Welcome to

Improving Outcomes for Students in Rural Areas: The Promise and Challenge of Educator Networks

The webinar will begin promptly at 1:00 PT/4:00 ET

The webinar will begin soon. While you wait, please share the following in the chat box: your name, role, organization, and location.
Improving Outcomes for Students in Rural Areas

The Promise and Challenge of Educator Networks
Today’s facilitator

Nettie Legters
REL Northwest
About REL Northwest

Regional educational laboratories (RELs) partner with practitioners and policymakers to use data and evidence to help solve educational problems that impede student success. We do this by:

- Conducting rigorous research and data analysis
- Delivering customized training, coaching, and technical support
- Providing engaging learning opportunities
Poll question: Who’s in the room today?

a) State education agency staff member  
b) Teacher  
c) School administrator  
d) University staff/faculty member  
e) Other
Agenda

1. Welcome and research overview
2. Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) Network
3. Vermont Rural Partnership
4. Ohio Appalachian Collaborative
5. Final comments
6. Close
Today’s speakers

Danette Parsley
NW RISE Network at Education Northwest

Karen Martin
Denali Borough School District

Margaret MacLean
Vermont Rural Partnership

Brad Mitchell
Ohio Appalachian Collaborative
Session goals

• Learn about common challenges rural school systems face and how educator networks can help address them

• Increase understanding of rural educator networks as a strategy to improve college and career readiness outcomes

• Explore strengths and challenges of a network approach to improving education in rural areas
Understanding rural education in the U.S.

- More than 40 percent of all schools and nearly half of all school districts are rural.
- Close to a third of all students attend rural schools.

Understanding rural education in the U.S.

- 25 percent of rural students live in poverty

- It is not uncommon for child poverty to exceed 50 percent in rural areas across the U.S.
Student populations in rural communities are changing

- The number of rural students has increased by 4 million since 1999
- 83 percent of this growth is from racial and ethnic minority populations
Use the Chat feature:

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing rural educators?
Rural educators face specific challenges

• Poor infrastructure
  • For example, inadequate and unreliable Internet access

• Human capital shortage
  • Individuals wear many hats

• Few opportunities for professional development and collaboration
  • "I'm a PLC of one"
What response is needed for rural schools and students to thrive?
Education change networks

• Networks can improve student achievement
• Studies of education networks in rural areas primarily done in other countries
• Research on rural education networks, or collaboratives, in the United States is emerging

Rural education collaboratives (RECs): A growing conversation

What are RECs?

• Two or more rural school districts with a shared commitment to a common purpose
• Visible, active, established, and organized
• Focus on improving practice by pursuing real solutions that create value for rural students
• Clear about intended outcomes and metrics
• A peer-to-peer learning network—not just a service organization
What is the status of RECs in the U.S.?

How many are there, where are they, what do they do, how are they organized, and what outcomes do they report?

**Method:** Web search, document review, and short phone and email interviews

**Product:** Database with descriptive information on the membership, organization, and reported outcomes
REC strategies

- Resource sharing
- Advocacy
- Curriculum design
- Scaling up programs and best practices
- Preparing students for college and career
- Holistic/comprehensive approach combining all of the above
In addition to the national field scan, we conducted four REC case studies

• Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) Network
• Ohio Appalachian Collaborative
• Vermont Rural Partnership
• Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium

Method: Document review, phone and in-person interviews, and direct observation of collaborative activities

Battelle for Kids. (2016). *Generating opportunity and prosperity: The promise of rural education collaboratives*
Danette Parsley
Education Northwest

Karen Martin
Denali Borough School District
The Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) Network convenes teachers and leaders from some of the Northwest’s most isolated and remote communities to learn from one another, share strategies to meet their unique challenges, and spread best practices of the region’s rural schools.
Four states, 32 sites
NW RISE’s premise

Challenge: Rural educators have limited opportunities to collaborate with role-alike peers to improve practice

Network Educators
- Routine communication and collaboration
- Resource sharing (ideas, strategies, and tools)
- Collaboration on joint projects in job-alike groups

Professional Capital
- More connected and know where to turn for support

Social Capital

Human Capital
- Increased access to knowledge, strategies, and tools

Decisional Capital
- Increased use of knowledge, strategies, and tools

Changed Practice

Improved Outcomes
- Teacher/administrator efficacy and retention
- Student motivation, engagement, and community attachment
- Student achievement and attainment
Growing professional capital

Social capital is higher for members who participate in NW RISE events and job-alike groups.

Survey participants who attended a NW RISE event and participated in a job alike group (N = 61)

Mean for "Teacher Social Capital": 3.4

All other participants (N = 84)

Mean for "Teacher Social Capital": 3.1
In the same way that research shows that students should learn to take control of their own learning, NW RISE engages educators in taking the same responsibility and running with it.

