



NATIONAL FORUM TO
ADVANCE RURAL EDUCATION

PROGRAM

The Nation's Premier Rural Education Conference

October 13-15, 2025 • Salt Lake City, Utah



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Nestled between the majestic Wasatch Mountains and the serene Great Salt Lake, Salt Lake City offers a captivating blend of natural beauty and sophistication. As you attend the conference, seize the opportunity to explore a city where outdoor adventure and cultural experiences abound. Immerse yourself in the rich history of Temple Square, delve into the wonders of the Natural History Museum of Utah, or stroll through the vibrant streets of downtown, where eclectic shops and diverse culinary delights await. For the outdoor enthusiast, the nearby canyons provide exceptional hiking and biking trails, while the Great Salt Lake invites you to witness breathtaking sunsets and unique landscapes. Whether you're seeking exhilarating recreation or enriching cultural attractions, Salt Lake City promises an unforgettable experience that extends well beyond the conference halls.

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NATIONAL RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NREA) is the voice of all rural schools and rural communities across the United States. NREA was originally founded as the Department of Rural Education in 1907. It is the oldest established national organization of its kind in the United States. Through the years it has evolved as a strong and respected organization of rural school administrators, teachers, board members, regional service agency personnel, researchers, business and industry representatives, and others interested in maintaining the vitality of rural school systems across the country. Learn more at nrea.net.

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MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

This year's event isn't just about sessions and keynotes—it's packed with can't-miss moments designed to help you connect, recharge, and celebrate.

Come early, stay late, and say yes to every opportunity!

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES



Welcome Party

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12 • 4:30-6 P.M. • LEVEL 2

Meet fellow attendees, grab a drink, and set the tone for an unforgettable week.

Sponsored by:  **eDynamic Learning**

Networking Lunch

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14 • 11:45 A.M.-1 P.M.

SALT LAKE BALLROOM • LEVEL 2

No formal program or speaker—just a relaxed space to eat lunch (provided), spark conversations, and build new relationships over a meal.

Attendee Reception

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14 • 4:30-6 P.M. • LEVEL 2

Mix, mingle, and toast to a great conference with snacks, drinks, music, and plenty of conversation.

Sponsored by: 

Breakfast & Networking

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 7:30-8:30 A.M. • LEVEL 2

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 8-9 A.M. • LEVEL 2

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 8-9 A.M. • LEVEL 2

OTHER ATTENDEE EXPERIENCES



Free Souvenir Photo

LEVEL 2

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Charging Stations

LEVEL 2

Sponsored by: 

Quiet Room

BROADCAST LOUNGE • LEVEL 4

Recharge in a calm, phone-free space.

Service Project

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 7:30-8:30 A.M. • LEVEL 2

Join conference attendees to participate in a service project benefiting the YMCA of Northern Utah.

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LEGO Build the Change

LEVEL 2

Create a solution to transform a schoolyard into a green space that supports play, learning, and nature, and let your imagination run free as you design climate-resilient schools of the future.

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SCHEDULE

Sunday, October 12

4:30-6 p.m. Early Registration & Welcome Party, Sponsored by:  **eDynamic Learning**
Level 2

Monday, October 13

7:30-8:30 a.m. Registration, Breakfast & Networking
Level 2

8:30-10 a.m. General Session: Opening Remarks & Keynote: Dr. Rick Rigsby
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2, Sponsored by:  **eDynamic Learning**

10:15-11 a.m. Learning Sessions

11:15 a.m.-12 p.m. Learning Sessions

12-12:30 p.m. Lunch (provided)
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2

12:30-2 p.m. NREA Awards & 2025 Rural Teacher of the Year, Sponsored by:  **Discovery Education**
General Session: *Why Rural Matters* Report Launch
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2

2:15-3 p.m. Learning Sessions

3:15-4 p.m. Learning Sessions

4:15-5 p.m. Learning Sessions

Tuesday, October 14

7:30-8:30 a.m. Service Project, Sponsored by:  **WGU**
Level 2

8-9 a.m. Breakfast & Networking
Level 2

9-9:45 a.m. Learning Sessions

10-10:45 a.m. Learning Sessions

11-11:45 a.m. Learning Sessions

11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Networking Lunch (provided)
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2

1:15-2 p.m. Learning Sessions

2:15-3 p.m. Learning Sessions

3:15-4:30 p.m. General Session & Keynote: Cassandra Worthy
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2

4:30-6 p.m. Attendee Reception, Sponsored by:  **T-Mobile**
Level 2

Wednesday, October 15

8-9 a.m. Breakfast & Networking
Level 2

9 a.m.-12 p.m. AI Summit, Sponsored by:  **aiEDU**
The AI Education Project
Salt Lake Ballroom, Level 2

EXHIBITORS • LEVEL 2

1. **T Mobile**

2. **MAGiC SCHOOL**

3. **Discovery EDUCATION**

4. **STiX**

5. **Partners for Rural Impact**

6. **schoolai**

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13. **ADVANTAGES ASSIST**

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15. **CollegeBoard**

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20. **CDW Education**

21. **CW-FIT**
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MORE TIME TO TEACH TO LEARN
cwfit.ku.edu

22. **incidentIQ**

23. **National UNIVERSITY**

24. **PROJECT RAISE**
SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN TENNESSEE SCHOOLS

25. **BYU Independent Study**

26. **eDynamic Learning**

27. **OPTERRA ENERGY SERVICES**

28. **SADD**
Students against destructive decisions

29. **RURAL SCHOOLS COLLABORATIVE**

30. **INREA FOUNDATION**
THE NATIONAL RURAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

31. **flow forms**

32. **Ribbit**
www.ribbonlearning.com

33. **StoryBook TREASURES**
Putting Books in the Hands of Children

34. **School Specialty**

35. **The Daily Mile**

36. **DataScience4 everyone**

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

GENERAL SESSION • SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

8:30-9 A.M. OPENING REMARKS

9-10 A.M. KEYNOTE



DR. RICK RIGSBY

President & CEO Rick Rigsby Communications, Motivational Speaker
& Best-Selling Author

Keynote: Making an Impact

We live in an era of astonishing technology, instant information and rampant social networking. Despite the epidemic advances that ushered in a new millennium, cultural critics argue that society has never been more shallow in communication and more superficial in appearance. In fact, Dr. Rick Rigsby argues that for many organizations, appearance—or what he refers to as impression—has become the new corporate wardrobe. We invite you to rediscover what is really important and meaningful—not only in your professional career but in your personal life as well. Join Dr. Rigsby as he shares the wisdom of past generations—wisdom that will inspire, motivate and empower you to make an impact rather than an impression!

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10:15–11 A.M.

PARTNERS IN GROWTH: ELEVATING TEACHING THROUGH PEER COLLABORATION

Presenters: Chad Warnick, 2023 Utah Teacher of the Year, Millard School District; Kimberly Radostits, 2022 IL Teacher of the Year, Oregon CUSD 220

Room: Alta (Level 3)

How can we create a culture where teachers feel supported, valued, and continuously grow in their practice? Explore structured peer-to-peer collaboration models that foster professional growth through classroom visits, meaningful feedback, and shared reflection. Learn how to implement a Partners in Growth program that strengthens instructional excellence, builds trust among colleagues, and enhances student outcomes. Walk away with practical strategies to build a sustainable, relationship-driven approach to professional development—one that empowers teachers to thrive together.

FROM ADMINISTRATION TO INSPIRATION: USING AI TO REFOCUS EDUCATOR TIME

Presenters: Jacob Kantor, JK K12; Melissa Sadorf, National Rural Education Association; Erin Lair, Oregon Department of Education; Mike Conner, Agie Evolutionary Group

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Discover and test-drive practical AI tools designed to reclaim precious teaching time. Learn how to implement ready-to-use AI solutions for automating routine tasks like grading, feedback generation, and administrative paperwork. Explore how these tools integrate seamlessly into existing workflows, providing real-world examples of time savings achieved in diverse classroom settings. Leave with a personalized toolkit of AI resources matched to specific pain points, along with implementation strategies and ethical guidelines for responsible use.

BRIDGING THE GAP: CONNECTING RURAL MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Presenters: Elizabeth O'Brien, Amanda Hardin, and Nick Frazier, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Rural communities face unique challenges in accessing mental health care, but strategic partnerships can bridge service gaps. Learn skills to conduct a comprehensive community resource assessment, identifying key stakeholders and areas of unmet needs. Explore best practices for developing collaborative strategies with local organizations, schools, healthcare providers, and first responders. Leave with practical tools for mapping resources and building meaningful partnerships that improve mental health outcomes in rural settings.

REDISCOVERING THE JOY OF TEACHING: STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATOR WELL-BEING AND RETENTION

Presenters: Anne Brown and Paul Richins, The Cook Center for Human Connection

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

Teaching has never been more challenging, and burnout is forcing talented educators out of the profession at alarming rates. Exit surveys reveal that 43% of departing teachers cite emotional exhaustion as a major influence in their decision to leave, while many report a lack of support, overwhelming workloads, and job-specific stressors. Teachers are not just leaving their jobs—they are leaving a calling they once loved. Learn strategies to support educators with the tools to prioritize their mental health, find balance, and rediscover the joy of teaching. Explore practical, real-world solutions, including teacher coaching, mental health resources, and strategies for systemic change, to help educators stay in the classroom and thrive.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10:15-11 A.M.

STAY CALM, STAY CONNECTED: NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS WITH ADULTS

Presenter: Erika Bare, South Umpqua School District

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

So much of an educator's job success depends on the strength of their communication. Learn how to sharpen your communication skills, explore tools to manage difficult discussions, and equip yourself to navigate the toughest conversations with confidence. Explore how to stay calm and help others catch that calm when tensions rise, de-escalate potentially explosive situations, prevent conflicts from escalating in the first place, and strengthen relationships and foster connections in divisive times. Learn practical and essential strategies today that you can use tomorrow—immediately improving your communication and leadership skills!

HIGH-QUALITY INTERNSHIPS TO ADVANCE RURAL SCHOOL STAFF PIPELINES

Presenter: Brittany Cashman, Randolph School District/Wisconsin's Well Be's Consortium

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

With national staffing shortages, schools are struggling to maintain their greatest assets, particularly in specialized areas. Our six-district consortium, located in rural south-central Wisconsin, is a recipient of the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant. We recruit, hire, and train graduate school counselor students through paid internships. Learn about our project, including the implementation of high-quality onboarding and training plans (recruiting methods, contracts, professional development, ongoing coaching), how interns support the work of school-based mental health plans, and tips for working with university and community partners. Take away ready-to-use insight and resources specific to rural communities that you can implement no matter your size or budget.

COLORADO FOUR-DAY WEEKS: RURAL SCHOOLS BEATING THE ODDS

Presenters: Christina North, Greg Nusz, and Zack Allen, Colorado Department of Education

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

In a state where a majority of rural districts operate on four-day school week, there are bright spots in implementation that are opening opportunities for students to beat the odds. During the session, we will share strategies and practices from districts who are outperforming state trends in student attendance, teacher turnover, and ELA and Math outcomes.

STRATEGIES TO BUILD RURAL GROW YOUR OWN TEACHER PATHWAYS

Presenters: Tawnya Lubbes and Kristin Johnson, Eastern Oregon University

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Learn how partnerships enabled the creation of a decade-long grow-your-own teacher pathway. Presenters will discuss how the program aims to build the teaching workforce and better meet the needs of students in rural schools. We will review current research and reflections from an established grow-your-own teacher program and share mechanisms that can be integrated to foster preservice teacher recruitment, retention, and development from high school through college, and into the first years of teaching. Promising practices gathered from participant and partner feedback will be highlighted, and we will explore how you can replicate this program through potential partnerships and programming to meet the needs of your rural community.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10:15-11 A.M.

REIMAGINING AND REVITALIZING RURAL EDUCATION: PATHWAYS AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RURAL RESILIENCE

Presenters: Todd Dugan, Bunker Hill CUSD #8; Scott Doer, Nokomish CUSD #22

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Delve into innovative approaches to rural education that can transform student outcomes and community vitality. Two rural school leaders will share insights on integrating technology, fostering local partnerships, and tailoring curricula to meet unique rural needs. Explore how reimagining education can create a foundation for economic growth, social cohesion, and enhanced opportunities for students and residents. Gain practical strategies to implement in your own communities.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR YOUR DISTRICT

Presenter: Elise Swanson, National Center for Rural Education Research Networks

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

Looking for strategies to support rural K-12 students' college and career readiness and transition? Learn more about the Rural Postsecondary Research Clearinghouse, a free, comprehensive resource developed by the National Center for Rural Education Research Networks (NCRERN) that compiles what we know about strategies to improve rural students' postsecondary readiness, access, and success. Learn how to navigate the Clearinghouse to identify interventions poised to meet your needs and explore implementation considerations to develop an action plan for change. Through guided activities, leave with tools and concrete actions that can improve college and career transitions for rural students across contexts.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

Presenter: Marisol Ruiz, New Mexico Highlands

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

Participatory action research is an excellent research tool to help transform communities to be responsive and sustain culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and/or transform institutional policies and practices that respond to the needs of diverse communities. PAR informs a collaborative inquiry process, which includes critical dialogue and reflection, as well as celebration, to generate group learning. Critical dialogue and reflection will make room for diverse experiences and methods to help avoid assumptions, check the validity of our methods, and allow us to question dominant values. Celebration of collective labor will ensure investment and validation among research design participants. PAR pushes us to take collective action to critically respond to community needs.

RURAL ROOTS, GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES: ENHANCING SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION WITH DIVERSE PICTURE BOOKS

Presenters: Sara Hartman, Ohio University; Erin McHenry-Sorber, West Virginia University

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Discover how diverse picture books can be powerful tools for enhancing social studies instruction in rural elementary classrooms. Explore social studies picture books and discuss best practices for using the books in K-6 classrooms. Special attention will be given to how diverse perspectives in picture books can help rural students connect with global issues while also valuing their own local communities and experiences. This session is designed for elementary teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, and anyone passionate about strengthening social studies education through meaningful and inclusive children's literature.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 10:15–11 A.M.

PROJECT ECHO: TELEMENTORING SUPPORTS PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION AND REDUCES RURAL ISOLATION

Presenters: Bradley Long and Ruby Brenner, Social Science Research Center/MSU

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Learn about research findings on the impact of Project ECHO, a telementoring model designed to support early childhood professionals in rural settings. The study highlights how virtual communities of practice can equip educators with the knowledge and confidence needed to address early childhood development and behavioral health challenges. Participation in Project ECHO not only enhances practitioner skills but also improves communication with families and encourages more effective use of local resources. By fostering professional collaboration and reducing the sense of isolation often experienced in rural areas, the ECHO model offers a promising strategy for strengthening rural early childhood education systems.

LEADING THE WAY: HOW RURAL PRINCIPALS NAVIGATE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Presenter: Brooke Solz, Florida State University

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

Public school districts play a pivotal role in the well-being of rural communities and rural principals play a critical role in shaping student success, yet they often face unique challenges in balancing instructional leadership with the demands of their school communities. Learn how rural principals navigate these complexities, from managing limited resources to fostering teacher development and improving instructional practices. Drawing from research on instructional leadership in rural settings, this presentation highlights key findings on the strategies principals use to support teaching and learning while adapting to their distinct contexts. Whether you're a current school leader, aspiring administrator, or educator invested in rural education, this session will provide valuable perspectives and practical takeaways.

