strengths and seek input for engaging them from community leaders and key informants

ACTIVITY: Who is Who in My Child's School

Quién es quien en la escuela de mi hijo/a

Director(a) – la persona encargada de la escuela, el/la líder

Director or Principal – the person in charge of the school, the school leader

Name/Nombre _____

Director(a) Asistente Subdirector(a)* – la persona encargada—en general—del comportamiento de los alumnos

Assistant Director or Vice Principal – the person sometimes in charge of student behavior in school

Name/Nombre _____

Asistente bilingüe – una persona bilingüe que ayuda a el/la maestro(a)

Bilingual aide – a bilingual person or classroom aide who helps the teacher

Name/Nombre _____

Educators Communicate and Build Relationships with Families in Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Ways

- *Fotonovelas* that are culturally and linguistically responsive materials.
- Adult ESL nights held at church and school media centers with teacher and bilingual aides.
- Building a “Little Free Library” of bilingual books made available freely and located in front of a church.



Educators Use Knowledge of Families' Strengths and Backgrounds to Support Student Learning

- Strength of languages and culture, trans-border communication
- Family as resource
- Social networking
- “Funds of knowledge”
- Knowledge of labor communities, agriculture, food, fishing, and livestock

La Guía 

de Servicios Médicos y Sociales para el Condado de Levy

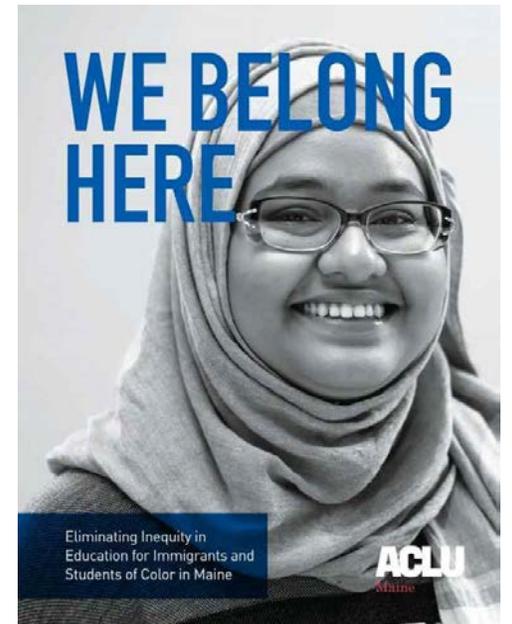
 = Este símbolo indica que se habla español.

Servicio de emergencia	Horario	Información Adicional
Emergency Dial 9-1-1 Se Habla español 	24 horas al día	• En caso de cualquier emergencia o incendio, marque 9-1-1
Levy County Sheriff's Office 9150 NE 80th Ave. Browns, FL 32621 Emergencia 9-1-1 Non-Emergencia (352) 486-5111 Se Habla español 	24 horas al día	• En caso de emergencia, marque 9-1-1. • Marque (352) 486-5111 para reportar un crimen o actividad sospechosa.
Detección Broward (352) 486-5122 Se Habla español 		• Ofrece asistencia, consejería y referencias para víctimas de violencia y/o abuso a otras instituciones que prestan servicios. Los servicios son gratis. • Ofrece servicios de toma de huellas digitales los lunes a viernes entre las 12pm y 4:30pm. Cuenta cinco dólares en efectivo y sólo se aceptará la cantidad exacta. • Se necesita una identificación de la Florida. • ¿QUÉ? Para recibir servicios de apoyo, la persona necesita reportar el crimen a las autoridades.
Levy County Department of Public Safety 1251 NE County Road 343 Browns, FL 32621 Emergencia 9-1-1 (352) 486-5289	Servicio de emergencia: 24 horas al día Horario de Oficina: Lunes - viernes 8AM-4:30PM	• Responde a incendios, emergencias médicas y accidentes vehiculares. • Ofrece transporte ambulatorio.
Levy County Sheriff's Office Victim Services PO Box 1719 Browns, FL 32621 (352) 486-5811, Frecuencia 273 O (800) 538-9767, Frecuencia 273 Se Habla español 	24 horas al día	• Ofrece ayuda a víctimas de violencia y abuso. • Un empleado de esta institución puede acompañar a la primera comparecencia en corte de la víctima o ir en su lugar. • Estos servicios son gratuitos y no requieren identificación.

