

Rural Schools Association of New York State

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RSA NEWS

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CONNECTING CORNELL RESEARCH WITH RURAL SCHOOLS & THEIR COMMUNITIES



Robin Blakely

Dear RSA Members,

As the RSA Board members from Cornell University, one of our goals is to help connect RSA members with relevant research and faculty at Cornell University. This month we would like to call your attention to a valuable resource that many of you may already be familiar with – CaRDI, the Community & Rural Development Institute at Cornell, and a set of free publications they offer on a monthly basis.

As rural school leaders, you all recognize the critical connection between schools and the communities you serve. Playing an effective role in your community's development requires being up-to-date on issues that not only directly affect education and schools, but the larger community and region. CaRDI has two new monthly publications that speak to a broad range of community and economic development issues. This month, both the Rural New York Minute and the Research & Policy Brief Series focus directly on education topics, and are included in this newsletter. We hope that you will visit the CaRDI website (www.cardi.cornell.edu) to view past and future issues as well.

CaRDI's publications not only provide you with another link to Cornell research on rural community issues, but could be freely incorporated into courses and curricula where students are discussing current events, issues, policy, etc.

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Kiley Corner

As we move into our New Year, the attention of the association turns to legislative advocacy on behalf of our member schools. Our members have received copies of the 2008 Position Statement. We have all become familiar with the key issues that we face in our rural communities:

- √ Loss of jobs
- √ Loss of wealth
- √ Loss of population

These concerns are highlighted in the position statement, and our focus is on initiatives that are intended to address these problems.

We are asking that you use the position statement as a guide for your discussions with your local elected officials. We also suggest that particular focus be given to the following:

√ Regionalization - We recognize the important place that the local school has in maintaining the vitality of a community. At the same time we need to find ways to achieve efficiency, economics of scale, and real savings. We believe that solutions may be found in strengthening your regional service agency – the BOCES, and establishing a regional school district structure to address our educational needs. In short, look to the BOCES to maximize savings through shared services, find ways to preserve your local elementary school and/or program, and look at the possibilities of a regional secondary school to enriched high school programs.

√ Rural Educational Advisory Committee (REAC) – This is a low budget item (\$175,000) that pays big dividends for small and rural school districts. REAC uses these funds to underwrite a mini-grant program to stimulate innovative educational initiatives in rural schools. Grants of up to \$2,500 are awarded to local school districts to help develop better programs to serve children. Twenty – eight grants were awarded during the 2007-08 school year. The remaining funds will be used to underwrite a major research project to address the needs of rural schools and rural communities. This year’s study is focusing on the availability of childcare and education for infants and toddlers living in rural settings. Attempts will be made to identify quality programs that can be replicated in other schools and communities. REAC serves an important research and development role to stimulate thinking that will lead to better educational programs for rural children.

√ Broadband Access - Many of our upstate rural communities do not have networks that provide high speed telecommunication and internet access. The 2007 budget contains funds for broadband design for rural areas, and no action has been taken to make this a reality. Broadband is critical for revitalization of rural communities, and we need to push to make this a reality.

√ School Aid – We finally have a foundation

formula. At the same time, however, it has not resulted in rural areas receiving the funds to which they should be entitled. In fact, there is growing recognition that high need rural districts were short changed. We need to encourage our legislators to eliminate the .65 floor on the Income Wealth Index that is part of the formula. Many of our rural residents have incomes well below the .65 floor, and this cutoff penalizes rural school districts. We need to work to eliminate this floor.

As an association, we ask that you concentrate on these issues with your legislators. We have 400 small and rural school districts in New York State. If we all speak with one voice, we can have a positive impact on the budget deliberations. We will be in Albany on Tuesday, March 18, 2008 as part of the Annual Rural Schools Association Legislative Advocacy Day. We will be addressing these issues with our elected officials, and we encourage you to do so as well.



Virtual Worlds in Education: Cornell's SciCentr Program – Margaret Corbit

Origins: You might have read in the papers about the new online medium of virtual worlds? These worlds range from Disney-sponsored cartoon Web sites to Second Life, a 3D landscape of islands primarily used by adults. But you probably don't know that Cornell University has been exploring the use of online, multi-user collaborative environments (known as MUVes, CVEs, and virtual worlds) for science education since 1998.

Cornell started with an online virtual science museum called SciCentr, part of the K-12 outreach program for the Cornell Theory Center, Cornell's supercomputing center. As one of the first sites on the World Wide Web, the Theory Center was the perfect institution to explore this new medium as an educational tool. Today, the SciCentr program has expanded and has moved under the administration of the Office of the Vice Provost for Land Grant Affairs where we hope to broaden our reach and expand our focus.