THE IMPACT OF CTE ON GRADUATION RATES FOR RURAL BLACK STUDENTS

Presenter: Aaron Duval, Southern Arkansas University

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

High schools in rural areas have long struggled with student engagement as students fail to see the relevance of school, evidenced by high absenteeism and dropout rates. To address these systemic concerns, schools must be innovative in identifying solutions and incentives to prevent students, especially black students, from dropping out, which has significant regional economic impacts. This study explores how CTE increases graduation rates for black students in the Arkansas Delta, examines specific CTE pathways, and provides recommendations for school leaders, teachers, and communities to increase the relevance of the school experience for students through CTE.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11:15 A.M.–12 P.M.

BEYOND WALLS: PLACE-BASED EDUCATION IN RURAL WYOMING

Presenters: Dean Olenik and Elizabeth Hansen, Cody High School, Park County School District #6

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Explore a dynamic, research-backed initiative from Wyoming's Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, highlighting how educators are igniting student engagement through integrated, place-based learning. Explore the practical applications of this model, demonstrating how science, language arts, PE, and business converge to foster a profound 'sense of place' and drive academic success. Beyond showcasing preliminary data, this session will provide insights for adapting this approach to your specific rural context. Learn how strategic partnerships with local and state-level organizations, combined with forward-thinking administrative support, became the cornerstone of this initiative. Leave with actionable insights empowering you to cultivate similar impactful learning experiences and unlock the possibilities inherent in your rural community.

MENTORING NEW EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN RURAL SCHOOLS: A STATE-WIDE PARTNERSHIP

Presenters: Donna Augustine-Shaw and Mischel Miller, Kansas State University

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Rural school leadership matters in rural communities. Nearly one-quarter of Kansas students attend rural schools. Mentoring is critical for the retention of school leaders in rural settings. Learn about a state-wide partnership supporting mentoring for new educational leaders. This unique and impactful partnership includes Kansas State University, Kansas Department of Education, Kansas Association of School Boards, and United School Administrators and supports mentoring by the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI). KELI fosters growth and builds capacity in new rural education leaders, served by experienced mentors and supportive networks. The hallmark of KELI is on-site individualized mentoring. KELI has mentored 1,369 superintendents, principals, and special education administrators, served by 826 program mentors since 2011-12.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, ETHICS, AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE RESPONSIBLY

Presenters: Scott Ebbrecht, Dina Pacis, Jennifer Preimesberger, and Jessica Gladney, National University

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming various industries, yet its adoption in education remains slow and ethically complex. Explore the intersection of AI, ethics, and school leadership, offering practical insights on how administrators and teacher leaders can navigate AI-driven decision-making while ensuring responsible implementation benefits all learners. Engage in discussions on AI ethics frameworks, AI's role in personalized learning, and leadership strategies for responsible AI integration. Leave with actionable steps, policy considerations, professional development resources, and exposure to new AI tools to enhance instructional and leadership effectiveness, safeguard student data, and build confidence among educators, students, and stakeholders in AI-driven educational initiatives.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11:15 A.M.-12 P.M.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE, HOMEGROWN TEACHING CORPS

Presenters: Brandon Lucius, Lizzy Hetherington, and Whitney Carter, Arkansas Teacher Corps (University of Arkansas)

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

The Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC) is a partnership between the University of Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Education, and Arkansas public school districts to recruit, train, license, and support Arkansans as empowered teachers facilitating excellent, equitable education every day. Arkansas has more than double the number of uncertified teachers than the national average, with seven school districts in the Arkansas Delta at over 30% uncertified. Furthermore, with only 14% of teachers identifying as BIPOC compared to 42% of students, Arkansas struggles to recruit and retain an educator workforce that reflects the diversity of its students. Through the ATC program, 89% of their new cohort identifies as people of color, and more than half are homegrown applicants who were already working in the school where they now teach. As a result, ATC was identified in 2024 as one of Arkansas's exemplary approaches to grow-your-own teacher recruitment by TNTP. Learn about ATC's innovative strategies for recruiting and retaining diverse teachers in rural schools, including a cohort model for community-building, Praxis test prep for licensure, coaching/mentoring for instructional growth, mental health and personal wellness support, financial incentives, and leadership opportunities.

CAPTURING RURAL VOICES FOR A NATIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS SYSTEM INITIATIVE

Presenters: Denise Cunningham and Rhonda Bishop, Missouri State University; Annah Rogers, University of West Alabama

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Learn about a dynamic initiative empowering rural schools through collaborative, research-driven action. Follow the journey of five Rural Schools Collaborative hubs as they guide 50 schools in implementing practical student success systems. Explore the key elements of student support: Strong, Supportive Relationships; Student-Centered Mindsets; Actionable Data; and Implementation of Action Plans. Discover shared resources and cross-school collaboration, showcasing a replicable framework for sustainable, innovative improvement tailored to rural communities. Learn about the real-world successes and challenges encountered during the multi-state implementation, providing honest insights into the process.

CREATING AND SUSTAINING EFFECTIVE PK-12/UNIVERSITY RELATIONSHIPS IN TURBULENT TIMES

Presenters: Curt Baker, Frostburg State University; Gregg Dionne, Central Michigan University; Tracey Karlie, Meyersdale Area School District

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Rural school districts are faced with a multitude of vexing issues. Steep enrollment declines, chronic student absenteeism, behavioral and mental health issues, and an ongoing acute shortage of teachers and staff. All of this is happening in a fraught fiscal and political environment. Universities, which can bring considerable expertise to school districts, are often ineffective in building partnerships that rural school districts value. Frostburg State University and Central Michigan University surveyed superintendents, district administrators, and building principals to share their perspectives. An extensive needs assessment of rural school districts in rural Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia was conducted. Respondents discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their districts and where partnering with a university would be most valuable to them. The study addressed teacher effectiveness, school improvement, community partnerships, student behavior/discipline, student achievement, educational leadership, and funding. The findings provide a roadmap for effective university-school district relationships in rural communities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11:15 A.M.–12 P.M.

SAY NO WAY TO SAME TEACHER PAY: STRATEGIC COMPENSATION PLANS

Presenter: Gabriel Zamora, Fort Stockton ISD

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Like many districts across the U.S., Fort Stockton ISD faced critical staffing shortages—especially in high-need, testable subject areas—exacerbated by an outdated state salary schedule that failed to reward specialized expertise or demand. In response, Dr. Zamora designed and implemented an innovative tiered salary system that is now entering its fourth year. This strategic model aligns teacher compensation with high-need certifications and performance, offering top-tier pay to educators who meet key qualifications while providing clear incentives for others to upskill. The result—improved recruitment, stronger retention, and a measurable impact on student outcomes. Explore how Fort Stockton ISD’s approach has reshaped its educator workforce and how similar models can be adapted to meet the needs of other districts.

RURAL ROOTS, RISING LEADERS: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT REIMAGINED

Presenters: Tay Moore and Loren Cox, Aspen Institute Education & Society Program

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Rural communities are epicenters of opportunity. This interactive session shatters deficit narratives by showcasing how Positive Youth Development (PYD) frameworks can transform rural education ecosystems. Discover unique strategies to enhance academic performance, cultivate leadership, spark civic engagement, and improve the well-being of rural students. Explore how rural schools can leverage their unique assets—close community connections, place-based learning opportunities, and intergenerational relationships—to create powerful developmental environments. Leave with practical tools to identify community strengths, design youth-led initiatives, and build cross-sector partnerships that amplify impact.

DEVELOPING RURAL LEADERS THROUGH COMMUNITY AND SHARED LEARNING

Presenter: Casey DeFord, Teach for America

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Rural school leadership isn’t one-size-fits-all. The Rural School Leadership Academy (RSLA) is a fully funded, yearlong fellowship that supports educators in developing the skills, mindsets, and connections needed to lead in rural contexts. Through cross-regional collaboration, school visits, and place-based learning, participants engage with innovative leadership strategies and build lasting mentorship networks. This session will highlight how RSLA strengthens leadership pipelines, fosters cross-district collaboration, and supports educators in bringing these strategies back to their own schools. You’ll leave with an understanding of how participation in a program that leverages the unique strengths of individual communities can build sustainable leadership in rural schools.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11:15 A.M.–12 P.M.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING RURAL STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Presenters: Lauren Ezzell and Rebekah Barker, Central Utah Educational Services; Heather Anderson, Central Utah Counseling Center

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

As the demand for behavioral and mental health services continues to rise, finding effective solutions for rural schools is crucial. Central Utah Educational Services (CUES), a Utah Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), is committed to providing high-quality, equitable, and cost-effective programs to seven rural school districts. Through House Bill 373 funding, CUES offers vital mental and behavioral health services, featuring a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and partnerships with the Central Utah Counseling Center (CUCC). This collaboration allows CUES and CUCC therapists to work as integrated members of school teams to support the region's students. This session, led by the CUES BCBA and two CUCC school-based therapists, will highlight their collaborative efforts, how they address unique challenges in rural schools, and gain insights into a whole-person approach to improving both behavioral and mental health outcomes in rural educational settings.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITHOUT A COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Presenters: Jerry Gallagher, Donovan Group; Justin Stockdale, Dike-New Hartford Community School District

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

School communication is at a premium. If you're not engaging with your community, someone else is creating the narrative for you and often times, the story is inaccurate or misleading. How can you create professional communications and be strategic about those efforts with little to no internal support? Dike-New Hartford (Iowa) Community School District Superintendent Justin Stockdale and Donovan Group's Jerry Gallagher will provide community engagement strategies to assist smaller, rural schools.

FROM FREEFALL TO FLIGHT: SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS FOR FRESHMAN SUCCESS

Presenter: Kimberly Radostits, Oregon CUSD 220

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Freshman failure rates are a key predictor of high school graduation, yet too many students slip through the cracks without targeted support. Explore the proven impact of Hawks Take Flight (HTF)—a decade-long mentoring initiative designed to reengage at-risk freshmen through relationship-driven interventions. Learn how strategic goal setting, data-driven early warning systems, and trauma-informed practices can foster academic success and personal resilience in small town USA.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 11:15 A.M.–12 P.M.

LEADING FOR LIBERATION: LGBTQ+-AFFIRMING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Clint Whitten and Josh Thompson, Virginia Tech

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

How prepared are rural principals to create safe, affirming environments for LGBTQ+ students, and what support do they need to do it well? Explore insights from a pilot study that explored the beliefs, experiences, and training gaps of rural middle and high school principals in Colorado, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Through surveys and interviews, the research team found that while rural school leaders care deeply about supporting LGBTQ+ students, many feel underprepared and lack access to training and resources. Participants expressed a need for practical tools to navigate pushback, address harmful attitudes, and foster inclusive school cultures. Explore what these findings mean for educators, leaders, and advocates and how we can work together to ensure LGBTQ+ students in rural areas feel seen, supported, and safe.

ELEVATING COLLABORATION: A STATEWIDE APPROACH TO RURAL PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Presenters: Barbara Hickman, Beth Lougee, Colby Gull, and Margaret Hudson, University of Wyoming

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

This study examined the role of a school-university-community partnership in a rural western state. The collaborators worked together to develop, implement, and evaluate a state-wide principal leadership academy and principal mentor program. Using a qualitative case study design with elements of participant observation, the study explored the initiative's first fifteen months as an example of collective impact (CI) in education. Findings provide a broad view of the CI process, showing how collaboration, shared goals, and a systematic approach are used to address the complex problem of developing and supporting high-quality school leaders. Insights from this study may inform future efforts to design, implement, and scale effective leadership development programs, contributing to improved teacher and leader recruitment and retention, especially in states with rural, isolated school districts whose leaders often face challenging weather, long distances and few options for administrative coverage when attending opportunities to prioritize their own professional growth.

EXPLORING SOCIALLY JUST PEDAGOGY THROUGH A RURAL CRITICAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Presenters: Erin McHenry-Sorber, West Virginia University; Sara Hartman, Ohio University

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

This research highlights the experiences of rural West Virginia elementary teachers participating in a critical community of practice alongside university faculty. Together, they explored ways to meaningfully integrate social studies content into their curriculum—centered on themes of social justice—using picture books. The findings underscore the powerful role social studies can play in rural education, helping students connect their local identities to broader global issues. By grounding instruction in students' rural experiences while expanding their worldview, teachers foster socially conscious thinking and cultivate a more inclusive understanding of the world. This session offers inspiration and practical strategies for using literature to prepare rural students to engage thoughtfully within and beyond their communities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

LUNCH & GENERAL SESSION • SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

12-12:30 P.M. LUNCH (PROVIDED)

12:30-1 P.M. NREA AWARDS & TEACHER OF THE YEAR



2025 RURAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

JEFF GRANRUD

Math Teacher, Howard Lake, MN

With nearly three decades of experience at Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted Schools, Jeff Granrud has a reputation for engaging instruction and a commitment to student growth. His excellence has been recognized through the 2002 Leadership in Educational Excellence Award, the 2020 HLWW District Teacher of the Year honor, and the 2024 MREA Educator of Excellence Award. Beyond the classroom, Jeff has coached high school sports for 27 years and is an outdoor enthusiast who shares his passion with others by leading the Joe Voitalla Memorial Fishing Expo, where he has helped take more than 1,000 fourth graders fishing, and by serving as a Minnesota DNR Hunter Safety Instructor. He also served 11 years with the Howard Lake Fire and Ambulance Departments, reflecting his dedication to service, mentorship, and leadership within his rural community.

Sponsored by: 

1-2 P.M. WHY RURAL MATTERS REPORT LAUNCH



Why Rural Matters 2025: People, Place, and Possibility

Join the National Rural Education Association for the launch of *Why Rural Matters 2025*, the 11th edition of the nation's premier report on the contexts and conditions of rural education. For more than two decades, this influential series has guided policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in understanding the opportunities and challenges facing rural schools across all 50 states.

This interactive general session brings together the report's lead researchers and rural education advocates to share powerful new data, compelling stories, and actionable strategies for change. Explore critical findings—from shifting definitions of “rural” to increasing diversity and rural student achievement—while engaging in live polls and discussion. Attendees will gain access to a digital communications toolkit and practical examples for applying the findings in their own communities.

Whether you're a policymaker, educator, or community leader, you'll leave equipped to turn data into action and advocate for policies that honor the people, places, and possibilities of rural America.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M.

TRANSFORMING FUTURES: GEORGIA'S INNOVATIVE RURAL WORK-BASED LEARNING PILOT PROGRAM

Presenter: Laura Ergle, Georgia Department of Education: Office of Rural Education and Innovation

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Are the students in your district gaining the skills, experiences, and knowledge that align with their individual aptitudes—and truly prepare them to thrive in the local, regional, and global workforce? Explore how rural districts can strengthen career awareness, exposure, and readiness by building a comprehensive work-based learning program that serves all students. Discover how districts are creating scalable and sustainable models that connect students to real-world experiences, empower educators, and engage local employers. Leave with strategies and practical steps to begin building or enhancing career-connected learning in your own schools.

RURAL LEADERSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR EFFECTIVE CRISIS RESPONSE

Presenter: Alissa Sasser, First District RESA-Georgia

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Participants will explore the key components of emotional intelligence that rural leaders need to effectively manage crisis situations. Dr. Alissa Hanrahan Sasser will present interview insights from rural leaders throughout the United States, highlighting their experiences with emotional intelligence and how they utilized this skill to successfully handle crises in their schools or districts. The presentation will conclude with practical strategies rural leaders can utilize to enhance school safety in their schools and districts.

CO-TEACHING: CHATGPT AND ME

Presenter: Christopher Knoell, University of Nebraska Kearney

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Explore questions about Artificial Intelligence, ranging from its definition and potential applications/use cases to more fundamental issues, such as ethical considerations and implications for classrooms and students. Leave with valuable insights for navigating the future that skipped our doorstep and is already in our classrooms.

