



RURAL NET

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

Roadmap for Rural Policy Reform

A recent report issued by the **National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)**, paints a familiar picture of the state of rural education – one in which a myriad of factors combine to create critical resource and staffing shortages - and underscores the ways that rural communities around the nation can/are improving student achievement through smaller class sizes, personalized learning and increasing access to technology and advanced courses.

The report; **Educating Students in Rural America: Capitalizing on Strengths, Overcoming Obstacles** provides a roadmap for rural policy reform for states and state boards of education committed to enhancing the capacity of rural communities to ensure all students are prepared for college, careers and civic life:

1. Technology Access and Training. Map geographic areas that lack access to broadband, marshal resources to address the needs in these areas, and

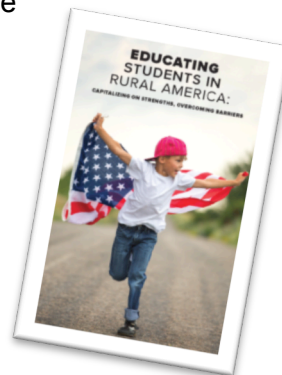
leverage capacity and professional learning to translate technological access into high- quality learning.

2. Partnerships and Collaborations. Help rural communities form partnerships with local organizations as part of broader economic and community development strategies.

3. Flexible Funding. Rural areas struggle to meet administrative demands created by education reforms that were designed with the greater staff capacity of urban and suburban schools in mind. In order to better empower rural schools to meet their students' needs, states should consider addressing these burdens with more funding, greater flexibility, and incentives for districts to build connections that increase capacity and save money.

4. Capacity Building. Develop a comprehensive strategy to recruit, train, and retain the teachers, principals, and educational support staff needed to ensure all its students are provided a world-class education.

The NASBE report provides an excellent platform for the Rural Alliance to continue our efforts to educate CDE, the State Board and the Legislature as to rural realities in Colorado and to shape policy reform that positively impacts students in the classroom. We will continue to work with our state association partners to bring these (and other critical rural) issues to the forefront of the state policy debate.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

To access the full NASBE Report visit:

<http://www.nasbe.org/study-group-report/educating-students-in-rural-america-capitalizing-on-strengths-overcoming-barriers/>

School Safety Resources for Rural Schools

During the 2015-16 school year, the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) provided School Emergency Management (SEM) workshops to 88 teams across the state. Participants spent time learning about the emergency management process in school settings, had time to write pieces of their Emergency Operations Plans, and worked through table-top exercises to explore how they would handle different threats and hazards. To bring a team to the 2016-17 SEM workshops, to be scheduled in Eagle, Haxtun, and Montrose, contact Teresa Yohon at tyohon@enetlearning.org

CSSRC also provide regional trainings tailored to specific needs.

Last Spring, staff travelled to the NE BOCES office in Haxtun for an all-day training on threat assessment attended by staff members from the 12 member districts and three County Sheriff's Departments. These trainings ensure that regional partners have a shared understanding of emergency prevention/response protocols and practices.

CSSRC also provides no-cost trainings on a myriad of issues designed to help school leaders develop and sustain positive school climates.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please call the CSSRC at (303) 239-4435

Visit their website at :
<https://www.colorado.gov/cssrc>

and/or email:
mailto:CDPS_School_Safety_center@state.co.us

Professional Development and Grant Opportunities

Share Fair Rural Colorado

Share Fair Nation and its partners, Battelle for Kids and Generation Schools Network, will host Share Fair Rural Colorado, featuring world-class professional development at no cost to the educator, school, or district

October 7, 2016

Colorado Mountain College
Rifle, Colorado

October 28, 2016

Pueblo West High School
Pueblo, Colorado

Registration/information:
<http://sharefairnation.org>

Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented 39th Annual Conference.

This year's conference features a special rural district luncheon focused on how CAGT can help rural districts overcome the challenges they face in educating GT students.