SciCentr's most successful programs have been developed in partnership with teachers and school administrators. These pioneers have come primarily from minority and underserved rural schools. In 1998, we began our SciFair program in partnership with Spencer-Van Etten Central Schools,

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Jay Boak – '08 Conference Chair

Jay Boak, District Superintendent of the Jefferson – Lewis BOCES located in Watertown, NY, has agreed to serve as Chairman of the 2008 Conference Planning Committee. Jay has a long history with the Jefferson – Lewis BOCES. He first joined the BOCES in 1983 as Assistant Superintendent, was promoted to Deputy Superintendent in 2001, and assumed the role of District Superintendent in 2003. This marks his 25th year with the Jefferson-Lewis BOCES. Jay is also active in the Greater Watertown Community serving as a board member for WPBS Television, the North Country Chamber of Commerce, and the Seaway Trails Association. The Rural Schools Association is pleased that Jay has agreed to lead our conference planning effort this year.

We are pleased that the following individuals have agreed to work with Jay as part of the Conference Planning Team:

Ken McAuliffe – Superintendent – Lowville Academy and CSD

Fred Morgan – Superintendent – Adirondack CSD

Leueen Smithling – Superintendent – Beaver River CSD

Donnalee Dodson – Superintendent – Lyme CSD

They are a team of experienced educators who know and understand the needs and interests of rural schools. They are practitioners who are leading rural school districts during this period of change, and understand the problems and the challenges that rural schools face in maintaining a quality educational program. With their leadership, we are confident that we will have a strong conference program.

The committee recently held its organizational meeting, and agreed on a conference theme of **Assuring Educational Quality in a Changing Rural Environment**. We are indeed living and working in a rapidly changing rural environment. Now, more than ever before we must focus on building stronger community connections through cooperative ventures, sharing of resources, and opening our schools to agencies that serve families and children.

Our focus should continue to be on assuring that every child has a successful school experience. More than ever before there is a need for a “team effort” to maximize use of resources, realize greater economies of scale, build efficiencies into our systems, and achieve genuine cost savings.

Jay and his planning team hope that we receive a strong response to the Request for Proposals which have been sent to all our member districts. As Jay noted in our recent planning meeting;

“We are looking for innovative programs that demonstrate local school efforts to build connections and shared programs with other school districts, local government, and human service agencies. With our limited resources and shrinking student population, we need to strengthen our relationships with other agencies that serve families and children.”

The Annual Conference of the Rural Schools Association is scheduled for July 13-15, 2008 at the Otesaga Conference and Resort Center. Mark your calendars and plan to join us in Cooperstown. We have the makings of a strong conference program.

CNS Institute for Physics Teachers (CIPT)

Designed for high school physics teachers, the institute will:

- √ Update teachers on recent advances in physics
- √ Provide participants with take-home Laboratory exercises
- √ Develop a continuing relationship between Cornell and participating teachers.

It was created as an educational outreach program by the Cornell Center for Nanoscale Systems with funding provided by the National Science Foundation and the New York State Office of Science, Technology, and Academic Research.

Applicants must teach at least one period of Physics per day or provide workshops to Physics teachers on an on-going basis. Tuition and fees are paid by CIPT, and participants will receive a \$300 per week stipend. For more information about the Institute for Physics Teachers, contact;

Linda Clougherty
607-255-9434
Email: cipt_contact@cornell.edu
www.cns.cornell.edu/cipt

Application deadline for the institute is March 1, 2008.

Virtual Worlds ...continued from page 2

which serves a rural community in the Southern Tier. Today, these programs are financed through a combination of support from community foundations, grants to the districts (for example, NCLB educational technology allocations and Dept of Education 21st Century Learning Center awards), and grants to SciCentr. We have worked with teachers in the Greater Southern Tier, Manhattan, Schenectady, and Long Island, as well as in Richmond, VA, and Washington State.

Goals: We believe that Middle School is an ideal time to prepare students to use computers for their future coursework and careers. While we could have focused on developing game-like interactive learning experiences for K-12 students (see the River City Project from Harvard URL as an excellent example (<http://muve.gse.harvard.edu/rivercityproject/index.html>)), we decided on a creative approach that supports students and teachers as they build their digital communication, Internet research, digital design, and other technical skills. Our programs address the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for Students developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Imagine how pleased we were to see Creativity appear at the top of the list in the 2007 revised standards!

Programs: Through trial and error, we developed a process model, the SciFair Model, for supporting young students in learning how to navigate the technology and then to create their own content to share with others through this social online medium. Each of our programs includes a Showcase, a special event at which the students share their projects with peers, family, and friends—online and onsite. This model, developed for science communication, is the foundation for almost all of our current programs, and can be applied to any area of study.