BRIDGING CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND CURRICULUM: COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION FROM A NATIVE LENS

Presenter: Dezi Lynn, National Indian Education Association

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

While interest in place- and project-based learning has grown in recent years, Native peoples have long used these approaches to pass down knowledge, stories, and practices that sustain their communities. Community-based education from a Native perspective offers a culturally responsive, holistic model that benefits all learners—not just Native students. Join the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) to explore promising practices, policies, and strategies in Native education. Grounded in Indigenous scholarship, this session highlights how educators can integrate community, culture, and place into curriculum, instruction, and assessment for more meaningful, inclusive learning environments.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M.

RURAL K-12 STEM EDUCATION: OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL ACADEMIES REPORT

Presenters: Elizabeth Cady, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Darris Means, Clemson University; Tiffany Neill, University of Central Oklahoma and OpenSciEd; Jessica Sampley, Gulf Shores City Schools

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Rural areas provide a rich context for learning STEM. Promoting unrecognized assets for STEM learning, while also addressing potential barriers like funding, can enhance the ability of individuals in rural areas to further engage in and contribute to their communities or broader scientific exploration and discovery. In 2024, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a report on K-12 STEM Education and Workforce Development in Rural Areas that addressed these and other issues for rural STEM learning. Examine key conclusions and the implications of these recommendations on your own practice and community.

SUPPORTING OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS: FILLING A VOID THROUGH CHILDCARE AND BOOKS

Presenters: Brent Jaco and Chris Henson, Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD; Charles Lino, Town of Pecos City

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Some places are considered rural, but the West Texas town of Pecos is better described as remote. With the next closest town almost 40 miles away and the nearest bookstore 70 miles away, Pecos is not only a geographical desert, but also considered a desert for childcare and literacy. We have developed partnerships with our local taxing entities to provide daycare services for children from six weeks to three years old. Additionally, we have partnered with local businesses and the community to put books throughout the community to support literacy growth by getting books into classrooms, businesses, parks, and homes throughout Pecos. Hear how one remote town is creatively addressing critical gaps in early childhood care and literacy by leveraging local partnerships and community-driven solutions.

DEFINING RURAL IN UNCERTAIN TIMES: STATE-BASED RESEARCH METHODS

Presenter: Phillip Grant, Clemson University

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

To date, most studies in rural education have relied on the National Center for Education Statistics' definition of rurality. However, access to this dataset is now at risk. Under the current federal administration, several national education datasets face termination or significant reduction, creating uncertainty for future research. In this context, it is essential that educational researchers and scholarly practitioners, particularly those in doctoral programs, continue to engage with and examine the complexities of rural educational settings. Explore multiple approaches to defining rurality through qualitative and quantitative lenses, leveraging state-level data, and share strategies for integrating data from Georgia and South Carolina to conduct population-level analyses focused on access to advanced curricular opportunities in rural schools.

FEDERAL UPDATE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S RURAL EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

Presenters: Victoria Hammer and Abigail Swisher, U.S. Department of Education

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Join U.S. Department of Education staff for an overview of the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)—an annual grant program designed to meet the unique needs of rural school districts with flexible uses of funds. The presentation will cover an explanation of REAP, key updates, trends from this fiscal year's REAP awards, and an overview of how grantees can use REAP funds to support their priorities for students. The presentation will also include time to ask questions and engage with Department staff and learn about ongoing work supporting rural communities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M.

CULTIVATING COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT FUTURE RURAL EDUCATORS

Presenter: Jessica Daugherty, Randolph School District

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Collaborative partnerships between rural schools can open doors to opportunities that small schools might struggle to offer on their own. Randolph is one of six high schools in the Wisconsin Well Be's Education Consortium, where each school runs its own Educators Rising Club, offers dual credit courses, and manages a student teaching program. Through this consortium, schools come together to expand student experiences beyond their own campuses—organizing field trips, coordinating education-focused job shadows, and inviting guest speakers to showcase the many career paths within the education field. By working together, these rural schools are not only strengthening career exploration opportunities but also breaking down traditional rivalries and helping students connect with peers who share a passion for teaching and learning.

OUTSIDE THE BOX INCENTIVES FOR RECRUITING AND RETAINING RURAL TEACHERS

Presenters: Emma Berry and Donna Peduto, West Virginia Public Education Collaborative

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

Teachers Ascend is an innovative teacher recruitment and retention program that leverages economic and community assets to offer a pathway for teachers to relocate to West Virginia. Designed to address teachers' personal and professional needs, the program seeks to improve the teacher pipeline and enhance working conditions. Like many rural states, West Virginia is facing a chronic and severe teacher shortage. To overcome this challenge, schools need to think outside the box, beyond salary, to place-based benefits, like mentoring and quality of life programming focused on building community.

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL STUDENTS WHILE MAINTAINING RIGOR WITH AP

Presenters: Jennifer Goetz and Nicole Cartensen, Almira Coulee Hartline High School; Mikael Taylor, College Board

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

Rural students often have access to a variety of dual credit opportunities, but navigating the options and maximizing their benefits can be a challenge. Learn how Almira Coulee Hartline High School in Washington has expanded college and career pathways by increasing student participation in dual credit, boosting access to college credit, and improving completion of college and career readiness benchmarks. At the same time, the school has maintained high academic standards through rigorous on-campus offerings, including Advanced Placement courses like AP Precalculus. Come ready to collaborate and share your own best practices as you explore strategies to strengthen dual credit and AP pathways in your own school, district, or state, ensuring rural students have both access and rigor.

STRENGTHENING RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PARTNERSHIPS

Presenter: Sarah Torres Lugo, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Cooperative Extension, a public service in partnership with land-grant institutions, delivers research-based educational programs co-developed with the communities it serves. With a strong local presence in nearly every U.S. County, Extension is uniquely positioned to support community, economic, and workforce development (CEWD) in rural areas through a locally driven, relationship-based approach. By conducting needs assessments and drawing on the daily work of local agents, Extension programs are tailored to reflect the strengths, priorities, and challenges of each community. This session will highlight real-world examples of how Extension contributes to CEWD efforts and share practical ways schools, community organizations, and other stakeholders can collaborate with Extension to build local capacity and improve quality of life in rural communities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M.

ARTS-BASED RURAL QUEER PEDAGOGY: LESSONS FROM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SPACES

Presenters: Clint Whitten, Josh Thompson, and Amy Price Azano, Virginia Tech

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Queerphobic policies and rhetoric, including drag bans and attacks on transgender youth, uniquely impact rural communities where Queer-affirming resources are often limited, and conservative anti-Queer politics are often prevalent. Regardless, rural Queer artists still cultivate joy and care in their communities and artistry. When policies and practices push Queer youth out of their schools, the spaces these rural Queer artists inhabit become lifelines of affirmation, hope, and joy. Explore findings from two research studies that examined the role of rural Queer performance artists, in media and our region, in fostering alternative educational spaces. Discuss practices and pedagogies informed by rural Queer performance artistry and guide attendees in discussion of how they can implement these frameworks in their own educational contexts. Leave with practical strategies to implement arts-based pedagogies that uplift and celebrate underrepresented youth.

WOMEN RURAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ROLE THEORY

Presenters: Margaret Hudson and Barbara Hickman, University of Wyoming

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

This study examines how women principals in rural settings experience work-life balance through the lens of role theory. By analyzing these experiences, we uncover how role overload, role conflict, and role strain manifest and impact job satisfaction and turnover intention, while identifying strategies implemented to manage competing role demands. Research reveals critical intersections between work-life balance perceptions, gender, rural context, and role theory concepts, while revealing emergent themes that extend theoretical understanding. The findings offer valuable insights for policy development, administrative support systems, and leadership preparation programs. This work contributes to understanding how institutional structures and cultural expectations impact women leaders striving to balance professional excellence with personal fulfillment and offers practical insights for supporting retention of women educational leaders in rural communities.

ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL RURAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SQUEEZE

Presenters: Jessica Lane and Donna Augustine-Shaw, Kansas State University

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

Rural school principals increasingly face heightened pressures that impact their health and well-being. This qualitative study examines the “educational leadership squeeze,” a phenomenon in which principals experience both top-down and bottom-up pressures. Drawing on focus group discussions with school leaders in the U.S. and Australia, this research explores the implementation of a systems model as a framework to support social-emotional wellbeing among educational leaders. Findings indicate that rural principals face unique challenges, including increased workloads, inadequate mental health resources, and the expectation to act as frontline responders to crises affecting students and staff. While principals find satisfaction in student success and relationship-building, they report experiencing stress, burnout, and diminishing work-life balance. The study highlights the necessity of systemic approaches to support principal wellbeing. This research underscores the urgent need for policy interventions and institutional support to ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of rural educational leadership.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 3:15–4 P.M.

CULTIVATING RURAL TEACHING PIPELINES: SOWING SEEDS IN PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS

Presenters: Heather Finley and Laura Ergle, Georgia Department of Education

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Discover how rural districts across Georgia are cultivating teachers through apprenticeship by planting the seeds early with pre-apprenticeship programs and growing talent from within their own communities. In this session, you'll explore the unique approaches of three rural school systems—how they launched their programs, navigated challenges, and built sustainable pathways into the teaching profession. Leave with practical strategies, tools, and inspiration to design a grow your own initiative tailored to your district's workforce needs and community context. Whether you're just getting started or looking to expand an existing program, this session will equip you to strengthen your local educator pipeline.

STRENGTHENING RURAL EDUCATION: BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE ACROSS SECTORS

Presenters: Hennessey Lustica and Stephanie Betts, Seneca Falls CSD; Kristin DeFeo, Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES; Sandra Ordan, Peaceful Schools

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Recruiting and retaining educators in rural school districts remains a persistent challenge, particularly when serving high-needs students and families. In response, we've developed an innovative, cross-sector partnership model that brings together K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and community organizations, all grounded in a shared organizational culture. This collaborative approach strengthens the rural education workforce and supports student well-being through five key strategies: a common language, shared decision-making, innovative professional development, embedded coaching, and quarterly roundtable events. Currently, we partner with 25 rural school districts, eight colleges and universities, and 25 community agencies to host eight MTSS and mental health-focused roundtables each year—creating a powerful network of support for educators and the communities they serve.

BUILDING RURAL AI CAPACITY: SCALABLE TRAINING FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Presenters: Catherine Baumgartner, Consortium for School Networking; Sheila King, Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs); Valerie Truesdale, The School Superintendents Association (AASA)

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

As generative AI reshapes education, rural K-12 districts need practical, sustainable, and locally relevant strategies. Discover Building Capacity for Generative AI in K-12 Education, a national initiative led by CoSN and AESA, with support from AASA and SETDA. Using the CoSN/CGCS K-12 Gen AI Maturity Tool, the project helps districts assess readiness and take actionable steps toward responsible AI integration. The initiative's scalable, three-tiered model—training ESA-based leaders to mentor regional trainers who deliver customized, in-person support—blends national expertise with local implementation. Designed to meet the unique needs of rural communities, this approach empowers Education Service Agencies to guide districts in building long-term AI capacity aligned with their values and goals.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 3:15–4 P.M.

RURAL COACHING AND TRAINING FOR LASTING IMPACT ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Presenters: Howard Wills and Jacky Williams, University of Kansas; Courtney Castle, Saucelito Elementary

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

Rural schools often face limited time and resources for professional development, making it difficult to implement effective, sustainable classroom strategies. The CW-FIT rural coaching model offers a solution through self-paced online training that empowers teachers to guide their own learning, while coaches receive targeted support to ensure high-quality implementation of CW-FIT—a research-based classroom management program shown to boost praise and academic engagement. Hear about early findings from the first study cohort, including a case study from Saucelito, CA, presented by a principal and teacher. Receive free implementation resources and learn how flexible training and data-driven coaching can help rural educators create more positive, engaging classrooms.

BRIDGING GAPS IN RURAL TEACHER PREP: A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

Presenter: Jan Miller, University of West Alabama

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

The University of West Alabama has developed and implemented an innovative competency-based education (CBE) program designed to address Alabama's teacher shortage, particularly in rural communities. This program provides paraprofessionals with a flexible pathway to teacher certification by integrating on-the-job training as experiential credit. Currently, over 700 teacher candidates are enrolled in online courses while simultaneously working in P-12 schools across the state. This dual approach allows candidates to apply their learning in real-time, enriching their professional development and immediately contributing to their schools. Learn more about program outcomes, testimonials from candidates, and best practices for developing CBE programs to provide actionable strategies to adapt similar initiatives in your own schools and communities.

GROWING OUR OWN: PRINCIPALS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGIONAL POLICYMAKING

Presenter: Matthew Clifford, WestEd

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Developing strong leadership talent is a critical and ongoing challenge—especially in rural school systems where attracting, supporting, and retaining principals, assistant principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals requires intentional, systemic strategies. Too often, principals are left out of key policy and practice conversations around leadership pipelines. The Bridge District Leadership Network (BDLN), featured in *Principal* magazine, brings together partners from 20 rural and suburban districts to change that. By centering the voices of principals, BDLN has uncovered powerful ways they are shaping the future of school leadership—mentoring aspiring leaders, teaching preparation courses, and helping design more effective pipeline policies. This session explores what happens when principals lead the effort to grow and sustain leadership in their schools and communities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 3:15–4 P.M.

WHY NOT HERE? BRINGING COMPUTER SCIENCE TO RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Robin Martin, University of California Davis; Karen Mix, Small School Districts' Association

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Rural schools often face challenges in offering computer science (CS) education, from being far from resources to lacking professional support networks. This session shares simple, low-cost ways, co-designed with rural educators, to bring CS to life in your community—by connecting coding and problem-solving to real-world, local topics like farming technology or environmental issues. Hear how schools are working together across districts to share resources, support each other, and learn how to create K-12 pathways for students in all grades that align with NGSS and CSTA standards, while still honoring rural values and identity. Backed by current research and real classroom examples, leave you with practical ideas to start or grow CS programs that fit your community, excite students, and open doors to future careers.

FROM K TO CAREER: HOW ONE RURAL DISTRICT REIMAGINED SCHEDULING FOR IMPACT

Presenters: Sabra Sowell-Lovejoy and Nikki Johnson, Campo Undivided School District

Room: Park City (Level 3)

To spark greater interest in high school career pathways and better support elementary students and teachers, Campo School District developed an innovative shared-schedule model tailored to the realities of small, rural schools. High school teachers bring their subject expertise into elementary classrooms, while elementary teachers gain more time for focused, grade-level instruction. Monthly planning and reviewing of data ensure alignment and data-driven planning. This approach addresses challenges like limited staffing, combined-grade classrooms, and burnout—while giving students early exposure to plant science, STEAM, and standards-based learning. As a result, interest in the district's Food Production pathways has grown significantly. This session will share what's working, what's evolving, and how other small districts can adapt the model to fit their needs.

BUILDING STUDENT AND COMMUNITY SUCCESS THROUGH CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Presenter: John Glasgow, Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a gateway for rural student success and community prosperity. However, many rural districts struggle to offer robust CTE programming that not only trains all students for every profession but also trains them for high-demand, high-quality, and high-wage careers in their own communities. The Rural IL CTE Project is a partnership between the Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools and the Illinois State Board of Education to better understand the challenges rural districts face with CTE, and to help in growing stronger programs. Learn more about the statewide research on rural CTE conducted by the Project, policy and advocacy opportunities from the data, and promising new pilot models across Illinois attempting to expand students' access to these critical personal and professional opportunities.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 3:15–4 P.M.

RISKS OF BEING RURAL: TAILORED MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Presenters: Tobin Novasio, Hardin Public Schools; Anne Brown, Cook Center for Human Connection

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

Explore how the unique identity, culture, and resources of rural communities shape the mental health needs of students, educators, and families—and what schools can do to respond. With 65% of rural counties lacking a psychiatrist and nearly half without a practicing psychologist, schools are often the frontline for mental health support, despite limited resources. This session will highlight creative, interdisciplinary strategies to meet those needs, including integrating accessible mental health services into schools, using virtual tools, and building strong community-based networks. Leave with practical ideas to strengthen resilience and well-being for rural students and staff.

