

A VISION FOR YOUR RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

The RSA Board of Directors has set a new direction for your association. Here is the new vision for your Rural Schools Association:

***ADVOCACY FOCUS:** RSA's vision is to add significant advocacy on behalf of member districts to its array of member services. Rural schools are frequently politically marginalized and underfunded. In response, RSA will seek to educate leaders on the impact of proposals on rural schools and to inform them of methods of helping improve educational opportunities in rural communities. It will do this by providing authoritative information, presented in a professional way. RSA will regularly attend meetings of the Board of Regents and the state legislative education committees, hold meetings with state leaders and key staff and provide written reports, reactions to regulatory proposals and legislative bill memos. RSA will analyze the Executive Budget and the enacted State Budget, as well as issue veto requests of legislation when warranted. RSA will also provide an analysis of legislative activity from a rural school perspective at the conclusion of the legislative session.

Within the educational community, RSA intends to work collaboratively with partnering associations to advance the general interests of public education. This work will include producing research reports, joint advocacy statements and testimony at legislative hearings.

***INCREASE VISIBILITY:** In order to be influential in educating state leaders to the rural school perspective, RSA must become regularly visible. This can be accomplished through issuing press releases on relevant issues, letters to the editor, releasing reports and studies, as well as serving as a spokesperson for radio, television and the print media. RSA will be a regular presenter at educational conferences and forums, meet with business and higher educational leaders, in addition to providing members with periodic webinars and video clips related to timely issues. Staff will regularly travel to meet the demands of increased requests for local Rural Schools Association presentations.

***INCREASE MEMBER OUTREACH:** Your Rural Schools Association is increasing communication with you by providing regular issues of Albany Alerts and Washington Watch (where we will let you know about important governmental proposals with the potential of affecting your rural district.) We are expanding the number of people who receive information from RSA to include all administrators and staff, as well as board of education members. RSA will also produce a “Who We Are” video to let folks know the programs and services available through RSA. We plan regional forums to make it easier for you to attend RSA events. Finally, RSA makes every effort to come to your district personally whenever you feel we can help.

***EXPAND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:** One of the most effective ways to increase the recognition of rural school issues is by partnering with organizations that hold similar positions and have like interests. Those kind of partnerships can be temporary around a single issue or they can be longstanding. Our rural schools are closely aligned with business interests, economic development issues and the higher education and military aspirations of our students. RSA reaches out to groups representing those issues to build strong mutual support.

***MAXIMIZE THE CORNELL CONNECTION:** The partnership between the Rural Schools Association and Cornell University is historically and programmatically important for our rural schools. The Rural Schools Program of RSA is part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and is a member of the Community and Regional Development Institute (CaRDI). Each of these partnerships affords RSA the opportunity to serve students and its member districts through programs, services and research. Your association is increasing the use of paid and credit bearing programs for student interns to increase the level of information, research and services we provide to you. RSA serves as your full partner in the efforts of these groups to ensure that both they and our rural schools receive their full benefit. In addition, RSA hosts the Center for Rural Schools, a data driven member service. Rural Schools may use the center to compare their economic status, enrollment projections, academic performance and other factors against similarly situated schools, other schools within their region or all schools in the state.

***EXPAND THE GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT:** In the big picture, the interests of rural schools in New York State aren't that different from other rural schools in the Northeast. Funding, enrollment and economic stagnation affect us all. RSA is beginning to reach out to organizations and institutions in surrounding states so that we might identify common issues and concerns and arrive at shared approaches. There is strength in numbers and together, we can have a louder voice and a stronger presence for rural schools by collaborating with our neighbors.

THERE YOU HAVE IT! Ambitious, strategic, highly visible and relevant. That's your new Rural Schools Association of New York State! If you have suggestions for additional ways we can carry out this vision or if you have information you know will be helpful in our efforts to educate leaders, please be sure to contact us.

The phone number for the Albany Advocacy Office is (518) 250-5710.

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