In 2007-8, SciFair mentors are working the entire 6th grade of Lincoln-Orens Middle School in Island Park, NY. Through a NYS Educational Technology grant, our staff is in the second year of designing a 6th grade social studies curriculum, CyberCiv, with teaching teams in Elmira's middle schools. CyberCiv students move through a sequence of worlds and related activities starting as players (in Mesopotamia) and growing to be world designers of their own, (Middle Ages worlds). This spring, we are piloting new digital technology lessons in CYFair (CyberYouthFair), a variation of the SciFair after school program, in Elmira and Spencer. New activities center on data visualization and interpretation in a fun way. We will also offer professional development workshops for teachers ranging from short demonstrations to multi-day hands-on training.

Impact: Experts and parents agree that motivation is a major challenge with middle school students.

We are luring students with the appeal of computer games into a learning experience that impacts their motivation.

When we compared students' attitudes toward science in pre and post tests for SciFair participants, we found that there was a significant improvement for students who started out with neutral to negative attitudes. We also saw this pattern in at-risk rising 6th graders in special summer sessions. Statistics don't tell the whole story. For example, a handicapped child went from being bullied to being adopted as the class "geek squad" by his fellow "under-achievers". This year we are administering a standardized test of student motivation toward school for all 6th graders in Elmira. This will give us a comparison study for the impact of CyberCiv and the after school programs.

Future: Virtual Worlds are identified in the 2007 Horizon Report from the national organizations EDUCAUSE and the New Media Consortium as a digital medium that is almost ready for prime time in the classroom. The December/January issue of ISTE's Learning and Leading with Technology points out that virtual worlds "hold significant potential for a learner-led—rather than an outcome-based—model of exploration and knowledge development." SciCentr staff have experience, sample lesson plans and standards alignments, a wealth of other support materials, and the technical capacity to support projects for rural schools. Our primary focus right now is within the Greater Southern Tier. We are in discussion with six science and technology museums across the state and hope to find ways to support richer interaction between their staff and volunteers and students and teachers in the public schools.

Funding for SciCentr has come from a variety of sources, always building on a base provided by Cornell. SciFair was developed through support from the GE Foundation; CYFair is supported through a grant for Broadening Participation in Computing from the National Science Foundation. We are working hard to identify a sustainable model for support from New York State and participating schools and organizations. One way will likely be through BOCES.

Virtual worlds are best when they can be shared and experienced by a community of users. With this in mind, Cornell expanded its Universe (CUni) of Active Worlds (a particularly stable and easy to use and manage virtual world system) in 2007. We now host more than 100 worlds created by students and educators at any given moment. Until now, we have relied on Cornell undergraduates to serve as our mentor corps, but we want to reach beyond this and encourage schools interested in participating in our community to recruit mentors for their programs from other pools. For example, high school computer clubs, virtual community college digital arts classes and community service groups, regional four year college and university clubs, service groups, or classes.

rural new york minute

ISSUE NUMBER 13/JANUARY 2008

Are New Yorkers Satisfied with the Public Education in their Communities?

By Robin M. Blakely, and John W. Sipple, Cornell University

Public education is viewed by many people as fundamental to a democratic, civil, and productive society. Community support, public engagement, and adequate resources are seen as essential to the success of public education (Public Education Network). New Yorkers view education as one of the top issues facing their communities (see our July *Rural New York Minute* issue, #7). But how satisfied are New Yorkers with public education in their communities? Does this support vary across the state?

In the 2007 Empire State Poll, 1,100 New York residents were interviewed by telephone on a number of issues and topics. Respondents were asked: "Every community has good points and bad points about living within it. Thinking about availability, cost, quality, and any other considerations important to you, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the public education in your community?" Overall, New Yorkers are relatively satisfied with public education in their communities, but this varies significantly by where people live.

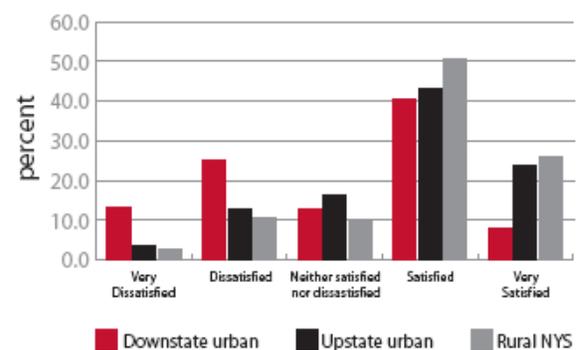
Almost half (49%) of downstate urban respondents report satisfaction (almost 8% are *very* satisfied with the public education in their communities), though almost 39% report being *dissatisfied* (with 13% being *very* dissatisfied). Rural New Yorkers, on the other hand, differ dramatically from their downstate urban counterparts. Almost 77% of rural New Yorkers interviewed report satisfaction with the public education in their communities (with one in four being *very* satisfied). Only about 12% of rural respondents reported dissatisfaction (less than 3% are *very* dissatisfied). Upstate Urban respondents fall somewhere in between downstate urbanites and rural New Yorkers. Just over 67% of upstate urban respondents report being satisfied with their communities' public education (24% are *very* satisfied), while 16% report being dissatisfied (just over 3% are *very* dissatisfied).