NO TWO DAYS ALIKE: TRANSFORMING RURAL EDUCATION WITH DISCOVERY EDUCATION

Presenters: Devan Jones and Matt Irvin, University of South Carolina; Andrea Lance, Discovery Education

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

No two days in a rural classroom are alike. Some flow smoothly, while others present unexpected challenges. Discovery Education and the University of South Carolina's Institute of Rural Education and Development are collaborating to support educators, ensuring every moment counts. Learn more about Discovery Education's rural initiative, focusing on three core components: STEM Education, Career Exploration, and Immersive Learning. Together, these components empower rural students and communities with engaging, hands-on opportunities. STEM Education provides curriculum, teacher training, and real-world applications, integrating career exploration into core subjects. Career Exploration & Workforce Readiness offers virtual field trips, mentorship, and "Career Connect Pit Stops" with industry leaders. Immersive Learning unites communities through interactive STEM family events featuring experiments, workshops, and industry-sponsored activities.

BUILDING RURAL PARTNERSHIPS: LEVERAGING YOUR STRENGTHS FOR OUTSIZED IMPACT

Presenters: Rachael McClain, Collegiate EDU-Nation; Melissa Harris and Dariana Castro, Transcend

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Just as strong partnerships between schools, families, businesses, and postsecondary institutions are essential to meaningful innovation, so too is a vibrant ecosystem of organizations learning and working together toward transformation. Explore how learning with and from each other—and from the broader field—has shaped and strengthened their individual and collective work. In this session, Transcend and CEN will highlight key insights, actionable strategies, and lessons learned to support other organizations seeking to deepen collaboration. Discover how field collaboration can accelerate innovation, enhance community engagement, and better prepare students with the skills they need to thrive and access economic opportunity.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 3:15–4 P.M.

ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED TEACHERS' NEED TO LEARN AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

Presenters: Michael Brody, Nicholas Lux, and Marcie Reuer, Montana State University

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

This research project used a Delphi Survey (Consensus Building) methodology to determine the immediate needs of newly alternatively certified (alt-cert) teachers to help ensure their success in the early years (1-5) of their teaching career. This research was conducted to determine the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions a newly alternatively certified teacher in Montana needs to learn to be successful in the beginning years of their employment. Subjects of the study were experienced and knowledgeable K-12 teachers, K-12 administrators, and state university teacher education faculty. A three-step Delphi Survey process was used leading to consensus on knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Results indicate these essential needs and will inform future professional development activities throughout the state and especially in the numerous rural communities in Montana.

CONSIDERING RURAL SCHOOL REALITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION RESEARCH

Presenters: Joanna Ryan, University of North Dakota; Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma; University of Utah; Ginevra Courtade, University of Louisville

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

Rural special education services are often deeply connected to communities, and the outcomes of special education interventions are influenced by setting variables that are unique to rural schools. Real rural special education settings may differ from the settings described in the research studies that support evidenced special education interventions. These differences require consideration as evidenced special education interventions are used in everyday rural schools. The presenters of this panel session will describe five recommendations for special education intervention research in rural schools, with a focus on single-case research designs. Leave with actionable insights to guide the development of special education intervention research studies that deeply consider the influence of rural setting variables on intervention outcomes. While presenters will focus on special education and single-case design, the recommendations provided will hold applicability for researchers in other educational disciplines and for other research designs.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 4:15–5 P.M.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL DISTRICTS

Presenters: Christina Russell and Dan Aladjem, Policy Studies Associates; Scott Daniels, Partners for Rural Impact; PRI FSCS State Scale Up Team

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Through the federal Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant program, Partners for Rural Impact (PRI) is working to build sustainable cross-sector partnerships to support rural youth and their families, including county agencies, healthcare and social service providers, nonprofit organizations, higher education, faith-based, and workforce development/industry partners. This session, led by PRI's external evaluator, Policy Studies Associates (PSA), will focus on emerging lessons learned about practical strategies to identify, onboard, build trust, and create a partnership hub in schools and districts that expand access to resources and services for geographically isolated and low-resourced communities. Hear about establishing effective partner outreach and engagement, creating and institutionalizing long-term partnerships, and creating infrastructure to connect and sustain a web of community partnerships.

STRUCTURED LEADERSHIP FOR RURAL SCHOOLS: AMPLIFYING VOICES, DRIVING RESULTS

Presenter: Joseph Farnsworth, Show Low School District

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Effective leadership starts with clarity and a framework that centers the voices of your stakeholders. Explore a practical, four-pillar leadership model designed to support leaders at the campus and district levels. Grounded in organizational identity, culture, academics, and continuous improvement, this approach helps leaders move beyond reactive, “whack-a-mole” problem solving to lead with focus and purpose. Whether you’re navigating daily challenges or driving long-term change, leave with strategies to elevate your leadership and build a more cohesive, responsive organization.

EFFECTIVE AND LOW-COST BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Patrick Morin and Heather Nudd, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

This session will equip parents and school practitioners with free and low-cost evidence-based strategies to support challenging behaviors in rural school settings. Focusing on Tier 2 behavioral needs, participants will explore various tools, websites, and resources to design and implement effective behavioral supports for rural and homeschool students. Emphasizing practical strategies that align with federal guidance under the Every Student Succeeds Act, this session will provide participants with the knowledge and resources needed to better support struggling students behaviorally, regardless of the setting. Learn how to leverage community resources and collaboration to enhance their behavioral support efforts.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 4:15–5 P.M.

EXPLORING WORLD CULTURES AND LANGUAGES: PARTNERSHIPS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

Presenters: Kelly Moser and Kenneth Anthony, Mississippi State University

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

Many rural communities find it difficult to recruit and retain teachers, a reality that is even worse for elementary world language programs. The limited supply of world language teachers creates a ripple effect in rural communities, resulting in students not having access to quality world language instruction and diverse perspectives about the world around them. To bridge this gap, the program described in this session relied on a partnership between a land-grant university, a local library, and families. Monthly, families visit the library to pick up a suitcase, containing hands-on activities about languages, social studies, and STEM. Each suitcase offers young learners a unique adventure including learning new languages, cooking common recipes, practicing traditional dances, creating cultural artifacts and crafts, and playing games. Participating families receive a passport to collect flag stamps as they “travel” and are encouraged to share their experiences through photos and videos, enhancing the immersive, community-driven cultural journey.

DESIGNING FUTURES: EMPOWERING RURAL STUDENTS THROUGH INNOVATION

Presenter: Meg Grothman, ASU Prep Academy

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Discover how rural districts across Georgia are cultivating teachers through apprenticeship by planting the seeds early with pre-apprenticeship programs and growing talent from within their communities. Explore the unique approaches of three rural school systems—how they launched their programs, navigated challenges, and built sustainable pathways into the teaching profession. Leave with practical strategies, tools, and inspiration to design a grow your own initiative tailored to your district’s workforce needs and community context. Whether you’re just getting started or looking to expand an existing program, this session will equip you to strengthen your local educator pipeline.

FROM VISION TO VALUE: GROWING CTE OUTCOMES WITH PURPOSE

Presenters: Christy Cleugh and Millie Padilla, eDynamic Learning; Josh Sneideman, Learning Blade; Lauren Pisa, Knowledge Matters

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

By connecting immersive learning experiences, higher education pathways, and industry engagement, participants will learn how to create environments where students actively engage in career exploration, career-focused curriculum, and authentic, work-based learning. These approaches not only prepare students for immediate workforce opportunities but also strengthen their readiness for higher education and lifelong learning. Together, we’ll examine how purposeful CTE programs can transform vision into value—building pathways that bridge the classroom to college, career, and the real world.

INNOVATING SMALL DISTRICTS: LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR RURAL SUCCESS

Presenters: Karen Mix and Yuri Calderon, Small School Districts’ Association

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Ready to lead boldly in a small district? Join us to explore how rural and small school leaders can turn challenges into opportunities through agile decision-making, innovative instructional models, and strong community partnerships. Discover how to push through the “valley of disillusionment,” build high-performing teams, and implement lasting reforms. With real-life case studies and actionable strategies, this session will empower you to drive meaningful, measurable change—no matter your district’s size. Let’s shape the future of education, one small school at a time.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 4:15–5 P.M.

CULTIVATING CARE THROUGH CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRACTICES IN RURAL CONTEXTS

Presenters: Jenay Willis and Erica Avent, University of Mississippi

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Cultivating and sustaining an ethic of care is essential to supporting students at rural-serving institutions (RSIs), particularly at the University of Mississippi, a predominantly white institution in Northern Mississippi. In this session, two Black women professors share how they create student-centered environments by embracing culturally relevant pedagogy rooted in their lived experiences and identities. Drawing on frameworks such as Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy and hooks' (1990) teachings on love and education, the presenters will explore how care, joy, and a sense of safety shape their work both inside and outside the classroom. Gain insight into how intentional, identity-informed practices can foster belonging and transformative learning, even in predominantly white rural settings.

IMPROVING RURAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE THROUGH PRACTICAL AND SUSTAINABLE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Presenter: Rachel Chamberlain, American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Discover how rural schools can participate in continuous improvement efforts despite challenges posed by limited budgets and staff capacity. This session will share insights from the American Institutes for Research's Attendance Lab initiative, showcasing evidence-based interventions for chronic absenteeism tailored to rural contexts. Learn how rural districts formed improvement teams, conducted root cause analyses, and identified effective interventions. Leave with practical tools and resources, including family engagement techniques, positive school climate interventions, and data-driven attendance plans.

YOU RECEIVED A GRANT NOW WHAT?

Presenter: Cari Warnock, CDW Education

Room: Traverse (Level 5)

Securing a grant is a major achievement—but it's only the beginning. Discover how to move beyond basic compliance and turn your grant into a catalyst for lasting change and learn practical strategies for managing, tracking, and building momentum around your grant project while staying aligned with your key performance indicators (KPIs). Learn how to create systems that keep your team engaged, your stakeholders informed, and your project on track. Most importantly, explore how to embed sustainability into every stage of the grant lifecycle—because ensuring long-term impact shouldn't be an afterthought at year five.

TRANSLATING POSTSECONDARY INSIGHTS: A RURAL LENS

Presenter: Kimberly Hanauer, UnlockED

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

This session explores early findings from the Insight to Postsecondary Action (IPA) initiative, which examines how school systems can leverage data, leadership structures, and continuous improvement cycles to advance students' postsecondary success. Although most IPA efforts have taken place in non-rural settings, the discussion invites rural school leaders to consider parallels, surface unique challenges, and exchange ideas on adapting local strategies. Engage in dialogue and shared reflection to identify insights that can inform future action in diverse rural contexts.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 4:15–5 P.M.

BEYOND FACILITIES: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR NEW LEARNING MODELS IN RURAL DISTRICTS

Presenter: Andy Stumpf, Greenfield School District

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Facilities often dominate rural district planning due to aging buildings—but starting with learning can spark deeper change. Explore two case studies of how rural-centered models improve outcomes and community support: one through a community-driven strategic plan, the other via a competency-based learning model. Together, they demonstrate how thoughtful design and engagement can shift the focus from buildings to learning, creating the vision and buy-in needed for meaningful, lasting change.

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 4:15–5 P.M.

ALONE TOGETHER: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH WITH RURAL MULTILINGUAL TEACHERS

Presenter: Kaycee Rogers, UW Madison

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Explore the identity, agency, and positionality of rural multilingual (ML) teachers through a community-engaged research lens. Drawing on foundational literature and a co-constructed study with ML teachers in Wisconsin, this presentation highlights how context shapes teacher identity and why sharing their stories is essential. Learn about the use of narrative inquiry and qualitative social network analysis to better understand rural ML teacher experiences. Preliminary findings and practical recommendations will be shared to inform researchers, teacher preparation programs, and rural education leaders on how to more meaningfully involve teachers as co-researchers in educational inquiry.

ENHANCING RURAL MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: ADDRESSING UNIQUE CHALLENGES THROUGH UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Presenter: Jingyuan Zhang, East Tennessee State University

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

Rural schools—defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as those located outside urban areas—serve 1 in 5 students across the United States and face distinct challenges, including teacher attrition, poverty, geographic isolation, racial and ethnic diversity, and limited resources (Allensworth et al., 2022; Weiss et al., 2023). Despite these realities, there is limited research on how evidence-based practices (EBPs) in mathematics are implemented and supported in rural contexts. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring how rural-specific factors influence the implementation of math EBPs, how these practices are adapted to meet local needs, what support systems are in place for educators, and how implementation fidelity is currently monitored. Findings aim to inform more contextually responsive strategies for supporting high-quality mathematics instruction in rural schools.

SCHOOLS IN PARADISE: EXAMINATION OF RESORT RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Robert Mitchell, Leah Matoka, and Devynn Evans, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

Learn more about the unique characteristics of rural schools in areas where tourism is the dominant industry. These resort regions do not always resemble what we commonly consider rural schools, but they are an important component of the landscape of rural education. This presentation focuses on a mixed-methods study that examines the demographic characteristics and the voices of resort rural leaders in articulating the challenges and opportunities of resort rural schools. Early findings show that the common assumptions about the people who live in and attend schools in these areas may not be accurate. There also appears to be a growing chasm between these area school leaders and their peers in agricultural communities, which may lead to challenges related to state school policy and a unified voice for rural school concerns.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 9-9:45 A.M.

COMMUNICATE LIKE YOUR RURAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY DEPENDS ON IT

Presenters: Bill Tarleton and Bonnie Walker, Texas Rural Education Association; John White, JLW Communications

Room: Alta (Level 3)

In a world where narratives shape perception, rural schools must take control of their own stories. Misconceptions and a lack of awareness diminish the achievements and innovations happening in rural education. Texas Rural Education Association will share innovative tools they use to promote public education in Texas and discuss the importance of telling rural success stories statewide and nationally. Learn strategies and tactics to communicate rural schools' strengths and success stories to broader audiences and influence public support.

PREK-12 CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: CRADLE THROUGH CAREER INNOVATION

Presenters: Mike Felton, St. George Municipal School Unit; Michael Gonzalez, Rural Schools Innovation Zone

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Discover how two innovative rural school districts—both Yass Prize Finalists—are using Career and Technical Education (CTE) to transform student engagement and success. Through strong partnerships with local businesses and a deep connection to community traditions and values, these districts are ensuring that all students, from PreK through 12th grade, have access to hands-on, minds-on learning opportunities. Learn how CTE is being leveraged to equip students with real-world skills, reignite their passion for learning, and prepare them for meaningful careers and lives after graduation.

PLACE-BASED CASES FOR ENGAGING RURAL STUDENTS

Presenter: Beth Kania-Gosche, Missouri University of Science and Technology

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Case studies require students to think critically, but they may not engage students unless they are grounded in their local context. Place-based cases can connect students to curricular concepts in an authentic setting: their own community. The case study aspect provides a problem or a mystery to be solved. In this session, attendees will be provided resources for finding cases that can be modified for their context, as well as guidance on designing their own. The authors, who work in a rural university, have successfully incorporated this approach into preservice educator curriculum and professional development sessions with practicing teachers in rural schools.

SMALL BRICKS, BIG IMPACT: LEGO BUILD THE CHANGE

Presenters: Riley Justis and Monica Burba, Take Action Global

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

This hands-on learning experience for Rural Educators introduces the LEGO Build the Change Institute—a global initiative empowering students to explore real-world challenges in their communities and design creative solutions using LEGO bricks and other accessible materials. Educators will engage and explore curriculum connections and be inspired by rural and global classrooms putting student ideas into action.