October 10-11, 2016

Conference
Embassy Suites Loveland
Rural Luncheon
October 11at noon

Registration/RSVP for the rural luncheon at
<http://www.coloradogifted.org>

GOCO School Yard Initiative

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) has posted its application for School Yard Initiative (SYI) grants. SYI grants help schools, which apply in partnership with their local governments, construct outdoor spaces where kids enjoy unstructured play and outdoor learning. Plus, the schools become partners with Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments (SOLE) program, which further enhances the outdoor experience. Applications are due January 10, 2017 and will be awarded in spring 2017. Find application and tips at <http://www.goco.org/schools>

Questions? Email Erika at
emeyer@goco.org

Executive Update

Advocacy. At their retreat in June, the Rural Alliance board voted to hire Jason Hopfer to represent the Alliance at the Capitol during the 2017 legislative session. Jason served as the Alliance's strategist/lobbyist during the 2016 session and we are glad he will be leading our legislative efforts again next session. Jason is working with the Board as we update and refine our 2016-17 Advocacy Agenda to reflect our members concerns and lessons learned at the Capitol last session.

Funding. The issue of school funding will be front and center again this session and, once again, the JBC will be forced to make difficult funding decisions with grossly inadequate resources.

The June revenue forecast from Legislative Council projected a revenue decrease of \$63 million in FY 15-16 and \$187 million in FY 16-17. The General Fund reserve is expected to end FY 15-16 \$47 million lower than the budgeted reserve. The new fiscal year, 16-17, is expected to be \$268 million short of funding the full budget and reserve (including repayment of severance tax collections totaling \$51 million). There are not anticipated TABOR refunds in FY 15-16 or 16-17. A TABOR refund of \$162 million is expected in FY 17-18.

In June, the Alliance Board voted to oppose any adjustments to the school finance formula/factors if there was no new money dedicated to K-12.

This vote was taken before the Colorado Priorities campaign was cut short and before several of our members asked us to support efforts by the Opportunity Coalition to increase funding for high-poverty schools. The board will reconsider their position on funding after the Superintendents' have had a chance to better understand the intricacies of the formula and discuss and debate any changes thereto at their meeting in Avon later this month. We strongly encourage all rural superintendents to attend the meeting and engage in this discussion.

ESSA. The rural voice is well represented on the myriad of committees convened to discuss and debate the State's plan to implement ESSA. Kirk Banghart, Rural Alliance President, was appointed by the State Board to serve on its HUB committee and Senator Sonnenberg and Representative Wilson are both serving on the ESSA Legislative Task Force. There is also strong rural representation on the ESSA spoke committees, convened to make recommendations to the HUB on specific aspects of the State Plan. For more information on committee membership and work visit:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_stateplandevlopment

The Rural Alliance is listening to the debate and learning about the various points of flexibility

available under the law. We filed formal comments, along with the Colorado BOCES Association, opposing those aspects of the federal regulations that limit/eliminate the state and district flexibility available under the law. We will continue to build awareness and alliances to advocate for accountability, assessment and educator licensure and evaluation systems that make sense in smaller rural systems.



Rural Advocacy and Networking Receptions. During the Fall of 2016, the Rural Alliance will be hosting regional Rural Advocacy and Networking receptions. Invitees will include educators/school board members, county commissioners, workforce sector partners, community colleges, economic development council members and other business and community leaders.

The purpose of the meetings are to: (i) Honor local legislators for their support of rural schools and students; (ii) Build/expand the Alliance's rural advocacy network to include rural leaders (outside the school district) who share our interest in promoting and supporting rural students and communities; and (iii) Build/expand public-private partnerships and learn more about efforts to increase opportunities available to rural students and communities.

To date, we have scheduled the following receptions:

October 12, 2016	Brush
October 19, 2016	La Junta
October 26, 2016	Burlington



Save the Dates for these receptions are attached to this email. Please share them with educators and leaders in your community who may be interested in participating in these discussions.

For questions/concerns and/or to schedule an Advocacy and Networking Reception in your region contact

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