



RSA TODAY

News for New York State's Rural Schools

January 2016 Issue

Rural Schools Association of New York State



I don't live in New York , I live In New York !

David Little, Executive Director, dal295@cornell.edu 518-250-5710
Thomas Marzeski, Deputy Director, tem75@cornell.edu 315-317-4823
Office: 607/255-8709 Fax: 607/254-2896

Department of Development Sociology,
Warren Hall 275 Flex
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
www.RSANYS.org

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EXCITEMENT LEADS THE WAY AT RSA INNOVATION SUMMIT!

With local funding essentially frozen this year and state funding forever in doubt, rural schools are always on the lookout for innovative ways to expand and improve learning opportunities for students. In our travels on your behalf, RSA frequently encounters extraordinary and unique programs. Often, when presenting legislative updates or research in an area, RSA staff is approached by a local educational leader saying something like “Hey, you’ve got to see this program we have going. It’s really making a difference for our kids!” And off we go.

RSA has combined four of these unique approaches into the first **RSA Education Innovation Summit**. Partnering with the New York State Council of School Superintendents and Cornell’s Community and Regional Development Institute, RSA will host the event as the warm-up to the NYSCOSS Winter Conference at the Albany Hilton on Saturday, March 5th, from noon to 5 p.m.



Often when you decide whether to attend a conference, you wonder whether the presentations will apply to your district’s situation and your students. You wonder whether they’ll be engaging and most importantly, whether they can really change the educational experience of your kids. That’s what makes the Education Innovation Summit different. RSA staff has personally seen each of these programs in action. We’ve seen their impact on students, we’ve assessed their widespread applicability and we’re convinced the four we’ve selected can have a profound effect on rural education.

We’ve made it as convenient for superintendents to attend as possible, linking it to the front end of the NYSCOSS Winter Conference. That doesn’t mean it’s only for superintendents, though. This is a “stand alone” summit that presents real innovation in a convenient and powerful program. School board members, educators, administrators will all find inspiration and ideas. In by noon, lunch is provided and back on the road or to your room by five, with four unique programs under your belt. The low registration fee is intended to cover the cost of lunch (this is no money maker.) We just want to serve you, our members with information you can use to look at rural education in new and exciting ways!

Here’s a glance at the program. Let us know if you’d like to be with us on March 5th. We’d sure love to see you!



Communities Committed to Educational Excellence

EDUCATION INNOVATION SUMMIT

March 5, 2016

Presented in Cooperation with
The New York State Council of School Superintendents
and
The Community and Regional Development Institute
of Cornell University

Welcome to the Education Innovation Summit!

12:00-12:30: Registration and Buffet Lunch

12:30: Welcome! David Allan Little, Esq. Executive Director, Rural Schools Assn. of NYS

12:45-1:45: Your Student's-Their World: What a great combination! Cuba Rushford Central School District has a Fisheries and Wildlife Technology Program that runs its own television show, operates a fishery, Deerasic Park (a deer management compound) and so much more! Science and technology combine with the natural world to provide students one of the most intensive and unique educational experiences in New York State!

Presenter: **Scott Jordan**, Cuba Rushford Central School District

1:45-2:45: The P-Tech Revolution: How Innovation is Turning Heads and Changing Minds. The Pathways in Technology Early College High School is changing student lives in the Mohawk Valley by turning the instructional model upside down!

Presenters: **Dr. Pat Michel**, District Supt., H-F-M BOCES, **Michael Dardaris**, P-Tech Principal

2:45-3:00: Refreshment Break

3:00-4:00: International Superstars and Simultaneous High School/College Graduation: International students provide diversity, cultural perspective and yes, revenue to your district! Broaden your students' experience without leaving the district by bringing the world to their doorstep. Then, have your students pick up their high school diploma, two weeks after they get their AAS Degree!

Presenters: **Skip Hultz**, Supt., Newcomb CSD, **Dr. Anael Alston**, Supt., Hamilton CSD, **Ms. Mariamawit Wasihum**, International Student

4:00-5:00: Bridging Research and Practice: Lessons from the Strategic Use of Mobile Technology to Support the Learning and Teaching of Mathematics

When mobile technologies are strategically used in combination with high leverage research-based practices, they become powerful tools to enhance mathematics learning and teaching equity.