PEDAGOGY OF PRIDE: RURAL EDUCATION AND QUEER IDENTITIES

Presenters: Amy Price Azano and Clint Whitten, Virginia Tech

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Released in March 2025, Rural Education and Queer Identities: Rural and (Out)Rooted is a powerful collection of scholarly research, personal narratives, and creative works that explore the complex intersections of Queerness and rural education. Representing diverse rural communities across the U.S., the collection examines how rural schooling, educational policy, community systems, and identity development are deeply shaped by place and belonging. As the contributors' voices came together, a unifying theme emerged—the potential for a Pedagogy of Pride (PoP) in rural schools. This session will introduce the four foundational pillars of PoP, share examples of what it can look like in practice, and invite participants into a collaborative dialogue to envision how PoP might take root and thrive in their own rural contexts.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 9-9:45 A.M.

RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES

Presenters: Jen Collins, SUNY Potsdam; Lindsay Hollingsworth, University of Platteville

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

How can rural universities build meaningful, lasting partnerships that truly benefit both campuses and communities? Drawing from a recent chapter in *Sharing Leadership Stories in Rural Education: Leading Rurally* across Australia and the United States, this session explores one rural-serving university's ongoing journey to develop collaborative, place-based relationships with local school districts. Presenters will highlight the power of reciprocal engagement—where both the university and the community grow through shared goals and mutual support. Gain insight into real-world examples of partnership in action and walk away with a practical framework for building strong collaborations, both locally and across geographic distances.

ARE WE LISTENING TO RURAL LEADERS? A DIALOGUE ON FUTURE POSSIBILITIES IN EDUCATION

Presenters: Sarrah Grubb, IU Kokomo; Jenay Willis, University of Mississippi; Loni Crumb, ECU

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Over the past five years, rural leaders have faced extraordinary challenges while continuing to make decisions that profoundly impact their schools and communities. More than a conversation, this session provides a space for dialogue as an act of care and recognition. The goal is to honor the resilience, leadership, and unwavering commitment of those guiding rural education.

PROJECT RAISE: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT RURAL SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

Presenters: Sheri Smith and Tracie Hall, Tennessee Department of Education

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Project RAISE (Rural Access to Interventions in School Environments) is a school-based mental health grant awarded to the Tennessee Department of Education to recruit and retain school-based mental health providers for rural school districts across the state. Discover how the collaborative partnerships between a state education agency, university programs, and rural school districts address the shortages of school-based mental health professionals across Tennessee. Hear about lessons learned for developing and implementing recruitment and retention strategies, building relationships with and for school district personnel and university programs, and creating sustainable resources to strengthen rural communities and advance K-12 education.

WE CAN DO IT THRICE AS NICE: DUAL LICENSURE AS A WIN-WIN-WIN FOR RURAL EDUCATION

Presenter: Kelly Barber, The University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Rural districts face persistent challenges recruiting special education-certified teachers, while educator preparation programs seek to boost enrollment and better prepare candidates for diverse classrooms. This session shares how one university responded by developing a new dual licensure pathway in elementary and special education, designed through cross-program collaboration and stakeholder engagement. The pathway equips candidates to serve in both K-6 general education and K-12 special education roles, creating a sustainable pipeline of well-prepared teachers for rural schools. Gain practical insights into program redesign, approval processes, and strategies for advancing inclusive, equity-centered teacher preparation.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 9-9:45 A.M.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR ALL: VOICES FROM LATINX PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Presenter: Pedro Silva Espinoza, Kansas State University

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

Parent and family engagement is a vital part of student success, but too often, traditional models of involvement fall short, especially for families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This session centers the voices of Latinx parents and families, highlighting how they define meaningful engagement in their children's education and the ways they want to be included. Based on research findings and real family perspectives, the session will explore how schools can move beyond basic involvement to foster deeper, more authentic partnerships with Latinx families. Leave with practical strategies to create welcoming, inclusive environments where all families feel valued, heard, and empowered to contribute.



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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 9–9:45 A.M.

CULTIVATING RURAL STEM: LINKING SCHOOLS, INDUSTRY, COMMUNITIES FOR WORKFORCE GROWTH

Presenters: Pam Buffington, EDC and Rachael Dektor, MMSA

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Findings from the WFR Project, a Research-Practice Partnership in rural New England, highlight how expanding access to computer science education can strengthen school-community connections. By bringing together educators, researchers, and local industries—such as fishing, farming, and forestry—the project leverages authentic, place-based contexts to make learning more relevant and engaging. Although computer science plays a critical role in these sectors, it is often underrecognized in rural education. The session explores strategies to bridge that gap and build pathways to future careers—demonstrating how community-driven approaches can promote equity and opportunity in rural classrooms.

SUPPORTIVE ROOTS: RURAL STUDENTS' ASSETS ON THEIR JOURNEYS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Presenters: J. Kessa Roberts, Clemson University and Alycia Cole, Utah State University

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

Rural students face unique barriers to higher education but also bring distinct strengths shaped by their communities, schools, and families. This qualitative study examines how students draw on these assets to navigate college enrollment at a flagship university. Guided by the Rural Cultural Wealth Framework (Crumb et al., 2023), the research highlights students' resourcefulness, strong family and community ties, and self-driven strategies for overcoming challenges. Findings underscore the role of informal networks, familial support, and adaptive decision-making in expanding postsecondary access—offering actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and institutions committed to supporting rural college enrollment.

LEADING AI INTEGRATION IN RURAL STEM: PLACE, PARTNERSHIPS, AND POSSIBILITIES

Presenters: Juhee Kim and Elizabeth Wargo, University of Idaho

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

As artificial intelligence (AI) transforms education, rural schools face unique challenges in adoption due to limited infrastructure, resource constraints, and gaps in professional development. Explore findings from a mixed-methods study on how rural educational leaders perceive AI's role in STEM education, the barriers they encounter, and the strategies they employ to ensure equitable integration. Gain insights into leadership strategies for AI adoption, professional development priorities, and the importance of partnerships with universities, policymakers, and technology firms. The discussion will highlight the critical role of place-based leadership in addressing ethical concerns, data privacy, and AI-driven disparities while leveraging AI's potential to enhance personalized learning and STEM opportunities. Leave with actionable strategies to navigate AI integration in rural schools and advocate for policies that support sustainable and inclusive AI use.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10–10:45 A.M.

INNOVATIVE RURAL TEACHER OPPORTUNITIES FROM HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL

Presenters: Dave Dallas, Eastern Oregon University; Angela Vossenkuhl and Kristin Johnson, EOU College of Education

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Recruiting teachers for rural areas presents unique challenges, including lower salaries and potential isolation, but strategies like grow your own programs, emphasizing community connections, and offering incentives can improve success. Through programs such as Future Educators, the Eastern Oregon Teacher Academy, the Instructional Assistant Pathway Program, the Junior School Community Placement, the Senior Rural Field Experience, the Oregon Rural Teacher Corps, and the RTC Community of Learners, the College of Education at Eastern Oregon University is creating opportunities for students, be they high school, undergraduate or graduate teacher candidates, to experience and work in rural communities. This collaborative approach through placement, community partnerships, and program opportunities has proved to be successful in terms of teacher recruitment and retention.

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RURAL MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Presenters: Arlene Anderson, South Sanpete School District; Paul Richins, Cook Center for Human Connection

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Rural superintendents and district leaders face increasing challenges in addressing student mental health needs shaped by their unique contexts. This session features insights from South Sanpete County, Utah, where a districtwide mental health campaign was launched through strategic partnerships with nonprofit organizations, educators, behavioral health professionals, and families. Participants will explore actionable strategies to expand mental health support by increasing accessibility, reducing stigma, and fostering collaboration. Learn how parent coaching, staff wellness initiatives, and mental health education have improved student well-being and academic success. Resources—including partnership templates and professional development tools—will be shared to support implementation and sustainability.

PLACE AND TRADITIONS: GENERATING AND SUSTAINING CO-CREATED LITERACY AND MATH INSTRUCTION WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE FOUR CORNERS REGION

Presenters: Brandon Frost and Kristin Algier, TNTF

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Explore culturally responsive strategies for strengthening literacy and math instruction among Indigenous students in the Four Corners region—spanning New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado—where geographic isolation, resource limitations, and a shortage of culturally informed educators present ongoing challenges. Presenters will highlight best practices for integrating Indigenous languages, history, and traditions into core instruction, while honoring the vital role of families and community in the learning process. Explore lessons learned from co-creating a shared vision for literacy and math excellence alongside teachers, administrators, parents, elders, and community leaders, grounded in the specific context and strengths of the region. Gain insight into innovative, community-based approaches that help overcome barriers and promote meaningful, place-based learning rooted in Indigenous values and knowledge.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10–10:45 A.M.

GROUP DESIGN STUDIES IN RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Presenters: Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma; Wilhelmina van Dijk, Utah State University; JoAnna Ryan, University of North Dakota; Matt Jameson, University of Utah

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

Group design studies are a key method for identifying evidence-based practices in education. This session outlines strategies for conducting group design research in rural settings, with an overview of common approaches including randomized controlled trials, switching replications, and regression discontinuity designs. Discussion will address frequent challenges—such as sampling limitations, geographic isolation, and deficit-oriented assumptions—and explore solutions like open science practices, asset-based frameworks, strong partnerships, and innovative data strategies. The session concludes with recommended future directions to strengthen the quality and relevance of group design studies in rural education research.

RAISING THE RURAL VOICE: PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY

Presenters: Deb Koolbeck, National Education Association; Zeke Lee, National Association of Counties

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Rural communities and their residents understand the importance of coming together in service to each other. However, harnessing this collective power is vital in raising the rural voice in the policy arena. However, you might need to look beyond your usual partners to ensure that you are at the table (remember, if you are not at the table, you are on the menu). Learn how the National Association of Counties and the National Education Association joined forces with others to advocate for the bipartisan Secure Rural Schools Program that supports over 740 counties across the nation. Coming together in coalition, these organizations leveraged the assets they brought to the table to bring the voice of rural communities to the table through the power of partnership.

SHAPING CHANGE LOCALLY: EXAMPLES OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION IN A RURAL WYOMING SCHOOL

Presenters: Alexander Sivitskis, Teton Science School; Alison Mercier, University of Wyoming; Kelly Vallier, Albany County School District 1; Dallie Bowers, Rock River Schools

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Place-based education is an approach that integrates the local ecological, economic, and cultural aspects of place to foster student engagement and learning. Hear about how the Rock River School in Wyoming partnered with the University of Wyoming and Teton Science Schools to implement place-based education at their school. The Rock River School has implemented several place-based projects in the past few years - mapping incidents of wildlife-vehicle collisions on a local highway, designing multi-use trails for the school and community, and connecting to their regional watershed through raising trout in the classroom. Teachers had success integrating place-based principles into their existing standards and curriculum. Learn how the team has partnered together to collect data from the students, teachers, and school community about the impacts of these projects and get inspired to try new ideas in your school.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10-10:45 A.M.

SEAMLESS RURAL EDTECH: ACCESS ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

Presenters: Jeff Carlson, Clever; Rick Gaisford, Utah State Board of Education; Ji Soo Song, State Education Technology Directors Association; Mary Young, T-Mobile for Education

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Are your students missing digital learning opportunities? Discover practical solutions for rural connectivity challenges both in and outside the classroom and explore findings from the Universal Connectivity Imperative (UCI) report, building on SETDA's research into rural broadband needs. Learn about progress in closing the digital divide, current obstacles facing rural schools, and actionable strategies you can implement. Drawing on insights from government officials, researchers, teachers, and students, discover evidence-based approaches that work specifically for rural areas. Whether you work in K-12 or higher ed, leave with concrete ideas for improving internet access for all students on campus and at home. Policy recommendations that could bring additional resources to rural communities and how you can advocate for sustained investment in universal connectivity will also be discussed.

ROOTED IN HEALING: PRACTICAL TRAUMA-INFORMED STRATEGIES FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Tameka Grimes, Wake Forest University; Jennifer Kirsch, East Tennessee University; Sarah Henry and Amanda Walters, Virginia Tech

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Youth trauma is widespread in rural communities, yet schools often lack the resources, training, and guidance needed to implement effective trauma-informed practices (TIP). Rural school counselors (RSCs) are uniquely positioned to support students, but research and frameworks tailored to rural contexts remain limited—and TIP is often underutilized in daily practice. This session introduces the SAMHSA framework for trauma-informed care through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) lens, providing actionable strategies for rural schools. Learn how school counselors and administrators can collaborate to embed TIP across school systems in ways that are context-sensitive and sustainable. Designed for administrators and counselors, this session offers tools to help create safer, more supportive school environments for all students.

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION: ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTION FOR POST-PANDEMIC STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Presenter: Krista Hensley, Center for Excellence for Leadership of Learning

Room: Wasach (Level 4)

As rural educators seek effective ways to re-engage students, place-based education (PBE) offers powerful, community-centered strategies that foster academic growth and social connection. By allowing students to explore and research their own communities, PBE encourages intrinsic motivation, student choice, and a sense of agency. It also promotes metacognition and self-advocacy as students engage in self-directed learning and interact with real-world issues and local stakeholders. Explore how educators can integrate PBE seamlessly into their classrooms through real examples from rural Indiana. Examine how PBE taps into student interests and helps educators create meaningful, relevant learning experiences that strengthen ties between students and the communities they call home.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 10-10:45 A.M.

SUPPORTING RURAL, POOR AND WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Presenters: Ty McNamee, University of Kentucky; Noah Watts, and Roger Davis, The University of Mississippi

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

Many rural students from poor and working-class backgrounds attend community college to achieve their postsecondary goals. While local community colleges have been shown to enroll many rural, poor, and working-class students, little is known about how to support such students enrolling at these community colleges. This session will offer a space to discuss how PreK-12 and higher education practitioners and policymakers can best engage in such support. Presenters will offer an introduction to this topic and provide insights through interview data they collected at three Wyoming community colleges from both students and faculty at these colleges. The session will then conclude with group discussion on how to use the information and data presented to inform practice and policy to support students in your community.

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS: DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL RURAL CTE PROGRAMS IN GRADES 5-9 WITH DIGITAL CURRICULUM

Presenters: Christy Cleugh and Millie Padilla, eDynamic Learning; Josh Sneideman, Learning Blade; Lauren Pisa, Knowledge Matters

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

This session provides an overview of innovative digital curriculum offerings designed to strengthen Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways in rural communities. Participants will explore strategies for introducing CTE in grades 5-9, with a focus on fostering student engagement, addressing unique rural challenges, and ensuring alignment with long-term college and career readiness goals. Through practical examples and best practices, attendees will learn how digital resources can expand access, enhance program quality, and set the stage for thriving CTE programs that equip students with skills for the future workforce.

PLACE-BASED TEACHING: EXPEDITIONS IN THE SCHOOLYARD

Presenters: Jensen Ball, Hawaii ASCD; Whitney Aragaki, 2022 Hawaii State Teacher of the Year

Room: Zion (Level 5)

Discover how place-based science positions geographic location, geologic time, identity, and community at the heart of STEM learning. This session explores opportunities to use schoolyards and surrounding communities as living classrooms, helping students connect curriculum to the world around them. Drawing on ideas from Place-Based Science Teaching (Corwin Press, 2025) by Dr. Whitney Aragaki and Dr. Kirstin Milks, participants will gain strategies to spark curiosity, deepen understanding, and foster stewardship of our planet.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 10-10:45 A.M.

ROOTS TO RETENTION: PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LIVING AND EDUCATING

Presenters: Ann Van Wig and Tara Haskins, Eastern Washington University

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Research on rural pre-service teachers in a grow-your-own preparation program highlights how community ties, cultural understanding, and recognition of student strengths shape their commitment to rural education. Drawing from survey and interview data, the study explores how these future educators view their roles in connecting with students, families, and communities. Findings offer practical recommendations for using place-based learning to support teacher recruitment and retention, along with strategies to foster long-term engagement and address challenges unique to rural settings.