Why do citizens tend to report high or low levels of satisfaction? On the one hand, satisfaction with a public service may suggest a belief (based on firsthand information or simply reputation) that the school is providing a quality education program. On the other hand, reported levels of satisfaction may be more a reflection of contentment with the relative tax burden or quality of local leadership (school board and/or Superintendent), rather than a direct assessment of the quality of the educational program offered. If, for instance, current levels of taxation and investment in one's local public school are considered reasonable, then

overall satisfaction with the schools is often indicated. Conversely, in communities with relatively high school tax rates, research has documented that citizens often report higher levels of dissatisfaction. Moreover, researchers have used superintendent turnover and school budget failure as community-level indicators of satisfaction with their local school.*

Despite all the attention on measuring academic growth and success, parents often judge the quality of local schools on the availability of extracurricular activities (e.g., band, sports, arts). Given the dramatic increase in academic requirements imposed by the New York State Board of Regents and the Federal government through the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, there is evidence that school districts are responding by either increasing tax rates to continue to support a full academic and extracurricular program, or are maintaining level tax efforts and cutting into some of these optional extras. Since satisfaction with local education is a mixture of local leadership, tax burden, educational programs, and extracurricular offerings, these responses are likely to affect satisfaction levels with community public education.

Figure 1: How satisfied are you with the public education in your community?



Source: 2007 Empire State Poll, Survey Research Institute and CaRDI, Cornell University

* References available on the CaRDI website



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Research & Policy Brief Series

ISSUE NUMBER 13/JANUARY 2008

The Capacity of Early Childhood Care & Education in Rural NYS

By John W. Sipple, Lisa A. McCabe, and Judith Ross-Bernstein, Cornell University

What is the Issue?

Comprehensive early education programs can have a positive impact on children's future success in school and employment. Yet, despite the importance of such experiences to later outcomes, early education is delivered through a complex network of programs-with different settings, regulations, goals, and funding- the availability of which may differ in urban, suburban, and rural contexts. In fact, little is known about the capacity of early care and education in rural areas of the United States, and New York State in particular.

Currently, New York is one of 38 states that fund pre-kindergarten programs. With regard to child care, rural children are only two-thirds as likely as non-rural children to be in center-based care (other than Head Start). Instead, rural children are often cared for by relatives, typically in homes that are not part of any regulated system (in what is termed "informal" child care in New York State; Grace, et al., 2006). Limited research also suggests some challenges with child care in rural communities. One of the biggest challenges is that a smaller, dispersed population tends to limit the child care options available. Not only are there fewer providers and programs (especially centers) to choose from, but there are also problems with transportation due to the longer distances between home, child care setting, and workplace (Colker & Dewees, 2000).

With funding from the state Legislature obtained by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources in 2006-2007, the NYS Rural Education Advisory Committee commissioned a study assessing these research questions:

- What is the incidence of early childhood learning program slots for children under age 5 in New York State rural counties and school districts?
- How does the number of early learning program slots relate to the population of children in rural and non-rural settings?

- What factors (e.g. space, wealth, education level) may be related to patterns of early learning programs in rural versus non-rural communities in New York State?

Data and Methods

The data for this study are drawn from three sources: 1) NY State Education Department; 2) NYS Office of Children and Family Services; and 3) the U.S. Census. By using multiple sources of data, this report is the first to provide a comprehensive look at the complex early care and education system in New York State with a special emphasis on rural communities. Information on key segments of the early care and education community, including child care centers, home-based family child care, state-funded pre-kindergarten, and Head Start are all included in order to provide the most complete picture possible.