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Educators Advocate for Equity and Change in and out of School

- Strategizing and coalition-building with community agencies (**Rural Women's Health Project**) to address family needs and build sustainable social structures.
- **Parent manifesto**, for example, in which each school generates a vision for multilingual family engagement, a statement in multiple languages, and action steps for faculty and staff. ACLU (Maine)



Praxis: Reflection and Action

- Examine how your school functions in rural settings.
 - Is your school a community center? A venue for health care services? Address food security?
- Check assumptions and challenge traditional practices related to family engagement.
 - Research shows that ongoing home conversations about education have a stronger effect on student learning than parents attending school events.
- Examine how families function in rural spaces.
 - What do families do? Need? Contribute? What are their languages? Literacies? Mediums of communication?



The One-Task Challenge

Essential Question: How does my school reflect linguistic diversity and welcome multilingual families?

Activity

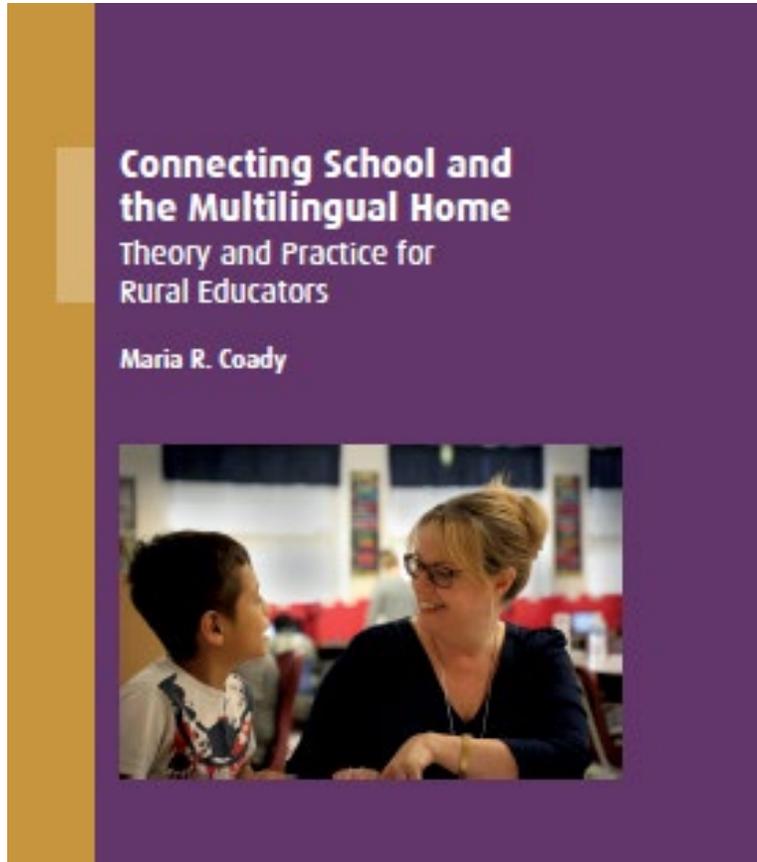
Take a field trip in your school. Start your field trip at the approach to the school. What do you notice? Are signs and information given in languages that parents speak? If parents are non-literate in the home languages, what symbols and icons represent the school, directions for entering the school, and arrows or other symbols for entering?

Draw a map as you walk from the road into the school area. Highlight areas of the school entrance where you might create symbols or multilingual signs to assist families in finding the school office. Once they arrive at the front office door, what are they expected to do? Who greets them and how? What languages and school images are families exposed to right away, upon initial entry into the school?

Finally, what role does the school front desk administrator play in welcoming families to school? Does the school staff have materials, including an oral or multilingual script, that they can point to or say when families arrive? If a new rural multilingual family enters the school and does not speak the school language or language of the staff, how are interpreters accessed or appointments made for when families return?

End with a list of suggestions of two items you can produce, translate, or change that will help rural multilingual families access the school and make them feel welcome and supported in their languages and cultures.

Questions, Comments, and Resources



- Coady, M. R. (2019). *Connecting school and the multilingual home: Theory and practice for rural educators*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Colorín Colorado (online) guide of 20 strategies: http://www.colorincolorado.org/sites/default/files/Engaging_ELL_Families_FINAL.pdf
- WIDA's *ABCs of Family Engagement*: <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/ABCs-Family-Engagement.pdf>

Closing

- Availability of webinar materials.
- Stakeholder feedback survey.

Thank You

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