PLACE-BASED LEARNING AND IDENTITY AFFIRMATION IN STEM: DIFFERENCES ACROSS RURALITY

Presenter: Guan Saw, Claremont Graduate University

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

This study brings together these lines of research to examine two research questions (RQs): (1) Whether and to what extent is place-based STEM learning related to STEM identity affirmation? and (2) Whether and to what extent does the relationship between place-based STEM learning and STEM identity affirmation vary by rurality? The findings can help inform and refine place-based learning theories and are relevant to the 2022-2027 NREA's Research Agenda in the domains of spatial and educational equity, and college and career trajectory, as well as to the Why Rural Matters 2023 report, which highlights the variation in the contexts and conditions of rural education across the country.

ROOTED IN RURAL INNOVATION: EXAMINING TEACHER AND STUDENT OUTCOMES IN RURAL CS EDUCATION

Presenter: Kerri Franklin, Missouri State University

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

Explore the impact of the CODERS (Computer Science Opportunities, Development, and Education in Rural Schools) program, a multi-year, grant-funded initiative serving over 4,000 rural students and 56 teachers in grades 3-8. Grounded in interdisciplinary, place-based learning, CODERS integrates computer science, STEM, and writing through hands-on modules, robust teacher professional development, and student events like the Coding Olympiad. Using a mixed-methods evaluation, the study examines changes in student attitudes, computational thinking, academic achievement, and teacher efficacy. Findings reveal strong professional development participation (92%), increased teacher confidence in teaching coding, and notable student gains in math attitudes and CS interest, especially among students attending computer science-focused events.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11-11:45 A.M. SESSIONS

RURAL TEACHER PANEL: THE POWER OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

Presenters: Henry Whitehead, Rural Schools Collaborative; Haley Salitros Lancaster, Vincennes Community School Corporation; Jennifer Pratt, Houston High School; Kelsy Sproul, Kansas State University

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Hear directly from current rural educators who are bringing Place-Based Education to life in their classrooms through Rural Schools Collaborative's Grants in Place program. In this session, Taylor McCabe-Juhnke, Executive Director of RSC, will host a panel of three teachers as they share their stories, successes, and lessons learned. This conversation celebrates the lasting impact of intentionally connecting students, classroom, and community.

RECOVERY, RELATIONAL CARE, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN RURAL EDUCATION

Presenters: Jon Dance and Josh Thompson, Virginia Tech/The Center for Rural Education

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Rural schools serve as vital hubs in communities impacted by the opioid and substance use crises, especially in Appalachia. Explore how schools can advance trauma-informed care, relational resilience, and culturally responsive recovery pathways. Using Southwest Virginia as a case study, the session critiques traditional prevention models and introduces the Community Resilience Model (CRM). A certified CRM facilitator will share practical strategies to integrate CRM and trauma-informed practices into school settings. Gain tools to strengthen student support systems, foster meaningful partnerships, and promote healing-centered engagement tailored to the realities of rural communities.

ENHANCING RURAL EDUCATION THROUGH STUDENT-TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

Presenter: Anna-Margaret Goldman, Auburn University

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

With nearly half of Alabama's students attending rural schools—and rural student performance ranked among the lowest nationally—there is an urgent need to recruit and retain high-quality educators in these communities. Explore the development of a student-teacher residency program designed to address the rural teacher shortage in Alabama, led by Auburn University. Learn what it takes to build a successful program, from securing K-12 and university partnerships to gaining student buy-in and funding support. Most importantly, hear directly from former rural teacher fellows who will share lessons learned, program highlights, and the real-world impact of this innovative approach to rural teacher preparation. Whether you are exploring a similar initiative or looking to strengthen your teacher pipeline, this session offers practical insights and inspiration.

MINING FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Presenters: Doug Adams and Josh Anderson, University of Wisconsin-Platteville; Cody Grabhorn and Christina Grev, The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

This session explores a partnership between a regional comprehensive university and The Mining and Rollo Jamison Museums, demonstrating how institutional collaboration can address localized needs. In a Community Learning course, university students refined K-12 instructional materials highlighting Platteville's lead mining history. Museum staff provided tours and feedback, while students delivered detailed recommendations, annotated bibliographies, and supplemental resources. The session offers a replicable framework and practical supports for building mutually beneficial partnerships between schools, universities, and community organizations—highlighting how local expertise can be leveraged to meet local challenges.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11-11:45 A.M. SESSIONS

CONNECTED FUTURES: HOW CONNECTIVITY FUELS ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY, AND INNOVATION IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Presenters: Peter Gladkin, T-Mobile K-12 Education; Michael Gonzalez, Rural Schools Innovation Zone; Matt Winters, Utah State Board of Education; Hayley Spira-Bauer, Fullmind; Peter Bang-Knudsen, Former Superintendent and T-Mobile Education Advisor

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

This panel explores how rural districts are transforming learning through innovative connectivity strategies. Hear from education, technology and policy experts as they share real-world stories and scalable solutions that expand access to CTE, dual credit, and remote learning opportunities. Learn how technology—paired with the right partnerships—can unlock new pathways for rural students to thrive.

CREATING A STATE RURAL ED ASSOCIATION: LESSONS FROM VERMONT

Presenters: Daniella Sutherland, University of Vermont; Ashley Hanlon, Grand Isle Supervisory Union; John Castle, Vermont Rural Education Consortium; Ryan Heraty, University of Vermont, and Lamoille South Supervisory Union

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Interested in creating a rural education association for your state or region? Founding members of the Vermont Rural Education Association (VT REA) will outline the process used to establish a state-level rural education association. The presentation includes strategies for securing buy-in, recruiting founding board members, drafting by-laws, obtaining nonprofit status, and achieving formal recognition as a state affiliate of the NREA. Lessons learned and common pitfalls will also be shared to support other groups seeking to develop their own NREA-affiliated organizations.

CONDUCTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS TIME AND SPACE: UTILIZING VIRTUAL AND HYBRID TRAINING

Presenter: Kat Fancher, Smithsonian Science Education Center

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Delivering engaging professional development is especially challenging when educators are separated by distance. This session shares insights from virtual and hybrid trainings conducted with teachers in rural North and South Carolina through an education and innovation research grant. Lessons learned include what worked, what did not, and how high-quality instructional materials paired with professional learning contributed to improved student outcomes. Engage in group discussions to explore how virtual and hybrid delivery models can be effectively adapted to meet the needs of their own local contexts.

INNOVATION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE: CREATING A VIRTUAL ADVANCED PLACEMENT® RURAL COLLABORATIVE

Presenters: Dave Backler, School Administrative Unit 20; Matt Saladino, Gorham Middle and High School; Dena Johnson, College Board

Room: Park City (Level 3)

New Hampshire's North Country faces significant economic challenges, limiting access to college-level coursework. To expand opportunities, six high schools have formed a collaborative virtual program launching in 2025–26. Students will take synchronous AP® courses taught by local teachers, overcoming barriers of cost and distance. SAU 20 Superintendent Dave Backler and Gorham High School Counselor Matt Saladino share how they built this partnership, key components for success, and how others can replicate the model. Participants receive the Bringing Advanced Placement® to Rural and Small Schools toolkit to customize and implement similar programs in their own communities.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 11-11:45 A.M. SESSIONS

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS

Presenter: Tyler Ruby, Wyoming Education Association Southwest Region

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Safe and healthy classrooms begin with educators who can regulate themselves through mental health and wellness activities and routines. Educators who can manage mental health and wellness issues effectively are able to provide a safe, regulated, and positive classroom environment. These educators are also able to build safe classroom communities through building positive working relationships with students, parents, and other educators. Explore ideas for routines and/or activities you can implement immediately in your personal and professional lives. These routines and activities can also be taught to others to assist them in building their own best practices with mental health and wellness.

USING A CHALLENGE-BASED APPROACH FOR RURAL LEADERS

Presenters: Theresa Gibson and Nancy Mangum, North Carolina Rural Education Collaborative; John Hughes, Southeast Education Service Center Utah; Darren Hudgins, Leading Edge Learning

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

The unique, place-based challenges that face rural leaders require unique and innovative support to foster sustainable and scaled change. This session will introduce a creative approach to leadership development, focusing on human-centered design and engaging school leaders across traditional town, county, and/or district boundaries. Learn how to engage a large group of learners in a design-thinking process that leads to place-based solutions for common issues for rural leaders, like teacher recruitment/retention and access to resources. Join us to learn about unique engagement strategies to encourage creative thinking, such as engaging in tours of private businesses and practicing the beginner's mindset in new spaces. Walk away from this session with a framework for managing complex change, strategies for fostering creative thinking and innovative approaches to recurring challenges, and a model for building a learning community that extends beyond traditional geographic boundaries.

EXPANDING ACCESS: USING DIGITAL CURRICULUM TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Presenters: Ben Dalton, Kane County School District; John Bushman, BYU Continuing Education

Room: Bryce (Level 5)

Rural school districts face unique challenges in providing equitable educational opportunities for all students. This session explores how digital curriculum can expand access, personalize learning, and support student success in remote communities. Explore insights, strategies, and practical examples of implementing digital resources to address diverse learning needs while overcoming geographic and resource limitations.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 11-11:45 A.M. SESSIONS

RURAL OUTDOOR SCIENCE LEARNING: LEVERAGING STUDENTS' FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Presenter: Julianne Wenner, Clemson University

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

To support rural students' access to high-quality science education, bridging the gap between students' rural knowledge and school-based science is essential. This session presents findings from a qualitative study examining how rural educators intentionally use the local outdoor environment to teach science. The guiding research question asked: How do rural educators use the outdoor environment to teach science? Results indicate that educators leverage outdoor learning in three key ways: (1) building rural community partnerships, (2) engaging students through relational teaching, and (3) designing experiences that honor students as individuals and scientists. Findings highlight how outdoor instruction fosters engagement, supports authentic scientific inquiry aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and deepens connections among students, their communities, and the natural world.

EXPLORING RURAL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MEASUREMENT AND MODELING

Presenter: Jerred Jolin, Eastern Oregon University

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

How do rural teachers engage in professional development, and what does their learning journey look like? Findings from a study of 220 K-12 teachers across 15 rural school districts in eastern Oregon map patterns of participation in continuing professional development (CPD) using a data-driven approach. Analysis of survey responses through an advanced measurement model identified distinct levels of CPD engagement, illustrating how teachers progress from occasional participation to sustained, in-depth involvement. The research offers valuable insights into rural educators' professional learning experiences and provides a framework for designing CPD opportunities that are responsive to their needs.

WE HAVE TO ADDRESS THOSE NEEDS FIRST: SCHOOL PERSONNEL RESPONSE TO SUBSTANCE USE

Presenters: Karen Eppley, Kansas State University; Cat Biddle, University of Maine

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

The over-representation of substance use disorder (SUD) in rural communities is a manifestation of spatial inequity, deeply affecting the developmental experiences and potential of children whose caregivers are impacted. This study reports on a qualitative inquiry investigating teacher and school leader's perceptions of barriers and affordances to schools' potential to function as recovery-friendly local institutions marked by empathetic and realistic responses to SUD. The stigmatization of SUD and the heightened public scrutiny associated with the dense social networks of many rural communities can be obstacles to schools' positive impacts on SU-impacted families, but the characteristics common to rural schools offer unrealized potential.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

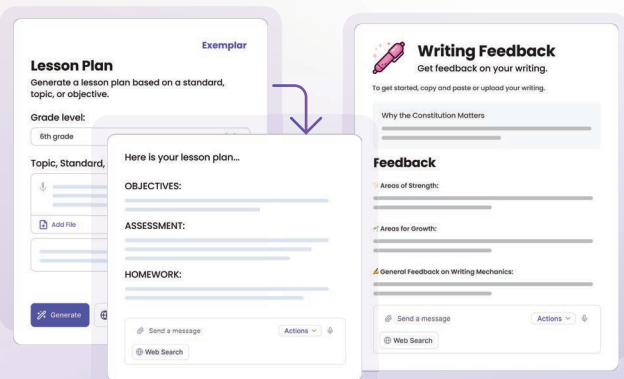
NETWORKING LUNCH • SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

11:45 A.M.-1 P.M. NETWORKING LUNCH (PROVIDED)

Take advantage of the Networking Lunch to connect with colleagues and build new relationships. This is a perfect time to meet new people, share insights, and exchange ideas in a relaxed setting. Use the opportunity to debrief on what you’ve learned and gain fresh perspectives from fellow attendees.

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 1:15-2 P.M. SESSIONS

BUILDING STRONG EDUCATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS: 10 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DAKOTAS

Presenters: David De Jong, Dakota State University; Laurie Matzke, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Educational apprenticeships are reshaping the pipelines for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals in rural states, addressing persistent educator shortages. This session highlights ten key lessons from apprenticeship programs in South Dakota and North Dakota, along with best practices for success—including collaboration with state agencies, securing sustainable funding, and leveraging support from national organizations such as National Grow Your Own. Topics include effective mentorship models, strategies for balancing work and learning, data collection for continuous improvement, and supporting special education pathways. Designed for education leaders, policymakers, and administrators, the session offers actionable steps to strengthen apprenticeship programs in rural communities.

REALIZING A TRANSFORMATIVE PLACED-BASED VISION: TARTANS AND RURAL INITIATIVES IGNITING COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Presenters: Arren Duggan, Tamara La Prad, Amelia Bennett, Natalya Main, and Olivia Dinges, Monmouth College

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Monmouth College's Rural Education Initiatives (REDI) are reimagining teacher preparation through deep, place-based partnerships. Through programs like the Rural Teacher Corps (TARTANS), the Educational Farm and Garden, and MC Teacher Pathways, teacher candidates engage with local people, land, and histories in meaningful ways. These efforts are revitalizing rural spaces, strengthening community ties, and inspiring a new generation of educators committed to rural life. A panel will share projects and personal visions for rural education, highlighting how community assets—both current and historic—can serve as powerful pathways for educational change.

DEMYSTIFYING AI: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR RURAL EDUCATORS

Presenters: Mallory Poole and Brionne Neilson, Southern Utah University

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Generative AI tools offer new possibilities for early childhood education, especially in lesson planning and development. These tools can streamline planning, spark creative ideas, and support diverse learning needs—saving time while enhancing instructional quality. With a focus on child-centered, developmentally appropriate practices, educators can explore practical strategies for using AI responsibly and effectively. This interactive approach addresses common concerns and provides real-world examples to guide integration into daily practice.

MDRC'S RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTER: A NEW FRONTIER OF FEDERAL INVESTMENT

Presenters: Sabrina Klein and Alyssa Ratledge, MDRC; Crystine Miller, Montana University System

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

For the first time, the U.S. Department of Education has funded a rural education research center focused on students' journey to and through postsecondary education. Join lead researchers from MDRC and a practitioner partner from Montana to learn about the why behind the center, the planned research, the purposeful inclusion of practitioners nationwide in the studies, and how you can contribute to the direction of federally funded rural higher education research.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 1:15-2 P.M. SESSIONS

THE POWER OF RURAL EDUCATION: EMPOWERING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Presenter: Lauren Zak-Newton, Calhan School District

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

An experienced rural educator shares a powerful firsthand account of the profound benefits and joys of teaching in a rural school setting. This presentation offers a realistic, thought-provoking exploration of the importance of cultivating authentic teacher-student relationships. These connections are shown to be the cornerstone of a successful, engaging, and enriching educational experience—for both students and teachers. The story highlights the transformative impact of meaningful relationships, and the deep sense of purpose and community found in rural education. It serves as a reminder of the lasting value of connection at the heart of teaching and learning.