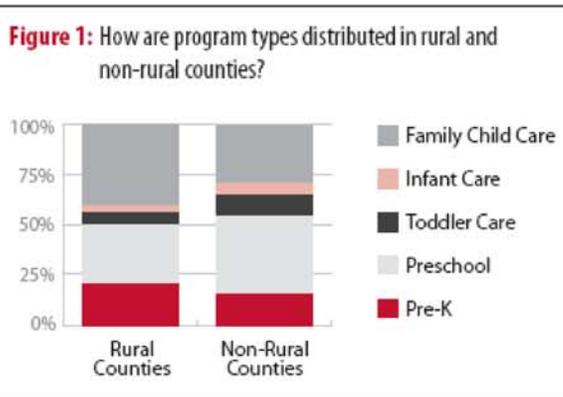
Early care and education terminology used in this report:

- Center-based child care (including Head Start) includes settings for three age groups of children: Infants (0- to 18-months), Toddlers (18 months to 3 years); and Preschoolers (3- to 4-year olds). Individual programs may include slots for all three age groups or may specialize in only one or two.
- Pre-kindergarten includes state-funded programming for 4-year-old children. Until the 2007-2008 school year, pre-kindergarten in New York State included two state-wide programs: Targeted and Universal Pre-kindergarten. Data for this report includes 4-year-old children in either program.
- Family child care refers to care for children under age 5 in home-based, registered settings.

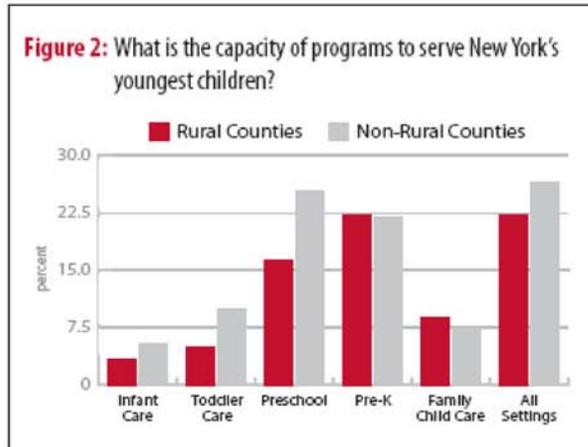
Findings:

- Rural and non-rural settings offer the same program types, however the distribution varies (see Figure 1). Family child care and public pre-kindergarten

are slightly more represented in rural counties while slots for infant, toddler, and preschool center care are less represented in non-rural counties.

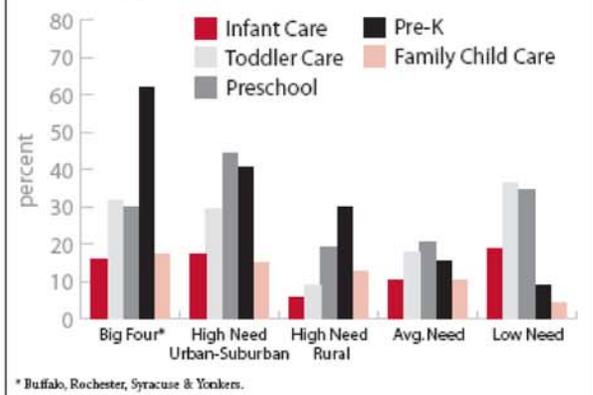


- In both rural and non-rural counties, the number of slots available does not come close to matching the number of children in a region whose families may participate in these programs (see Figure 2). In rural counties, slots only cover 22% (about 1 in 5) of all children. In non-rural counties this percentage is 26% (about 1 in 4).



- Regions served by high need rural school districts have substantially less capacity in all program types than do those living in areas served by high need urban and suburban school districts (see Figure 3). The more urban locations have two to three times the capacity for infants, toddlers, preschool, and pre-kindergarten participants.

Figure 3: How does capacity vary by school district locale and wealth?



- Districts with more square footage per student, higher rates of student poverty, or larger district enrollment are significantly more likely to offer pre-kindergarten than those districts with less space, higher wealth, and lower enrollment.
- Even after controlling for space, wealth, enrollment and adult education level, the high need urban and suburban school districts are two-and-a-half times more likely to offer prekindergarten than high need rural school districts.

Conclusions

This is a study of the capacity of communities across New York State to serve the youngest segment of society in early education programs. In particular, this study assesses the current state of regulated care and education in rural portions of New York State. This report offers considerable evidence of variation in the patterns of early-child care and education between rural and non-rural settings. These differences are at both the county and school district level with less capacity for services often evident in rural communities when compared to non-rural areas of NYS. This difference in education capacity is especially noticeable when comparing state-funded pre-kindergarten. Such programming is more than two-and-a-half times more likely in high need urban/suburban districts when compared with their low-income rural counterparts. New York State must recognize these patterns and engage in action to reconcile these differences in capacity to better serve the youngest citizens of the state.

* For references and the full paper, please visit the CaRDI website.



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REAC Mini – Grant Awards

The Rural Education Advisory Committee (REAC) has agreed to fund twenty–eight projects for the 2007-08 school year. The committee attempted to identify innovative projects that aligned with the following priorities of REAC.

- 1 Rural Schools should function as community centers.
- 2 Rural Schools should ensure high quality education for all children leading to success in school, employment, and civic engagement.

