

## Local Area Overview

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College Programming with Area School Districts  
Jim Rizzuto - Otero Junior College

## Rural District Excellence in Closing the Achievement Gap

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### Stephany Brown – Regional Education Laboratory

- The Regional Educational Laboratory is organizing a rural education research alliance and a proposed project called the Rural District Excellence in Closing the Achievement Gap.
- The project entails developing a framework similar to the one that the Broad Foundation uses for the Broad Prize for Urban Excellence using the research on rural schools.
- The goal of the project is for research alliance members (rural education leaders from the seven REL Central states plus leaders from national organizations) to establish a set of appropriate indicators for closing the achievement gap and to identify the most successful rural districts in the states.
- REL will then conduct a series of case studies using the qualitative data collection techniques to identify best practices in areas such as teaching and learning, district governance and leadership, and district operations and organizational culture.
- Questions:
  - Are other centers doing this?
  - Long term potential for Colorado?
- If you are interested in participating please contact Stephany Brown – a sign-up sheet was distributed for interested Rural Education Council members.
- We could commit – we have a team looking at how to help rural districts in the lowest performing areas. A possible future meeting with REL and CDE 's performance managers
- The diagnostic work is about a 3 day visit to a school district with the REL team.

## Final Rural Definition Discussion

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- The rural definition subcommittee and its work began in July.
  - The first draft indicated 9000 or less students. The council was concerned about the student enrollment number being too high and not accurately depicting rural in Colorado.
  - This definition depicted 44 rural school districts and 105 small rural for a total of 149 rural districts
  - The current CDE rural definition had 86 school districts.
- A new revised definition was considered with student enrollment of 4500 students or less. This deleted 13 districts from the rural district list.
  - Some of the districts deleted were Montrose, Roaring Fork, Delta, Garfield and Durango
  - These districts meet the criteria of location and isolation, but not with student numbers.
  - This was a concern by several members of the council.
- Another rural definition proposal considered was a student enrollment of 6500 or less. This would include Montrose, Delta, Roaring Fork, Delta, Garfield and Durango all of whom are located on the Western Slope and consider themselves rural as well as meet the location criteria.
  - This definition would include 38 rural districts and 105 small, rural districts for a total of 143 districts defined as rural.

- Need to look at and consider both criteria, student enrollment and distance/location from urban centers.
- Small rural information was shared via handouts
  - Common theme in small rural is minimal administrative staff
  - Administrative staff information based on the HR report
  - Single K-12 system – site description (based on coding)
  - Risk factors – student demographics (based on last year’s October count)
  - 105 school districts with <1000 students – stress with legislators and to be mindful when passing laws
- It isn’t only the number, but the other criteria... keep that in mind.
- Tracey Rainey’s research – level of effectiveness, economies of scale was discussed.
  - Powerful information to bring to the table.
  - One of the items in the original study – distributed around the state and asked are you rural or not? District perspective should be taken into account
  - Good debate with executive team. Some of these districts are districts with rural schools (6500+)
- Finding the number is not as important as how the district feels
- 4500 excludes the West Slope districts – could be perceived as a lack of understanding on the west slope.
- Could be a situation where a district opts out of being rural – we need to think through the exception process.
  - We don’t want to be considered too small because they don’t want to lose out on other opportunities where they are big. (Connection with BOCES, etc)
- Interest in definition
  - Within CDE – for example UIP
  - Want to make sure the service delivery to these districts is appropriate
  - Cabinet – the small admin FTE – opened eyes and elevated awareness of the challenges in our smaller districts
- What is the future impact?
  - Organizing point for this group to bring awareness to people about what rural is in Colorado
  - Can be changed – good to keep with the commissioner
- What is the consideration for those districts under 350, 250? Is there future consideration for those districts – Super, Small rural category?
- Do you support this current recommendation to the Commissioner?
  - Committee gave the approval to move forward to the Commissioner the recommendation of the rural definition to be districts with a student enrollment of less than 6500 and distance/location criteria to remain the same as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics.
- This will be reviewed annually by the Rural Education Council
- Next steps with documentation
  - A formal letter will be sent to superintendents and BOCES directors from the Commissioner with the recommended rural definition

## Dual Role: Superintendent/Principal Draft Guidelines

- A draft handout of suggested guidelines in implementing SB 191 for superintendents who serve in a dual role was shared.
- Is there any significance to add a third category – superintendent, that serves as principal who also teaches was discussed.
- How many of you have worked with or heard feedback on those who have worked through this with their board? Feedback?
  - Not yet but there have been concerns with the options.
    - Understanding that the evaluation is a constant process, not an event. With some of the options outlined it makes the evaluation more of an event.

- Making it an event limits the sustainability of the evaluation because there isn't constant monitoring
    - If you do contract out, whether it be a BOCES or not, will districts be able to maintain the fidelity and integrity of the process
    - Role of the school board and are they trained to evaluate the principals was a shared concern.
    - Next step is to talk with CASB about policies regarding this issue and SB 191.
- Input from teachers on principal is important but becomes problematic when the principal/sup is the only one collecting that feedback
- There is interest in facilitating an ongoing way for dual role individuals to meet and collaborate?
  - Possibly at CASE and CASB conferences
- Due to the difficulty of the dual role it would be best to simplify the choices to one option in a district and/or BOCES.
- If there is a third party contractor/consultant they need to evaluate multiple times during the year especially at the principal level.
- CDE needs to train on what the standards mean so that there can be consistency around the state.
- Rural districts have helped to lead the conversations of SB 191.

## Goal Setting Discussion

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- Council members worked in small groups to brainstorm possible goals for the Rural Education Council in the coming year. Further discussion and finalization of the goals will take place during the next meeting in February.
- See attached draft of the Rural Education Council goals for 2013.

## Future Meeting Dates

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- Friday, February 8, 2013 – Dolores, CO - Local Area Overview 10:00-11:00; Council Meeting 11:00-2:00
- Friday, April 26, 2013 – Northwest Region - Local Area Overview 10:00-11:00; Council Meeting 11:00-2:00
- July 2013 – CASE Conference – Time is TBD
- Friday, October 4, 2013 – Northeast Region - Local Area Overview 10:00-11:00; Council Meeting 11:00-2:00
- Friday, December 6, 2013 – Southeast Region Local Area Overview 10:00-11:00; Council Meeting 11:00-2:00