Presenter: **Dr. Pamela Buffington**, Education Development Center



RSA on Capital Tonight

RSA Executive Director Dave Little will join Capital Tonight host Liz Benjamin this evening to discuss challenges facing rural schools. For those of you with Time Warner Cable service, the show airs both early and then again late this evening.

<http://www.nystateofpolitics.com/coming-up/>



RSA School Innovation Summit

Saturday, March 5, 2016

12 PM -5 PM

Held in Conjunction with the [NYSCOSS Winter Conference](#)

The Hilton Albany, Albany, NY

Hear the Latest Program and Structural Innovations
in Public Education !



Registration Fee: \$50.00 Registration Assistance Provided if Needed

RSA Registration Form / Invoice
RSA School Innovation Summit

Saturday, March 5, 2016

12 – 5 PM

The Hilton Albany

40 Lodge Street, Albany, NY 12207

Cost: \$50.00 per person

District: _____

Attendee Name : _____ Title: _____

Reservation Deadline – February 29, 2016

Please return completed form with check to:

Rural Schools Association

275 Flex Warren Hall

Cornell University

Ithaca, NY 14853

Questions contact: Natalie Mitchell

Email: NAM33@Cornell.edu

Tel: (607) 255-8709

Fax: (607) 254-2896



MAJOR REPORT

ON HOW TO IMPROVE EDUCATION RELEASED

RSA PARTICIPATES IN EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES STUDY

Years of state aid cuts. Local property tax levy cap. Staffing cuts. The result? A curriculum that has become progressively narrower. There's never been any question that our rural schools do what we do very well. Collectively, we have a high graduation rate, we have solid, personal relationships with our students and we engage our communities to maximize what we provide our kids. But that doesn't mean we don't have problems!

Teen alcohol abuse, pregnancy rates and heroin use are all higher than you would expect for communities that know the vast majority of their children. Sadly, as they faced reduced revenue, school districts cut back on extracurricular activities, then electives and advanced placement courses and finally (sometimes) core foundational courses.

Now, with the economy on the rebound, RSA has teamed up with partners in the educational and academic community to create recommendations for improving school-community partnerships that expand learning opportunities for students. The central premise of this Ford Foundation-sponsored research is that school districts can partner with community based organizations to create programs for after school, weekends and summer. Schools can become community centers that not only address the academic needs of students, but improve the quality of life of their families as well. Depending on the community need, this may involve school based health, dental or mental health care, as well as academic enrichment programs and social services. The result? An education that can be put into context and used as an effective foundation for college or career.



Fred Frelow, Senior Program Officer at The Ford Foundation praises the work of RSA and other partners of the Statewide Learning Community at the release of the recommendations of the report "Expanding Learning Through School-Community Partnerships in New York State."

As the Learning Community (as the study partners are called) delved into the possibilities though, the challenges for rural schools kept coming to the fore. Yes, it's a good thing to have after school programs, but while urban students can simply ride a later public bus home, transportation in rural communities is a challenge and state rules on transportation aid are limiting. Yes, it's good for the schools to partner with local YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs and the like, except that rural communities often don't have them. And it's wonderful to devote a staff member to writing grants to secure needed state funds for programs, but rural schools don't have the extra staff to assign to that work.

According to RSA Executive Director David Little, “Fortunately, the Learning Community listened to the unique challenges facing rural schools and incorporated appropriate recommendations into the white paper that will be used by state officials to develop programs to promote school-community partnerships in New York State.”



RSA Executive Director David Little addresses the media and scholars about the potential benefits of expanded learning time in rural schools.

Specifically, the rural recommendations are:

