



**Wisconsin Center for  
Education Research**  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Building and strengthening partnerships across WI to enhance rural education through the development of a rural education research center

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Clinton School District



## Introductions



## Acknowledgements

- Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER)
- UW-Madison School of Education
- The Wisconsin Collaborative Education Research Network
- UW-System Administration
- UW-Madison Rural Education Workgroup graduate students
- Individuals from statewide organizations and rural schools throughout the state who have allowed us to partner with them to develop plans and priorities



## Goals for Today's Presentation

- Enhance our understanding of pressing needs and existing priorities associated with rural education.
- Review strengths of rural schools and communities.
- Describe the development of a rural education research center to be housed within the School of Education at UW-Madison.
- Discuss how to mold the center's vision and mission based on strengths and needs in rural education.
- Facilitate a discussion about existing priorities, engagement, and future opportunities to collaborate.



## Questions for Ongoing Discussion

1. Are the identified initial strands relevant and important for Wisconsin's rural schools? What other issues/strands should we consider adding as the center becomes more established?
2. Within rural schools and communities, what are the challenges in identifying, selecting, implementing, and sustaining research supported strategies and programs?
3. What would be the most effective dissemination strategies to reach educators and parents within your own district?
4. What can we do to enhance educators' and parents' interests in participating in future research associated with the Center?



What are the most pressing issues associated with rural education in your communities?



## Background Creation of a Research Center

- Within the School of Education and WCER, there has been an emphasis on deliberate and collaborative discussions about rural education across the state
- The importance of creating and sustaining partnerships with rural schools is clear and shared across researchers



## Rural Education Research and Implementation Center Mission

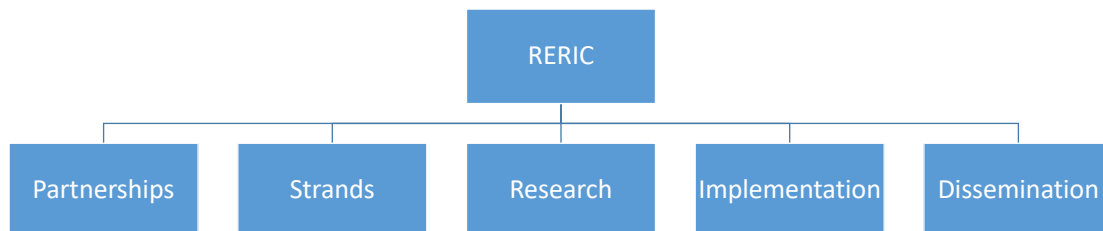
Conduct rigorous and sophisticated interdisciplinary research to enhance outcomes for students, families, and schools in rural education settings.

The Center focuses on improving rural schools' ability to engage in research, enhancing the capacity of rural schools to use evidence-based approaches, and developing methodological tools and strategies germane to rural education settings.

## Goals for *Rural Education Research & Implementation Center*

- Promote positive outcomes for children, youth, families, and schools and enhance college, career, and life readiness
- Establish partnerships and capacity to identify and implement practices informed by research
- Collaborate to develop practical tools and strategies
- Increase the quantity, quality, relevance, accessibility, and usability of rural education research for educators and policymakers
- Collaborate with rural schools to increase participation in and benefit from education research

## Vision for the *Rural Education Research and Implementation Center*





## Building Partnerships with Stakeholders Across Wisconsin

- Meetings and events
- School-community-university engagement
- Focus groups
- Ongoing connections to strengthen partnerships



## RERIC Strands and Associated Research

- College and career readiness
- Mental and behavioral health
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education
- Teacher recruitment, retention, and preparation
- Research training and preparation



## College and Career Readiness

- **Defined: Success in entry-level college courses or career training programs without remedial coursework** (Conley, 2012)
  - Academic knowledge, problem solving, social emotional learning, perseverance, and transition knowledge (Conley, 2012; Mishkind, 2014)
- **Research focused in two areas**
  - Improving the measurement of college and career readiness among students in rural schools (Lombardi, Seburn, & Conley, 2011)
  - Investigating indicators and predictors of postsecondary readiness
- **College and career readiness underlies all strands**
  - We are pursuing college and career readiness as a public health priority



## Mental and Behavioral Health

- **National and statewide priority**
- **Align and integrate mental and behavioral health support in rural schools with existing structures and routines** (Barret, Eber, & Weist, 2013)
- **School mental health begins with strong universal systems that are linked with targeted and intensive support through a systematic scope and sequence** (Walker et al., 1996)
- **Focus on interconnecting home, school, and community settings to strengthen a shared commitment to research-supported practices and leveraging collective strengths to build capacity for effective mental and behavioral healthcare in rural education settings** (Dishion, 2011; Irvine, 2004)