Listed below are the twenty–eight projects that were awarded grant funding along with a brief description of each project and school district contact information. Projects may not exceed \$2500, and the grant awards to the twenty–eight school districts amounted to \$64,894.76. This information is being provided as part of the commitment of the Rural Schools Association to disseminate information on “best practice” initiatives in New York State. REAC would like to thank all of the districts who submitted proposals and congratulate the twenty – eight grant recipients.

| Program Title | School District | Program Description | Contact |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Values Everyone, Everyday, Everywhere | Albion CSD | Weeklong, districtwide Cultural Awareness Fair to celebrate and educate preK-12 students on the diversity of the Albion community by identifying the different cultures in the community and promote cultural awareness through storytelling, music, food, and guest speaker. Program will conclude with a daylong celebration of community. | Susan Starkweather 585-589-2087 sstarkweather@albionk-12.org |
| Vine to Work | Prattsburg CSD | A vineyard will be planted with the purpose of training students in the regional culture of vineyards and providing them with employability in an area where there is demand. Focus will be on at risk and special education students. It will include students from Avoca and Hammondsport. | James Wall 607-522-3795 wallj@pratts.wnyric.org |
| Play It Again | Carthage CSD | Uses Reader’s Theater, a research based practice. Makes use of repeated readings of plays to motivate readers. It also provides fluent readers with the opportunity to explore genre and characterization. Blends children’s desire to perform with the need for repeated oral reading practice. | Marilyn Bish 315-493-5175 mbish@carthagecsd.org |
| Choral Camp | Carthage CSD | Gives students skills and experience in the performing arts, especially choral students. In collaboration with interested community members and local business, students will participate in vocal studies and the performance process twice weekly during the summer. Performances will be scheduled and the culminating activity will be a community picnic featuring camp participants. | Richard Weber 315-493-5175 rweber@carthagecsd.org |
| Transition Team | Cobleskill – Richmondville CSD | All 9th Graders will be scheduled into a daily “Freshman Forum” in groups of 10 students. Sessions will be 20 minutes in length and designed to assist students in making the high school transition. The intent is to provide academic and social support. | Pam Kostbar- Jarvis 518-234-3565 x 117 jarvisp@crcs.k12.ny.us |
| Be R.E.A.L | Cortland City School District | After school program in collaboration with the Virgil Youth Commission. Focus is on academic support and community service. Tutorial support from Tompkins Cortland Community College students. Community Service modeled on “Adopt a Highway” program with care for school playground and roads leading to school. Connections will also be made with a local senior citizen group. Counseling support would be provided by Alcohol and Substance Abuse Council and Communities that Care Coalition. | Linda New 607-758-4139 lnew@cortlandschools.org |
| Williamstown Elementary Educator/ Parent Connection | Altmar – Parish Williamstown CSD | A community program that includes a community craft night, a literacy program, computer classes, and fitness through the “Walk – A – Mile” Club. | Deborah Haab 315-625-5251 dhaab@apw.cnyric.org |