FROM ISOLATION TO COLLABORATION: LAUNCHING RURAL INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAMS

Presenter: Lauren Vandever, Bristow Public Schools

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

Building an effective instructional coaching program in a rural district comes with unique challenges, but also powerful opportunities. Based on real-world experiences of a two-year (and ongoing) pilot program, explore the foundational practices and beliefs needed for success, key administrative considerations, and the essential personality traits of a district-wide instructional coach that do not have coaching experience already. Dive into strategies for incorporating data initiatives, creative funding solutions, and ways to ensure coaching benefits both teachers and students. Gain insights from teacher reflections on the coaching process, learn how to navigate the complexities of rural education settings, and leave with practical steps to implement or refine coaching in their own districts.

FILLING GAPS NOW: INSTRUCTION, CURRICULUM, COUNSELING, COLLEGE, AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Presenters: Glen Lineberry and Mistry Groseth, American Student Opportunity Collaborative

Room: Park City (Level 3)

American Student Opportunity Collaborative (ASOC) fills instructional and curricular gaps for rural students and schools, provides a complete program of college and career pathways guidance, and leads professional learning communities and development for school leaders and their teachers. ASOC is now working to expand from its five years of successful service in Arizona, with a focus on the states identified in Why Rural Matters 2023: Mississippi, Alabama, West Virginia, Missouri, Louisiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and North Carolina, along with CTE and dual enrollment projects in Ohio, Colorado, and Tennessee. After a brief presentation about ASOC's programming, the session will be devoted to identifying needs in those states that ASOC can help fill and how best to bridge those gaps.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 1:15-2 P.M. SESSIONS

GROWING A MENTORING PROGRAM TO REDUCE RURAL TEACHER ISOLATION

Presenters: Jennifer Luebeck and Jayne Downey, Montana State University, Center for Research on Rural Education

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

Rural K-12 classrooms are increasingly staffed by new or underprepared teachers who may be isolated both geographically and professionally and may also have limitations in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical experience, or cultural/community awareness. An innovative statewide mentoring program in Montana was designed to address these gaps by preparing and matching veteran teachers with new rural teachers to provide individualized and content-focused mentoring. The program offers a framework for one-on-one mentoring; supports virtual and in-person communities of practice; and designs collaborative professional learning modules related to content, self, and students (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). In this session we describe components of the MentorMT program, investigate effective design elements, share teacher stories and current outcomes, and discuss applications to specific populations. Discover how MentorMT is uplifting isolated teachers, addressing unique needs, and working toward state-supported sustainability.

ELEVATING BOARD LEADERSHIP: 7 STEPS TO EXCELLENCE

Presenter: Aaron Malczewski, CESA 7

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

The unique, place-based challenges that face rural leaders require unique and innovative support to foster sustainable and scaled change. Discover a creative approach to leadership development, focusing on human-centered design and engaging school leaders across traditional town, county, and/or district boundaries. Learn how to engage a large group of learners in a design-thinking process that leads to place-based solutions for common issues for rural leaders, like teacher recruitment/retention and access to resources. Join us to learn about unique engagement strategies to encourage creative thinking, such as engaging in tours of private businesses and practicing the beginner's mindset in new spaces. Walk away from this session with a framework for managing complex change, strategies for fostering creative thinking and innovative approaches to recurring challenges, and a model for building a learning community that extends beyond traditional geographic boundaries.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE RESEARCH SESSIONS • 1:15–2 P.M. SESSIONS

A SCOPING REVIEW OF RURAL EDUCATION AND PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

Presenter: Phillip Grant, Clemson University

Room: Juniper (Level 2)

Place-based education (PBE) is a pedagogical approach that leverages local assets, culture, and environments to enhance student learning. Within rural education, PBE serves as a powerful framework for fostering equity, sustainability, and community engagement. Explore findings from a scoping review that systematically examined 119 peer-reviewed articles to map the current state of rural PBE research. The review identified key themes, including the central roles of teachers, students, school leaders, physical geography, and community in shaping rural PBE. Equity emerged as a foundational element, guiding the implementation and outcomes of PBE in rural settings. Hear more about concrete findings from the scoping review, discuss critical research gaps, and engage in discussion about the power of place within rural education.

RURAL ADMINISTRATORS: CRITICAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT ARBITERS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Presenter: Michele Schutz, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Room: Cottonwood (Level 2)

Despite the promise of college and career practices and partnerships deeply rooted in place within rural schools across the nation, many rural students with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing critical secondary services aligned with their postsecondary goals. The literature provides very minimal guidance for rural school and district administrators on addressing these inequities. Explore findings from a nationwide, mixed-methods study about the perspectives of rural school and district-level administrators regarding their facilitation of career development for students with disabilities. More specifically, learn how rural administrators facilitate and prioritize access to inclusive and specialized career preparation opportunities for students with disabilities, engage with prominent roles, challenges, and support needs in this area, and apply practical strategies for forging pathways to postsecondary success for students with disabilities living in rural communities.

UNDER PRESSURE: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR STRESS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Presenter: Nicole Schutter, Northern State University

Room: Blue Spruce (Level 2)

School administrators face increasing demands that impact their well-being and effectiveness, along with growing pressures that extend beyond the school day, including community expectations, policy demands, and personal well-being challenges. These challenges are often amplified in rural districts, where administrators frequently juggle multiple roles, face geographic isolation, and encounter unique staffing and funding constraints. Learn about research on the stress levels of P-12 administrators in South Dakota, examining both in-school and external factors contributing to their stress, such as staffing shortages, legislative pressures, and work-life balance struggles. Gain insights into these challenges and explore strategies for fostering leadership sustainability and well-being, particularly in rural school settings.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15-3 P.M. SESSIONS

IMMERSIVE LEARNING IN RURAL EDUCATION

Presenter: Duane Waber, Discovery Education

Room: Alta (Level 3)

Immersive learning is a recent term that is creeping into public education vernacular. What is immersive learning, and how can it benefit rural teachers and students? Grab your Chromebooks and iPads and discover interactive and innovative solutions for rural schools to explore immersive learning through the lens of gamification, augmented reality, AI, and 3-D virtual field trips. Level the playing field for rural schools and prepare rural students for the ever-evolving post-education landscape.

FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG LOCAL DISTRICTS TO SUPPORT BEHAVIOR NEEDS

Presenters: Alexandria Nudelman, Lake Havasu Unified School District #1; Victoria Trujillo, Kingman Unified School District #20; Allan Smith, Essential Behavior Health

Room: Snowbird (Level 3)

Rural school districts in Arizona are collaborating across Mohave County to better support students, particularly those with complex behavioral needs. Their shared efforts have led to growth in students and stronger support systems despite challenges like student transience and limited resources. Key topics include strategies for addressing behavior across diverse school settings, supporting transient students, and the unique challenges of serving students with complex needs in rural areas. This session highlights the power of inter-district collaboration and highlights effective, real-world approaches to improving outcomes for all learners in rural communities.

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS BUILDING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Presenter: Brandie Phillips Arnold, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Room: Solitude (Level 3)

Learn more about how principal supervisors build principals' instructional leadership capacity. According to research, principals receive support from principal supervisors. However, the support is unstructured and primarily focused on behavior instead of building their instructional leadership capacity. Discover findings from elementary principals of five school districts that provided perspectives on their principal supervisor's role in developing their instructional leadership capacity. It is vitally important that rural leaders create a network of support through relationships and communication that they can use to improve as instructional leaders of the school building. Gain perspective on the structures and coaching regarding principals' instructional leadership capacity in rural areas. Learn how to implement supports and resources that have helped increase principals' instructional leadership capacity to improve student outcomes.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M. SESSIONS

DEVELOPING A RURAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATE: PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR THE REALITIES OF RURAL TEACHING

Presenters: Janet Stramel and Paul Adams, Fort Hays State University

Room: Brighton (Level 3)

Rural schools face ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining well-prepared educators, yet many teacher preparation programs overlook the realities of rural teaching. A new nine-credit-hour Rural Education Certificate aims to fill that gap by equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to thrive in rural communities. Grounded in research and best practices, the program includes coursework in place-based pedagogy, rural leadership, multi-grade instruction, and field experiences in rural schools. Developed in partnership with community colleges and districts, this model offers a promising approach to strengthening rural teacher preparation and can be adapted to other contexts.

CULTURAL NAVIGATION PRACTICES FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ENTERING DIVERSE, RURAL COMMUNITIES

Presenters: Marcie Reuer and Joe Hicks, Montana State University

Room: Woodward (Level 3)

Explore best practices to prepare and support pre-service teachers as they enter schools in diverse, rural communities through university and community partnerships. Strategies for the socialization of pre-service teachers centered on the three Rs of relationships (respect, responsibility, and reciprocity) to assist in the cultural navigation of both school and community will be addressed using concrete examples. Specific case studies from placements in Hutterite communities and tribal communities will be explored, with foundational principles that can be applied to a wide variety of community and cultural contexts. Receive step-by-step guidance for preparation, fieldwork, and post-experience reflection to assist pre-service teachers' ability to thrive in diverse rural communities and meet the needs of their students. We will have opportunities for collaboration and discussion among attendees.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING TRAUMA: HANDLE WITH CARE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Presenters: Victoria Schaefer and Hannah Cheever, SRI

Room: Snowbasin (Level 3)

Learn to identify and leverage the strengths of rural communities to solve shared problems through school-community partnerships. Receive information on the freely available Handle With Care (HWC) program, drawing from an experience of implementing the program in a rural West Virginia county. HWC connects first responder agencies, such as law enforcement, fire, and emergency management services, and schools, to ensure students who experience potentially traumatic events are handled with care at schools. HWC also promotes cross-agency collaboration to strengthen understanding of collective and shared challenges in supporting student needs, expand mechanisms to address these challenges, and use data to emphasize continuous improvement of the implementation of practices to support all students. Learn how to foster collaborative relationships between community partners and schools with our proven approach—complete with proposed structure and sample meeting agendas for your own immediate use.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

45-MINUTE LEARNING SESSIONS • 2:15–3 P.M. SESSIONS

THE ARTS MATTER: EVEN IN THE TOUGHEST PLACES

Presenters: Sarah Morrison, Jerry Stout, and Kalyn McAlester, Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Room: Powder Mountain (Level 3)

School administrators must operate with an ethic of care if they engage in building efficacy for teachers and how they react and respond to students in their classrooms. This promising practice will endeavor to delineate a previous case study conducted by a team of colleagues related to juvenile students and engaging music programs in response to providing an element of care in a rural context (Zhu, Morrison, et. al, 2024). The purpose is to equip administrators in rural settings and communities to engage in elevating music in the light of recent developments to budget cut the arts program when a shift is needed for line items that require adjustment. The impact of music education, namely guitar club related to this case study is far-reaching and generation building.

RUNNING ON COFFEE AND GOOD VIBES: LEADERSHIP TIPS FOR SCHOOL WELLNESS

Presenter: Jen McNally, Educational Service Unit 5

Room: Park City (Level 3)

Running on Coffee and Good Vibes: Leadership Tips for School Wellness offers a fun and practical approach to promoting well-being in schools. Learn from a nationally renowned keynote speaker and Director of Mental Health and Wellness, who works across the country with administrators to create positive, supportive school environments. Explore leadership strategies to foster a stress-free atmosphere, prevent burnout, and boost morale. Leave with actionable tips to promote wellness, ensuring a healthier, happier school community—all while keeping things light and manageable.

LOCAL TREASURES: ASSET MAPPING FOR SUCCESSFUL RURAL POSTSECONDARY TRANSITIONS

Presenters: Rachel Rush-Marlowe, Michelle Foley, and Ayana Tapper, ResearchED; Beth Benedix, The Castle

Room: Wasatch (Level 4)

While only 29% of rural students enroll in postsecondary education—compared to 48% of urban students—rural K-12 schools continue to demonstrate high performance. Rural students often outperform or match their peers in academic achievement and graduation rates, thanks in part to strong community-based social resources. But more support is needed to help these students successfully transition beyond high school. Discover an innovative partnership model from Indiana, where The Castle and DePauw University collaborate with rural districts to turn community assets into shared, experiential learning spaces. Hear about insights from this work and about North Putnam, an award-winning documentary that showcases how one rural school fosters meaningful conversations around postsecondary planning. Engage in an interactive community asset-mapping activity to apply these ideas in their own contexts.

STATE AFFILIATE DIRECTOR/LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Presenters: NREA

Room: Traverse (Level 4)

This breakout session offers a dedicated space for State Affiliate Directors and Legislative Committee members to reconnect, share updates from across the country, and engage in dialogue about the pressing issues facing rural education today. Participants will receive timely updates from NREA, preview key advocacy priorities for the year ahead—including plans for the spring DC Hill visit—and collaborate on strengthening our collective voice at the national level. Join us to align, strategize, and support one another in advancing rural education policy.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

GENERAL SESSION - SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

3:15-4:30 P.M. KEYNOTE



CASSANDRA WORTHY

Founder & CEO of Change Enthusiasm® Global, Keynote Speaker,
Author & Consultant

Keynote: Master the Chemistry of Change: Emotional Alchemy Through Change Enthusiasm®

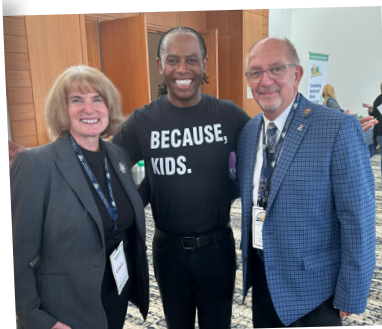
What if fear, frustration, and fatigue weren't obstacles in times of change—but powerful catalysts for growth? In this dynamic keynote, Cassandra introduces the Change Enthusiasm® framework, a science-based and emotionally intelligent approach that empowers leaders and teams to transform resistance into resilience, and anxiety into opportunity. Blending sharp business insight, compelling storytelling, and emotional mastery, Cassandra shows audiences how to decode their emotional signals during disruption and harness them as fuel for innovation, engagement, and lasting success. Leave with a renewed belief that change can be embraced and even enjoyed, a proven framework for turning emotional friction into forward momentum, and the mindsets, tools, and inspiration to step confidently into the role of a Change Enthusiast® who leads with clarity, courage, and resilience.

ATTENDEE RECEPTION

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 4:30-6 P.M. SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

All attendees are invited to mix and mingle during our taste of Utah-inspired attendee reception. Grab a locally-inspired drink and a few appetizers and connect with new and old friends.

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NEW! AI SUMMIT

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15 • 9 A.M. - 12 P.M.

SALT LAKE BALLROOM, LEVEL 2

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8-9 A.M. COFFEE & CHAT

9-10:15 A.M. OPENING & KEYNOTE



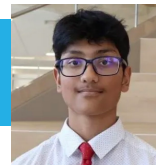
CHRISTIAN JACKSON

Founder, Edapt

Keynote: Leading as AI Architects: AI to Hone Your Organization's Expertise, Without the Fear

In an era where educational leaders are constantly navigating brand new technological challenges, AI offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance decision-making and streamline administrative processes. In this keynote, Christian, CEO of Edapt Schools, will reveal actionable strategies for leveraging AI to not only optimize workflows but also to truly empower educational leaders. By focusing on practical applications and avoiding the pitfalls of over-hyped tech trends, attendees will leave with a clear roadmap to harness AI effectively – turning it into a tool that hones their district's specialties. Discover how to lead with clarity amongst all of the tech noise and a forward-thinking mindset that prepares your district for the future.

