



Session title:

Session A5: Implementing i3 Projects in Rural Communities: Building on Strengths of Rural Communities to Improve Educational Achievement

Session B5: Rural Communities: Making Connections for Educators Beyond their Local Communities to Improve Educational Achievement

Session presenters/facilitators:

Session A5

- Aurelio Montemayor, Intercultural Development Research Association
- Dennis O. Davis, North Carolina New Schools Project
- Hector Bojorquez, Intercultural Development Research Association
- Hobart Harmon, Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc.
- Jason Kessler, North Carolina New Schools Project
- Paul Nichols, Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc.

i3 TA moderators:

Victoria Schaefer, Westat; Lauren Kurczewski, EDI

Session B5

- Aurelio Montemayor, Intercultural Development Research Association
- Hector Bojorquez, Intercultural Development Research Association
- Debbie Kasak, National Forum on Middle Grades
- Angie Jerabek, Spurwink Services
- Anu Sharma, Spurwink Services
- Linda Freidrich, National Writing Project
- Joye Alberts, National Writing Project
- Vivian Franklin, Niswonger Foundation
- Richard Katzmilller, Niswonger Foundation

i3 TA moderators:

Lauren Kurczewski, EDI; Victoria Schaefer, Westat

Overall summary of the session:

Session A5

i3 grantees shared powerful experiences in successfully implementing grants in rural communities. This work lies in building on the strengths of rural communities, including family and community networks. The three presenting i3 grants vary in project specifics, but share common themes around the importance of engaging parents, emphasizing postsecondary education and training for rural youth, and encouraging rigorous course-taking patterns in high school. During the roundtable discussions, participants in the session shared their experiences, and the discussion addressed questions, common challenges, successful practices and lessons learned. The session ended with a summary of a few key points for further discussion/exploration, which are identified below under "key issues."

Session B5



These grantees shared their experiences about increasing college and career readiness among students in rural communities. These grantees have helped rural educators build connections outside of their communities by creating networks or consortia across states. Although the grantees' projects differ in focus, all shared an interest in connecting outside the rural communities to overcome local challenges. During the roundtable discussions, participants in the session shared their experiences, and the discussion addressed questions, common challenges, successful practices and lessons learned. The session ended with a summary of a few key points for further discussion/exploration, which are identified below under "key issues."

Key issues and questions discussed:

Sustainability—Participants expressed significant interest in discussing the issues surrounding sustainability, including practical issues like finding ongoing funding as well as challenges related to cultural shifts and changes in perspective.

Evaluation challenges in relation to rural schools and communities—Participants are interested in understanding the evaluation designs for rural i3 projects, especially in relation to overcoming challenges related to implementing What Works Clearinghouse standards for rigorous evaluations.

Defining rural—One participant has experienced changes in participating schools' rural designation, which affects the evaluation design. In the larger context, defining rural has been an ongoing discussion in the rural education community and has a long history. Researchers interested in rural education can benefit from understanding the issues surrounding definitions of rural schools and districts, as well as understanding commonly used definitions when engaging in rural research.

Parent and Family Engagement—Participants emphasized that parents are powerful advocates in rural education and that engaging parents is essential for success. Identifying successful strategies for parent, family, and community engagement is an interest of this group.

Communication—Participants emphasized the importance of good communication when working in rural settings. Participants are interested in learning more about successful strategies used by i3 grantees to champion their projects in rural schools and communities.

Suggested topic(s) for follow-up engagement, in addition to those listed above, as provided by session participants:

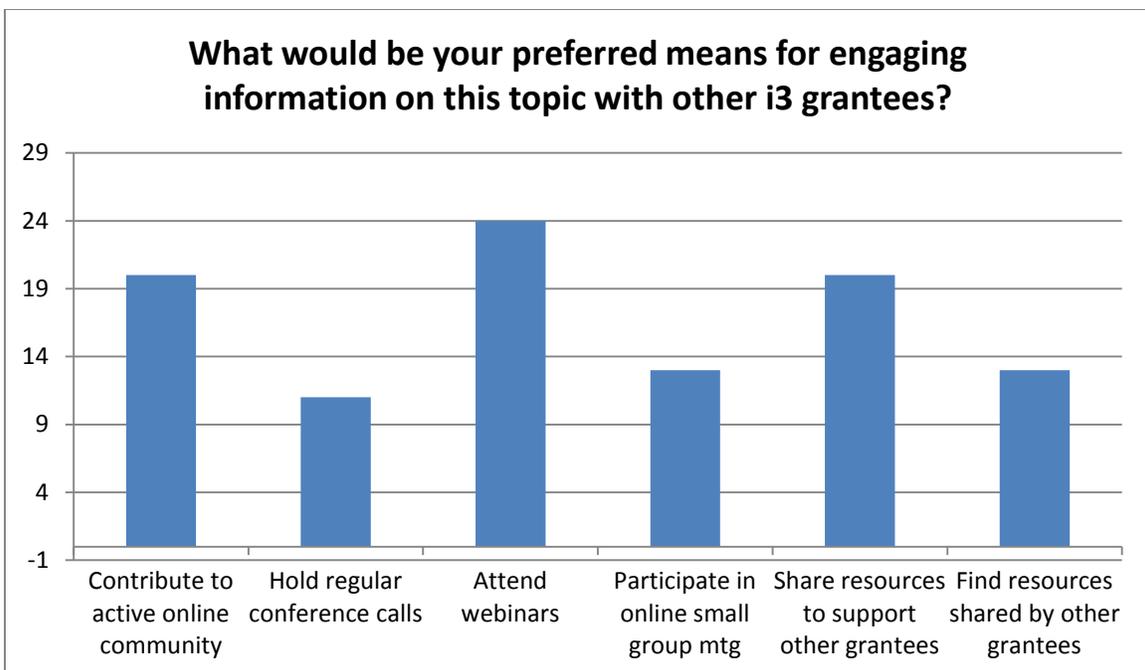
- Networking among schools
- Developing school leaders
- Value of using "postsecondary education" term versus "college" in rural communities
- In-depth review and discussion of each rural i3 project
- Clarity of outcomes
- Addressing the challenges of implementing higher learning in a culture of low expectations
- Use of data
- Teachers: Turnover; What is their role?; Engaging teachers
- Technology—access to internet at school and at home
- Distance learning
- Creating a culture shift in rural high schools that reflects understanding of rural community contexts



- Reducing isolation

Suggested means of engaging provided by session participants (circle all that apply, $n = 34$ individuals commented)

a. Contribute to active online community	20
b. Hold regular conference calls	11
c. Attend webinars	24
d. Participate in online small group meeting	13
e. Share resources to support other grantees	20
f. Find resources shared by other grantees	13
g. Other	0



Related resources that may be useful:

- Explanation of locale codes provided by NCES
 - http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/rural_locales.asp
- National Rural Education Association
 - <http://www.nrea.net>
- National Center for Research on Rural Education
 - <http://r2ed.unl.edu/>
- Rural School and Community Trust
 - <http://www.ruraledu.org/>
- Sustainability template provided by EDI at relevant conference sessions, which is available on the i3 community website