| Program Title | School District | Program Description | Contact |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Designs by Knight | Copenhagen CSD | Students will research, advertise, produce, and market personalized video productions for school and community groups. Focus will be on students enrolled in Business Computer Applications as well as students participating in after school programs. | Margaret Nevills 315-688-4411 mnevills@ ccs.knights.org |
| Marcus Whitman Bridges Out of Poverty Community Read | Gorham- Middlesex CSD | Focus will be on 170 elementary, middle and high school teachers. Entire staff to read and discuss Bridges Out of Poverty. Facilitated discussions throughout the school year. | Michael Chirco 585-554-6441 x 1365 mchirco@ mwcsd.org |
| Create Community Connections Through Hospitality | Gouverneur CSD | Hospitality Club comprised of 60 students in grades 3-12 will work with area civic organizations to host events. Students will prepare food and provide support at the functions. With support of trained adults, students will prepare, present, serve, and host events. Activities include a Career Day focusing on food service and hospitality industry. Students will visit a local resort to see hospitality industry at work. | Lauren French 315-287-1903 lfrench@ gcs.neric.org |
| Pillars and Portraits, A School – Commu- nity Connection | Greene CSD | Regi Carpenter, a well known story teller, and Leigh Yardly, a visual artist, will work with staff and students. They will assist in the collection of local stories and the development of appropriate illustrations for the stories. Final products will be presented at a public gathering. Stories will be transposed into a mural onto an exterior wall of the school entitled Greene Greater America. | Carole Stanbro 607-656-5174 x 1 cstanbro@ greenecsd.org |
| Herkimer Jr. – Sr. High School Learning Center | Herkimer CSD | Change focus of Academic Intervention Services from a “pull-out” model to a “push-in” model. Training will be provided on a “Learner Focused Acceleration” model, Ruby Payne’s Framework for Understanding Poverty, and Teaching in the Block. Visitations will be made to local community colleges that have instituted successful Learning Center models. | James Hawley 315-866-8562 jhawley@ herkimercsd.org |
| Literacy Enrichment | Hinsdale CSD | An After School Literacy Enrichment Program for students in grades 3 and 4. Training will be provided on skills related to questioning, modeling, Think Aloud, and conferring. Enrichment Providers will be high school students who can serve as mentors and role models. This Enrichment Programs will be part of the local YMCA Kid Zone Program. | Laurie Edmonston 716-557-2227 ledmonston@ hinsdale.wnyric.org |
| Developing 21st Century Communities of Learners | Holland Patent CSD | Using Adobe Connects Digital whiteboard, video, and voice conferencing, Holland Patent intends to create an interest based community of learners. Initial focus will be science teachers and students along with National Board Candidates. Connects will be with local colleges and NYS Agencies. Science teachers will use Connects to follow through with experts. National Board Candidates will use Connects for Peer Review. | Patrick Peterson 315-865-7226 ppeterson@ hpschools.org |
| Student Advisory Training Program | Windham Ashland Jewett CSD | 15 faculty members will serve as advisors for 55 students identified as at risk in grades 7 – 12. Activities will include: (1) A Student – Parent Workshop, (2) Advisor Training to assist Students in goal setting, (3) Drug Prevention Programs, (4) Visits to Greene Correctional Facility and Columbia Greene Community College, (5) Participation in the College for Every Student Program. | Anne Rode 518-734-3400 jgatto@ wajcs.org |

| Program Title | School District | Program Description | Contact |
|---|------------------------|--|--|
| Get in The Rhythm of Walking | Letchworth CSD | Designed to improve student health and academic achievement, this lunchtime walking program will include listening and distance monitoring activities. Using MP3 players and pedometers, students will listen to academic or social messages and track the distance they walk. Specific sites, such as Ellis Island, will be identified and student distance will be monitored and tracked on a map. | William Beam 585-493-5999 x 7007 wbeam@ letchworth.k12.ny.us |
| Staff Development Through Teacher and Parent Learning Circles | Lyons CSD | Pilot a 12 session joint professional learning circle consisting of a team of 15 parents and at least 5 teachers in an after-school setting. The Learning Circle will brainstorm and identify topics of interest and further study and will develop a work plan. Bi-weekly sessions will be held and outcomes will be presented to School Improvement and District Planning Teams. | Mark Clark 315-946-2200 x 3501 mclark@ lyonscsd.org |
| Detention Deferment Program | Malone CSD | A program done in cooperation with North Star Behavioral Health Services. Other partners will include AMVETS, the YMCA, the Office of the Aging, and the Malone Police Department. A trained mental health professional or a school counselor will work with 6 to 9 middle school students with chronic behavioral problems. Focus will be on team building and coping skills with students providing community service as an alternative to school detention. | Marice Clark 518-483-9487 mbright@ mail.fehb.org |
| Community Read | Marion CSD | High School Students, Staff, Parents, and interested community members will participate in a community read of Mark Haddon's The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night. English classes will explore different themes by grade level. Student and community book sessions will be held at school and at the public library. These will be supplemented by guest lecturers and panel discussions. | Denise Paley 315-926-4228 dpaley@ marioncsd.org |
| Historical Living Museum | McGraw CSD | Students will apply research skills, biographical writing skills, and creative oral presentation skills. Target population is 8th grade students. Historical characters will be identified through a random selection process. Students will research the impact of each historical figure as well as collect "artifacts" and create "scrapbooks" that focus on their figure. Progress will be monitored during the year, and the culminating activity will be a public presentation in the form of a living history museum. | Mary Reagan 607-836-3601 mreagan@ mcgrawschools.org |
| Mr. Sharp's Children's Garden | Newark Valley CSD | Mr. Sharp's Children's Garden is a project based – real life learning experience. Middle level students will be paired with community members for the purpose of designing school garden plots. This is a beautification project aimed at increasing school and community pride. It will include identification of plots, a publicity campaign to adopt a plot, and a sustainability plan for future care. | Lon T. Hayes 607-642-3221 lhayes@ nvcs.stier.org |
| School and Community – The Literacy Connection | Whitney Point CSD | Groups of high school students and community members coming together in small groups to read and discuss a common book. Modeled on community wide reading programs conducted in urban settings. A minimum of 5 discussion dates with culminating activity for all participants during National Library Week. | Mary Hibbard 607-692-8269 mhibbard@ wpcsd.org |

