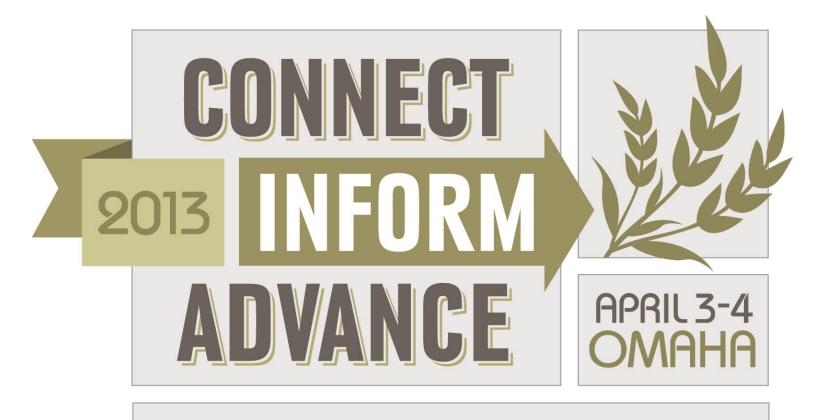


Advancing Rural Education Research: Results from the R²Ed Conference

Gwen Nugent and Gina Kunz Susan Sheridan, Mary Hellwege & Maureen O'Connor



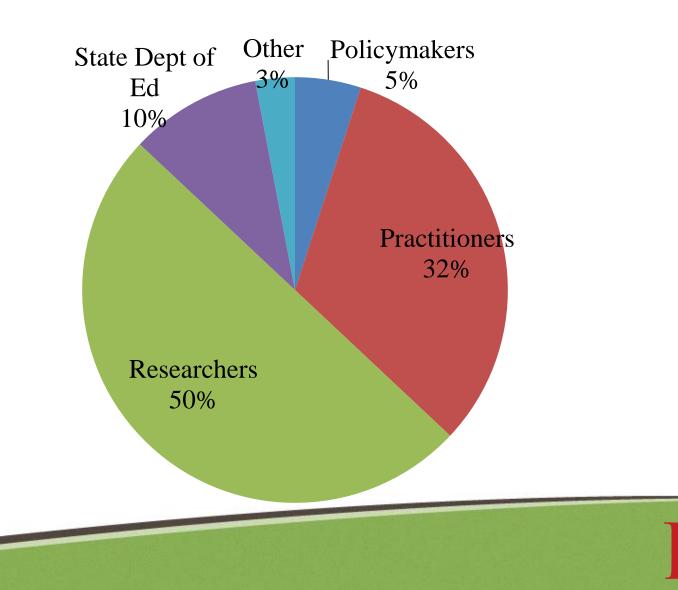


NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Conference Goals

- Assemble education researchers, practitioners and policymakers from across the country
- Foster dialogue about research-supported influences of teaching, family engagement, community involvement, school environment and contextual factors on the academic success of rural students
- Provide a research platform for exploring current issues and future directions of rural schools and education policy
- Feature presentations, roundtable discussions, open panels and a conference-specific Twitter feed

Conference Attendees



Conference Format

- Researcher and panel presentations focusing on influences on rural student academic success
 - Teacher
 - Community and family
 - Contextual
- Conference attendees participated in small group discussions focused by guiding questions, e.g.
 - What have we learned from past research and what can we learn from future research regarding three key influences?
 - How do we meet the challenges associated with rural research?
 - What are immediate next steps for rural education research, practice and policy?
- Designated note takers at each table

Themes from Qualitative Analysis of Notes

- Defining and accounting for the rural context
- Influences on student outcomes
- Interdisciplinary research partnerships
- Future directions and research dissemination

Defining and Accounting for the Rural Context

- Lack of consistent definition of "rural"
 - Need for meaningful criteria
 - Need to identify contextual variables
 - Need to consider commonalities as well as differences

Influences on Student Outcomes

- Lack of unified definition of and methods for measuring student success
- Myriad influences on student success not traditionally considered in research
- Importance of teacher professional development

Interdisciplinary Research Partnerships

- Need for partnerships among LEAs, regional service units, state agencies, higher education, local school boards, families, communities, researchers, and policymakers
- Need for more "authentic" partnerships
- Need to develop ways to maintain communication

Future Directions

- Need to get research into hand of consumers
- Need for comprehensive research agenda with multiple rigorous methodologies
- Future topics
 - Community-related variables
 - Empowering families to be involved in research
 - Evaluating sustained impact of professional development

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