## STEM Education

- STEM training is essential to create a workforce that can address the need for STEM jobs in rural communities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014)
- Leverage collective knowledge of the wide variety of STEM-related experts at UW–Madison to identify ways to increase and enhance STEM-related opportunities within Wisconsin's rural schools.
- Build on career pathways to improve real-world applications to STEM in authentic settings (e.g., through virtual internships)



## Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Preparation

- Teacher shortages nationally and in Wisconsin persist across subject areas and are particularly dire in rural areas, which often lead to eliminating school programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017; Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2016)
- We are planning several lines of work to address these concerns
  - Examine factors that affect teacher hiring decisions, experiences, and career paths
  - Develop a model of professional development designed to improve development and coaching for teachers in a public health approach to service delivery
  - Examine practices and development opportunities specifically for teachers who are certified through an alternative pathway





## Research Training and Preparation

- Rural education research is often plagued by two issues (Bovaird & Bash, 2017)
  - Lack of high quality, methodologically-sound research
  - Unique characteristics within rural schools and communities that makes conducting research difficult in those settings
- Build capacity for innovative and rigorous rural education research by mentoring graduate students and encouraging rural education pursuits
- Advance methodological knowledge and approaches associated with rural education research
- Provide training in economic analysis of education outcomes to determine costs, benefits, and return on investment.



## Cultural Responsiveness

- Examine approaches to improve cultural responsiveness.
- Investigate strategies to embed cultural responsiveness in schoolwide systems and practices.
- Build capacity in rural schools to enhance cultural responsiveness.
- Investigate data disaggregation approaches to assess and monitor equity in student outcomes.
- Examine policies and practices for disparate impact.

Leverson et al. (2016) McIntosh (2017)



Are the identified initial strands relevant and important for Wisconsin's rural schools?

What other issues/strands should we consider adding as the center becomes more established?

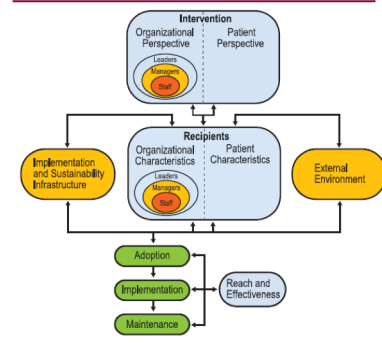


## Implementation and Sustainability

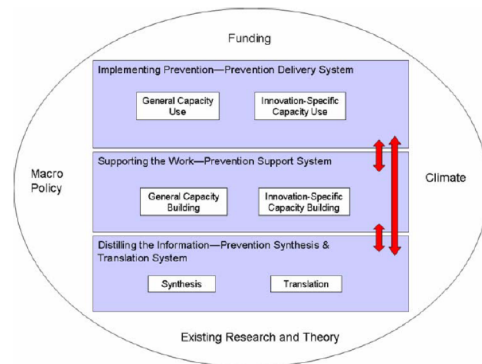
## How do we improve implementation?

- Modify together
- Plan for sustainability from the start
- Facilitate adoption of systems and practices
- Improve quality implementation
- Sustain systems and practices

### The Practical, Robust Implementation and Sustainability Model (PRISM)



## Implementation and Improvement Science



Feldstein & Glasgow (2005); Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace (2008); Wandersman et al. (2008)

Within rural schools and communities, what are the challenges in **identifying, selecting, implementing, and sustaining** research supported strategies and programs?

Dissemination

## Dissemination

- Email
- Listserv
- Social media
- Newsletters
- Website
- Blog
- Workshops/presentations

What would be the most effective dissemination and communication strategies to reach educators and parents within your own district?

## Engagement

## Engagement and Partnerships

- Regional conferences
- Working meetings
- Advisory councils
- Focus groups
  - Wisconsin Rural Schools and Communities Project



## Wisconsin Rural Schools and Communities Project

- Goal: Learn from school staff and parents in rural Wisconsin schools about strengths, priorities, and goals
- Focus group meetings
  - What are the biggest strengths of your community?
  - What are your top 3 priorities for your school?
- Outreach through schools and districts
- Each individual who participates in a 45 minute focus group meeting receives compensation.



What can we do to enhance educators' and parents' interests in participating in future research associated with the Center?



## Next Steps

- We will process the information shared here today
- Please consider sending us any additional ideas, suggestions and feedback
- Seek and obtain external funds to support and sustain
- Reach out to schools and districts to engage in a dialogue about future collaborations
- Create communication networks that include multi-directional communication pathways
- Initiate research projects
- Build a clearinghouse of resources and tools



## Feedback and Communication

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Thank you!