| Program Title | School District | Program Description | Contact |
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| Kindergarten Families Living Together | Morrisville-Eaton CSD | A Learning Bag, consisting of materials appropriate for kindergarten children, will be distributed to every kindergarten child. A family evening will be scheduled in the early fall at which learning activities will be modeled for and done by families and children. Three other family evenings will be scheduled during the school year. At these subsequent sessions a book will be given to each child, and the focus will be on “family reads” as an approach to improving reading skills. | Debra Dushko 315-684-9288 ddushko@m-ecs.org |
| “Love Literacy” After School Program | Mount Markham CSD | Working with the public library, the school district will focus on fostering literacy development in students grades K-4. Volunteer literacy partners will be sought across the school district. Volunteers will be trained in effective literacy strategies, skill based computer tech programs, and use of the internet. Students will be paired with a literacy partner and they will meet for 1 hour sessions twice a week throughout the school year. Literacy Logs will be maintained by each volunteer. | Rebecca M. Marzeski 315-822-6327 rmarzeski@mncsd.org |
| Y.E.S. Portville | Portville CSD | Developed in conjunction with the Students In Free Enterprise Chapter at St. Bonaventure University. The project will focus on management of an outdoor ice rink. Students would develop a business plan, secure materials, manage the funds, manage the building process, create and model at events, and record statistics on use. This project will help develop team building, communication, and planning skills. It will also allow students to explore different career paths. | Matt Milne 716-930-3000 mmilne@portville.wnyric.org |
| Project T.E.A.C.H Ticonderoga Educators and Community Helpers | Ticonderoga CSD | T.E.A.C.H will focus on 3 components: (1) Teaching parents how to use technology to enhance involvement in their child’s learning. (2) Helping the broader community gain access to the internet. (3) Training staff on the use of technology in the classroom. Instruction will be provided one hour per week through May 2008 by the District Curriculum Coordinator. | William Dodd 518-585-6661 wdodd@ticonderogak12.org |
| Literacy Across the Ages | Tully CSD | Project involves the school district, teachers’ association, parent teacher organization, the Rotary Club, Tully Free Library, PEALE Inc., and the Liberty Partnership Program. Focus will be on preschool (age 2) through grade 8 with an adult connection. Activities will include partnering at risk 8th grade students with elementary students for joint reading, reading projects involving parents and senior citizens through the Tully Library, helping parents become reading partners with their children, and the use of storytellers and community readers. | Debra Cox 315-696-6213 dcox@tully.k12.ny.us |
| Rachel’s Challenge | York CSD | Video on Rachel’s life and the Columbine Tragedy will be shown to all 7 – 12 grade students. This will be followed by a training session with adult and student leaders on how to sustain momentum created by the video. Evening session with presentation by Rachel, Challenge speaker to community leaders and parents. Intent is to eliminate bullying and prejudice, develop goal setting skills, making good choices, acting with kindness, and creating a chain reaction with family and friends. | Sherri Nevingo 585-243-1730 x2212 snevingo@yorkcsd.org |

Connecting Cornell ... continued from page 1

Please consider encouraging your teaching staff to use these publications as a fresh and innovative way to connect their students with current topics and research based in New York State communities.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these publications, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to a productive and engaging year – Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Robin Blakely & John Sipple

RSA Staff Working on Special Projects

This been a busy year for RSA Staff. In addition to continuing our support of the Improving Graduation Rates Workshops, we have agreed to work on two special initiatives.

Over the last 18 months, our staff has been working with the Chautauqua County School Study Group comprised of the Brocton, Chautauqua Lake, Ripley, and Westfield School Districts. The Study Group received a \$40,000 grant from the New York State Department of State to examine the possibility of greater collaboration; particularly the feasibility of creating a Central Business Office to serve the four districts. The Rural Schools Association conducted the study and provided a report to the Study Group in December 2007. The report contained recommendations on how to proceed with the creation of a Central Business Office as well as suggestions for greater collaboration in the areas of Food Service Management, Human Resource Management, Special Education Administration, Technology Support, and Transportation Services. It was also recommended that Brocton, Ripley, and Westfield study the feasibility of school district merger. For more information on the study please feel free to contact Brocton Superintendent Jack Skahill at jskahill@broc.wnyric.org

The Rural Schools association has also entered into an agreement with the Honeoye Central School District to conduct a search for a new Superintendent. Honeoye is a rural school district located 30 miles south of Rochester. Superintendent William Schofield will be retiring in November 2008. The vacancy notice is being finalized and the formal announcement of the vacancy will be made in February 2008. The Board of Education would like to employ the new Superintendent by mid August so that he/she could work with Mr. Schofield during the transaction period. For more information contact the Rural Schools Association at 607-255-8709.