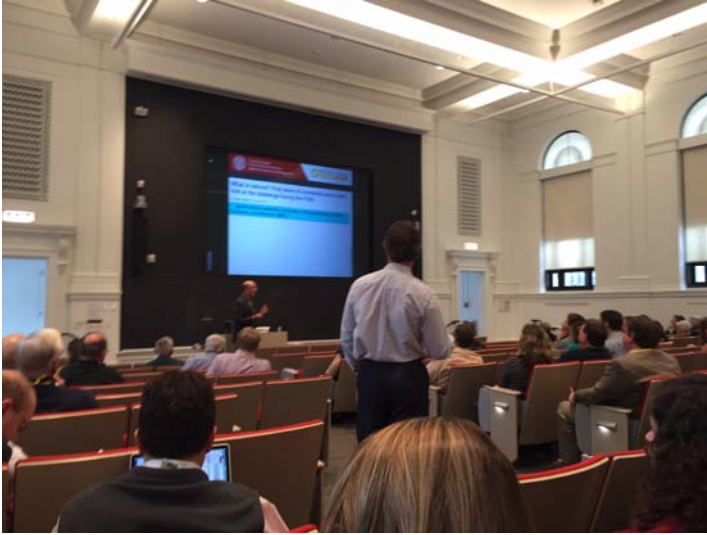
1. To ensure equity in rural schools, where traditional partners are unavailable, the state should encourage partnerships with county services, hospitals, community colleges, BOCES, or other schools. Allowance should be made in funding programs for schools without access to partners.
2. In rural districts, the state should allow directors to work with multiple sites if the district shows that a dedicated director at each site is not feasible.
3. Policymakers and state agencies should evaluate funding for rural schools, including eliminating barriers to rural schools in applying for competitive grants, to ensure equitability and the ability of these schools to sustainably expand learning through school-community partnerships as desired. Read the report, recommendations for rural schools and a shorter, Executive Summary. www.nysan.org/learning-community.

The recommendations contained in the report are groundbreaking, addressing issues like summer learning loss and providing students a real life context in which to use classroom information. They provide a framework for bridging the gap between urban and rural students and their suburban neighbors. The state has already signaled its support for school-community partnerships and creating Community Schools. This report provides state leaders a template for building an effective statewide system of varied, expanded learning opportunities for students.

“This white paper should be a valuable resource to state policymakers and agencies as they seek to support school-community partnership models that promote student success. These approaches to expanding learning are beneficial across the state, and I am pleased that the learning community was able to provide significant recommendations to assist rural school districts in their efforts to expand learning for their youth.” -

Alli Lidie, Deputy Director

AfterSchool Works! NY: the New York State Afterschool Network (ASW:NYSAN)



Cornell's Dyson School of Economics predicts slow, steady growth at its recent conference.

THE RURAL ECONOMY WHERE WE'RE HEADED- WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Your Rural Schools Association recently participated in Cornell's Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management's economic outlook conference. That outlook has tremendous portent for rural schools.

Some of the statistics presented are reminiscent of classes you'd rather not be reminded of, but they paint a clear picture of future challenges for rural schools. For instance, the long range (30 year) loan interest rate is pegged at only 3%. Construction of housing is still depressed and there is little if any public construction. (This bucks a historical trend, since public construction

usually blossoms when money is cheap (it's practically free, currently) to borrow and wages are low and stable. Not so, recently however.) Public spending has become such a political pariah that schools and municipalities are largely unwilling to face the public criticism of expressing the need for new or updated facilities.

The same is true for businesses, who seem content with small, slow but steady growth, rather than taking the risk needed to push the economy to really take off. Consumer spending is also flat (which has led us to the 0% property tax levy freeze this year) and in fact, experts say that deflation is possible; meaning under current law, school budgets that can't override the "tax cap" would have to cut spending below the previous year.

Despite the tepid pace of economic growth, the United States is outpacing the rest of the world. China's growth has slowed to a crawl and Europe's growth is under 2%. Cornell's Professor Steven Kyle says that the U.S. will have to "pull the rest of the world along" if there is to be widespread improvement in the global economy. That isn't likely with the Federal Reserve Bank planning to raise interest rates only one quarter of one percent and national politicians unwilling to touch the economy in an election year. Everyone wants to blame the other party for how bad things are and no one wants to let the other side claim victory for doing anything about it. (Not exactly a recipe for "making America great again".)

NEW YORK STATE'S AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK

The information really gets fascinating when we zero in on New York State's agricultural community, however. Take a look: In 1950 there were 17 million acres in agricultural production in New York State. Today there are 7 million. (The loss mostly occurred between 1950 and 1970 and has now settled into a steady decline.) New York's agricultural income was highest in the 1950's, dipping for a generation or so, but now rebounding; meaning that despite losing over half of all acreage to production, we're producing more and earning more from it. The looming issue for our farms is worker wages. Higher wages mean more stable rural communities, but they also mean stress



on the remaining farms. Unlike other states, where wages have “plateau’d”, NYS farm worker wages are increasing each year, have gone up 75 cents per hour this year alone and currently stand at \$11.75 per hour on average. The move to increase the minimum wage for all workers in New York to \$15 per hour would obviously have a significant impact on the agricultural economy.