I feel completely invested in the work because it comes from my interests and desires for PD.

It opened up my world. I’ve been isolated for so many years.

I am more positive and feel like I can solve issues as they arise, whereas I would have just shrugged my shoulders before.

I do feel that there is a network now of like professionals that I can rely on for ideas, guidance, and general support.
Video Study

Video of students at work in each teacher’s own classroom launches authentic professional discussions about student learning.

Secondary math
Student problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and perseverance skills

High school English language arts
Lyric analysis and informal argumentative writing

Special education
Student self-advocacy and self-determination

“Job-alike group activities are self-formed, so the work is very specific to the group’s needs.” – NW RISE member
Student-to-student collaboration and connection

• Connections with students across the Northwest to extend learning beyond the walls of our classrooms

• Enhanced cognitive and emotional engagement to learning experiences

• Authentic audiences to share learning, thinking, and products
Teacher-to-teacher collaboration and connection

• Connecting with passionate educators sharing problems of practice that resonate across contexts

• Strengthening expertise by sharing knowledge, as well as pedagogical thinking and practices

• Increasing collective efficacy outside the walls of school buildings
Learn more

Website and video
http://nwcc.educationnorthwest.org/nw-rise-network

Research
Peabody Journal of Education article
http://bit.ly/2tr1gnt
Case study

Blogs
Shanker Institute
http://bit.ly/2uDiMEm
Education Northwest
http://bit.ly/2tHg5h3

Twitter
@NWCompCenter
#NWRISE

Visit
Check out the next NWRISE convening!
Post Falls, Idaho
(November 9-10, 2017)
Got a question?

Use the Q&A feature in the bottom right corner of the screen. Please ask “All Panelists.”
Vermont Rural Partnership

Margaret MacLean
Established in 1996, 36 member schools, 5,000 students PK-12

- Has leveraged over $5 million and distributed it to schools within that time frame from multiple sources

- Promotes student voice, engagement, and leadership

- Supports the development of authentic, place-based learning

- Develops strong school-community connections and collaboration

- Tells our stories though assessment and documentation of the impact of our work
Activities and benefits

Annual cycle of activities tied to the seasons
• Fall: Principal retreat and meeting of grant teams
• Winter: Mini-grant development and peer-review process
• Spring: Annual conference

Additional optional opportunities offered annually

Benefits: Mini-grants for teachers, networking, role-alike groups, support

Example of a mini-grant: Quebec bread ovens
Lessons learned

• Place-based projects and curriculum build academic and applied learning skills
• Building ownership on multiple levels is important
• Staying connected is essential; we have a monthly electronic newsletter
• Consider the immediate concerns or issues schools face and connect people with resources and one another to solve them
• Create “buddy schools” to promote more localized, cross-school collaboration when initiating similar projects
Got a question?

Use the Q&A feature in the bottom right corner of the screen. Please ask “All Panelists.”
The three P’s of RECs

Place-based

Peer-based

Pedagogical-based
Established in 2010 with 21 rural districts

Expanded in 2013 to serve 27 rural districts, impacting:

- 98 school buildings
- 3,200 teachers
- 48,000 students—52 percent living in poverty
The OAC’s current focus

- Shared dual-enrollment system
- Personalized learning pathways for grades 6-12
- Shared professional learning community for educators

Focused on:

- Arts & Communications
- Business & Entrepreneurship
- Health & Human Services
- Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM)
Three “duh” lessons

• Lasting change comes from within
• Each participant gets more than they give
• Trust is the currency that matters most
Rural challenges

**LEAD**
Change the rural opportunity and prosperity mindset from a deficit to an investment perspective.

**SERVE**
Secure resources to connect and develop rural education collaboratives and networks.

**INNOVATE**
Solve critical rural challenges related to:
- Educator shortages
- Dual enrollment
- Personalized learning
- Learning productivity
- ESSA implementation

**CONNECT**
Make the annual Rural Education National Forum a 24/7 platform to connect rural collaboratives, leaders, and initiatives.
Got a question?

Use the Q&A feature in the bottom right corner of the screen. Please ask “All Panelists.”
Thank you for participating!

Learn more

• NW RISE Network:
  nwcc.educationnorthwest.org/nw-rise

• Vermont Rural Partnership:
  communityworksinstitute.org/vrp

• Ohio Appalachian Collaborative:
  battelleforkids.org/OAC

Contact Nettie Legters at
Nettie.Legters@educationnorthwest.org
for information about the research evidence.

We will notify you via email when a recording of this webinar is available.