10:20-11:45 A.M.
TED-STYLE TALKS



TED TALK SPEAKERS & PANELISTS

Sara Flanagan, Associate Professor of Special Education, University of Maine

Valerie Davis, Federal Programs/Elementary Supervisor, Polk County Schools (Tennessee)

Kelly Jeppson, ELA Teacher & AI Facilitator, Providence Hall Junior High (Utah)

Rahul Nair, High School Student (Utah)

Matthew Winters, AI Specialist, Utah State Board of Education



Panel Facilitator: Christian Pinedo, VP of External Affairs & Advocacy, aiEDU

11:45 A.M.-12 P.M.

COLLECTIVE CLOSE: INSIGHTS, INTENTIONS, & NEXT STEPS

NREA PAST PRESIDENTS & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

1900		
	1907	Organized by 28 people under auspices of National Education Association. The original letter was signed by Dick J. Crosby of the Department of Agriculture in Washington D.C.
	1908	David B. Johnson - First President Elected and Installed - Rockhill South Carolina - Meeting in Cleveland
	1909	Kenyon Butterfield - Massachusetts - Meeting in Denver, CO
1910	1910	James Barr - California - Meeting in Boston, MA
	1911	B.M. Davis - Ohio - Meeting in San Francisco, CA
	1912	Ernest E. Balcomb - North Carolina - Meeting in Chicago, IL
	1913	E.C. Bishop - Iowa - Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT
	1914	George Works - New York - Meeting in St. Paul, MN
	1915	W.H. French - Michigan - Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT
	1916	Charles Lane - Washington DC - Meeting in Portland, OR
	1917	H.W. Foght - Washington DC - Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA
	1918	H.A. Allan - Maine - Meeting in Milwaukee, WI
	1919	Officially became the Department of Rural Education under NEA
	1919	Eli Rapp - Pennsylvania - Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT
1920	1920	Ernest Burnham - Michigan - Meeting in Des Moines, IA
	1921	C.G. Sargent - Colorado - Meeting in Boston, MA
	1922	John M. Foote - Louisiana - Meeting in Oakland, CA
	1923	Mary Campbell - Iowa - Meeting in Chicago, IL
	1924	A.F. Harman - Alabama - Meeting in Indianapolis, IN
	1925	Julian Butterworth - New York - Meeting in Philadelphia, PA
	1926	N. Searle Light - Connecticut - Meeting in Seattle, WA
	1927	William Robinson - Michigan - Meeting in Minneapolis, MN
	1928	Mabel Carney - New York - Meeting in Atlantic City, NJ
	1929	Helen Heffeman - California - Meeting in Cleveland, OH
1930	1930	Kate Wofford - New York - Meeting in Detroit, MI
	1931	Ray Snider - New York - Meeting in Atlantic City, NJ
	1932	Agnes Samuelson - Iowa - Meeting in Chicago, IL
	1933	R.E. Jagers - Kentucky - Meetings in Washington DC and Cleveland, OH
	1934	Sue Powers - Tennessee - Meetings in Denver, CO and Atlantic City, NJ
	1935	Francis L. Bailey - Meeting in Portland, OR
	1936	Fred C. Fisher - Meetings in Detroit, MI and New Orleans, LA
	1937	Katherine M. Cook - Meetings in New York City, NY and Atlantic City, NJ
	1938	Norman Frost - Tennessee - Meeting in San Francisco, CA
	1939	Norman Frost - Tennessee - Meeting in Cleveland, OH

1940	1940	Frank Cyr - New York - Meeting in New York City, NY
	1941	Daisy Howard - Michigan - Meeting in Boston, MA
	1942	Barton Morgan - Iowa - Meetings in Denver, CO and San Francisco, CA
	1943	Barton Morgan - Iowa - Meeting in Indianapolis, IN
	1944	Lois Clark - Pennsylvania - Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA
	1945	E.E. Stonecipher - Kansas - Meeting in Buffalo, NY
	1946	E.E. Stonecipher - Kansas - Meeting in Cincinnati, OH
	1947	Jane Franseth - Washington, DC - Meeting in Indianapolis, IN
	1948	Jane Franseth - Washington DC - Meeting in Milwaukee, WI
	1949	Paul Norris - Iowa - Meeting in Memphis, TN
1950	1950	John S. Carroll - Texas - Meeting in Columbus, OH
	1951	W.A. Early - Georgia - Meeting in Dallas, TX
	1952	Marjorie Leinauer - Illinois - Meeting in Dallas, TX
	1953	M.L. Cushman - Iowa - Meeting in Omaha, NE
	1954	Lucille Klinge - Oregon - Meeting in Washington DC
	1955	Cliff Huff - Kansas - Meeting in San Diego, CA
	1956	R.E. Harris - Texas - Meeting in Atlanta, GA
	1957	Ralph C. Norris - Iowa - Meeting in Denver, CO
	1958	Ralph C. Norris - Iowa - Meeting in Dallas, TX
	1959	Velma Linford - Wyoming - Meeting in Minneapolis, MN
1960	1960	William Bishop - Colorado - Meeting in Seattle, WA
	1961	Cliff Archer - Minnesota - Meeting in Louisville, KY
	1962	J.C. Fitzgerald - Oklahoma - Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA
	1963	Douglas McRae - Georgia - Meeting in Dallas, TX
	1964	Rosalie Farley - Nebraska - Meeting in Detroit, MI
	1965	Donald Kruzner - Washington - Meeting in Washington DC
	1966	Burton Kreitlow - Wisconsin - Meeting in San Diego, CA
	1967	William Dreier - Iowa - Meeting in Atlanta, GA
	1968	Noble Gividen - New York - Meeting in Oklahoma City, OK
	1969	Olin Gresham - California - Meeting in Spokane, WA
1970	1970	Gordon Swanson - Minnesota - Meeting in Cincinnati, OH
	1971	Thomas Quick - Oregon - Meeting in Des Moines, IA
	1972	E. Roberts Stephens - Iowa - Meeting in Reno, NV
	1973	Thomas Sommerville - Oregon - Meeting in Philadelphia, PA
	1974	Everett Edington - New Mexico - Meeting in Springfield, MO
	1975	Began separation from the NEA
	1975	Tom Lawrence - Texas - Meeting in Portland, OR
	1976	David Gilliland - Iowa - Meeting in San Antonio, TX
	1977	Leo Soucy - New York - Meeting in Albany, NY
	1978	Walter Turner - Colorado - Meeting in Denver, CO
	1979	Ray Drage - Ohio - Meeting in Hyannis Port, MA

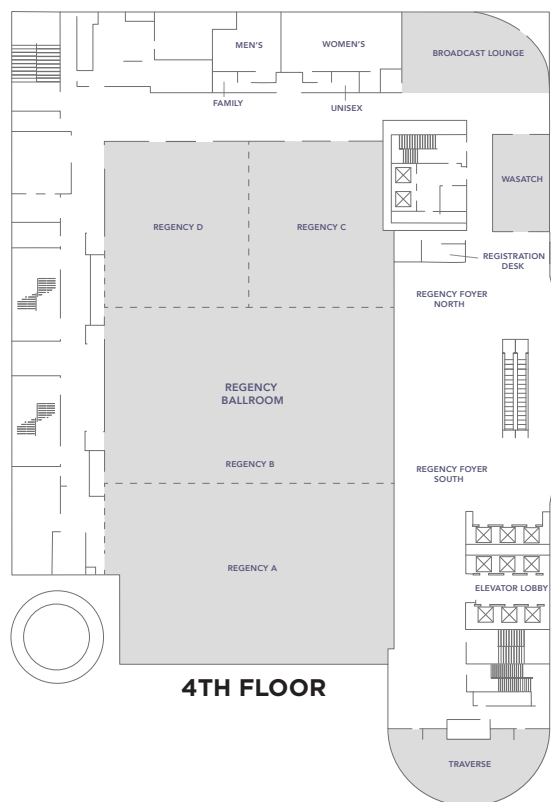
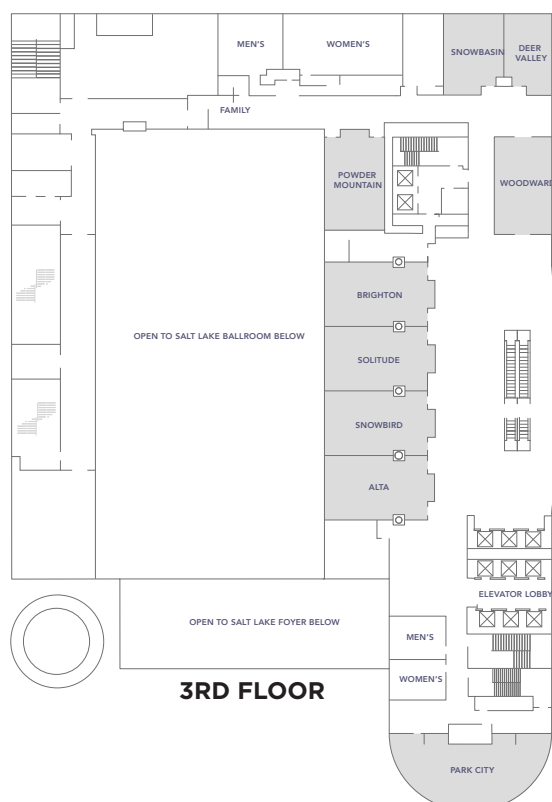
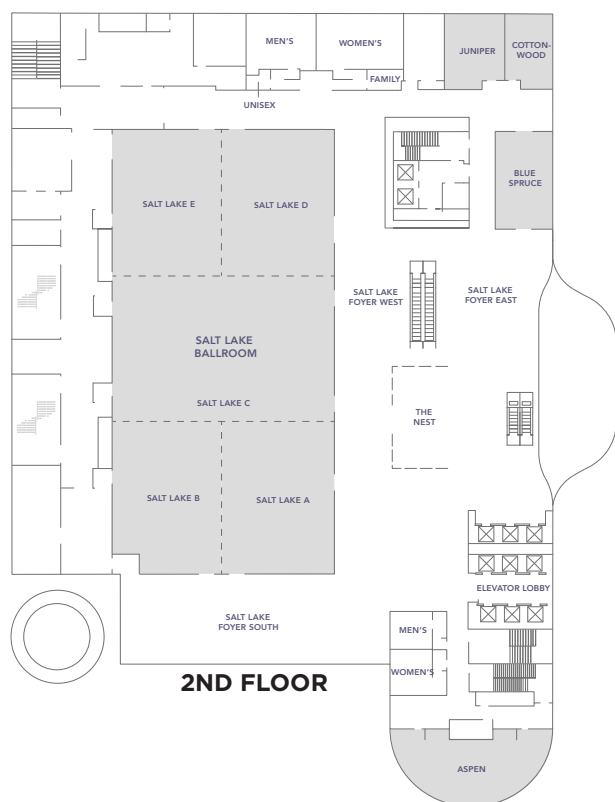
1980	1980	Completed separation from NEA
	1980	Anita Lohr - Arizona - Meeting in Madison, WI
	1981	Calvin Bones - Iowa - Meeting in Portland, OR
	1982	Glen Thompson - Wisconsin - Meeting in Tucson, AZ
	1983	Roy Brubacher - Colorado - Meeting in Rockport, MA
	1984	Rural Education Association Incorporated
	1984	James Jess - Iowa - Meeting in Manhattan, KS
	1985	Peter Schwalbenberg - Maine - Meeting in Olympia, WA
	1986	Jerry Horn - Kansas - Meeting in Little Rock, AR
	1987	Fred Tidwell - Washington - Meeting in Lake Placid, NY
	1988	Dwight Bode - Iowa - Meeting in Bismarck, ND
	1989	Charlene Rudolf - Maine - Meeting in Reno, NV
1990	1990	Patricia Laubach - North Dakota - Meeting in Colorado Springs, CO
	1991	Dave Trujillo - Colorado - Meeting in Jackson, MS
	1992	Bill Peter - Missouri - Meeting in Traverse City, MI
	1993	Gerald Hanson - Michigan - Meeting in Burlington, VT
	1994	Rene "Jay" Bouchard - New York - Meeting in Tuscaloosa, AL
	1995	Dean Swanson - Minnesota - Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT
	1996	Bennie McKay - Louisiana - Meeting in San Antonio, TX
	1997	Paul Street - Arizona - Meeting in Tucson, AZ
	1998	V. Pauline Hodges - Oklahoma - Meeting in Buffalo, NY
	1999	John L. Sullivan - Kansas - Meeting in Colorado Springs, CO
2000	2000	Mary Lou Gammon - Arizona - Meeting in Charleston, SC
	2001	George Brown - Texas - Meeting in Albuquerque, NM
	2002	Peter Kachris - New York - Meeting in Portland, OR
	2003	Al Eads Jr. - South Carolina - Meeting in Kearney, NE
	2004	Mike Copeland - Oklahoma - Meeting in Indianapolis, IN
	2005	J.M. Edington III - Arkansas - Meeting in Tucson, AZ
	2006	Robert Newhouse - Kansas - Meeting in Kansas City, MO
	2007	Gay Molnar - New York - Meeting in Oklahoma City, OK
	2008	Seth Adams - Texas - Meeting in San Antonio, TX
	2009	Don Stephens - Wisconsin - Meeting in Cincinnati, OH
2010	2010	Ray Patrick - Missouri - Meeting in Branson, MO
	2011	Cindy McIntee - South Carolina - Meeting in Hilton Head, SC
	2012	Phil Gerik - Texas - Meeting in Cincinnati, OH
	2013	Jimmy Cunningham - Arkansas - Meeting in Branson, MO
	2014	Gerald Thorne - Texas - Meeting in San Antonio, TX
	2015	Sandra Watkins - Illinois - Meeting in St. Louis, MO
	2016	J. Scott Turney - Indiana - Meeting in Columbus, OH
	2017	Allison Nys - Montana - Meeting in Columbus, OH
	2018	Dr. Jason Bell - Tennessee - Meeting in Denver, CO
	2019	Jimmy Cunningham - Arkansas - Meeting in Louisville, KY

2020	2020	Dr. Jon Habben - Nebraska - Virtual Meeting Pandemic Year
	2021	Dr. Jon Habben - Nebraska - Meeting Indianapolis, IN
	2022	Allison Nys - Montana - Meeting Green Bay, WI
	2023	David Ardrey - Illinois - Meeting in Chattanooga, TN
	2024	Dr. Melissa Sadorf - Arizona - Meeting in Savannah, GA
	2025	Dr. Devon Brenner - Utah - Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT
	2026	Dr. Bill Chapman - Texas - Meeting in San Antonio, TX
	2027	Dr. Darris Means - New Mexico - Meeting in Albuquerque, NM

2025 Executive Board			
Devon Brenner	President	Jerry White	Rural Board of Education Rep
Bill Chapman	President Elect	Amy Price Azano	Rural Research Center Rep
Darris Means	President Elect Designate	Allison Nys	Member At Large B
Melissa Sadorf	Immediate Past President	John Glasgow	Higher Education Rep
Dave Ardrey	Past President	Alissa Sasser	State Education Agency Rep
Jeff Byrd	School Admin Rep	Marlon Murray	Member at Large Rep A
Chris Lagoni	State Affiliate Rep B	Steven Johnson	State Affiliate Rep A

Current & Past Executive Directors	
Melissa Sadorf	Current
Dave Ardrey	2024-2025
Allen Pratt	2016-2024
John Hill	2007-2016

EVENT SPACE MAPS



2ND FLOOR

Registration
Salt Lake Ballroom
(all general sessions)
Exhibitor Booths

Breakouts

Juniper
Cottonwood
Blue Spruce
Aspen

4TH FLOOR

Broadcast Lounge
Quiet Room

Breakouts

Wasatch
Traverse

3RD FLOOR

Breakouts
Alta
Snowbird
Solitude
Brighton
Powder Mountain
Snowbasin
Deer Valley
Woodward
Park City

5TH FLOOR

Breakouts

Bryce
Zion



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ADVANCE RURAL EDUCATION

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

NOTES

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