Our state has fewer dairy cows than before, but greater milk production than ever. (Go cows!) We have a declining number of beef cattle and the number of horses (pardon the pun) are stable. Prices for agricultural products are described as “flat and weak”, while the price of land and wages are increasing. Farm labor is in increasingly short supply. An interesting note: The increase in Amish farming may skew the statistics, because they don’t participate in government reporting.



Despite these challenges, there may be hope on the horizon for New York’s farmers and the rural communities that depend on them. Some of that hope comes in strange form. As the country begins to feel the effects of climate change, New York State is well positioned to become a major food producer for the nation. California’s declining food production due to drought and the south’s volatile weather have left New York State and the Northeast as one of the most stable food producing regions.

Increased public awareness of food issues like obesity, hormones used in food production, the impact of gluten, labor practices, animal rights, fair trade, food security and the unavailability of wholesome food in some areas are combining to focus attention on agriculture. If we are what we eat, New York State is stable, lean, struggling but in pretty good shape. Good information to know, when the link between our farm community and our rural schools is so strong.

**Invitation to Present at the
2016 Rural Schools Association Conference
July 10 – 12 in Cooperstown, NY**



Dear Friends of Rural Schools,

We at the Rural Schools Association have started our planning for our **annual conference**, which will be held at the **Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown**, July 10 - 12, 2016. Our conference planning committee has selected **“Reimagining Rural Schools, Now or Never”** as the theme for this year’s conference.

Now we are interested in identifying outstanding programs that are currently operational in school districts and whose results can be supported by qualitative or quantitative assessment. The program may be related to our theme or of a general interest to our conference attendees. We know that each district has some unique and successful programs that should be shared, and we ask that you consider nominating one or more from your own district or BOCES. Please feel free to duplicate the program description form. The form is also available on our website, www.RSANYS.org.

The Rural Schools Association Conference Planning Committee, consisting of District Superintendent **Patrick Michel, Chairperson**, and members **Lorraine Hohenforst, Joanne Freeman, Michael Dardaris, Deborah Grimshaw, David Halloran, David Little, Linda King and Thomas Marzeski**, will be meeting in March to select the programs to include as part of the 2016 conference.

Our format provides for sessions on Monday, July 11 and Tuesday morning, July 12. We ask for approximately one (1) hour of presentation time and fifteen (15) minutes to respond to questions. To accommodate the large number of conference participants, some programs are scheduled for back-to-back presentations.

Thank you for your continued support of the **Rural Schools Association**. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas E. Marzeski". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Thomas E. Marzeski

Deputy Executive Director

RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION
Annual Conference July 10-12, 2016
Otesaga Hotel, Cooperstown, NY
Request for Program Proposal

The Rural Schools Conference Planning Team is interested in receiving proposals related to the theme of this year's conference, **"Reimagining Rural Schools, Now or Never"**. Rural school districts face serious challenges to their educational viability. Such challenges aren't new to rural school superintendents, board members and staff. They have however become more common, more complex and more threatening to the quality of education students receive in rural schools.

The following are some possible program areas that could relate to the Conference theme:

- Describe or demonstrate the use of technology to improve or expand student learning opportunities especially for school districts where consolidation is impractical or undesirable
- Describe the process of utilizing community partners to create work based learning opportunities.
- Describe ways of collaborating with other school districts to offer enriched coursework options for secondary students.
- Describe unique partnerships between school districts and colleges and universities to improve educational opportunities for student learning.
- Describe instructional programs and practices that successfully address a common problem in rural schools, i.e. the limited options for language learning; under enrollment in advanced science classes.
- Provide information that assists school districts in addressing a current challenge not described above.

The majority of our attendees are school board members and school administrators, while teachers are most welcome to attend. The presentation time available is 1hr. and 15 minutes. We prefer to use 15 minutes of that time for questions and answers.

Title of Proposed Program: _____

Program Description (Please be as specific as possible):

SAVE THE DATE:
**July 10-12, 2016 RSA Conference in beautiful
Cooperstown, NY at the Otesaga Resort Center.**



Check the Rural Schools Association Website
www.RSANYS.org
for details in early May 2016.