



CC BY-NC-SA Education Development Center - Designed in Collaboration with NREA's Research and Higher Education Committee



NATIONAL RURAL RESEARCH AGENDA 2022-2027

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) is pleased to present the National Rural Education Association Research Agenda – 2022-2027. A wide variety of stakeholders across the country were invited to provide their perspectives on the strengths and needs of rural schools. It is the hope of NREA that this agenda will increase educational equity and opportunity for rural students across the country while highlighting the many strengths that rural schools and communities possess.

NREA Research and Higher Education Subcommittee: Catharine Biddle, Pamela J. Buffington, Sara L. Hartman, Erin McHenry-Sorber, J. Kessa Roberts, Sarah Schmitt-Wilson

SPATIAL & EDUCATIONAL EQUITY Spatial and educational equity are conceptualized in two ways in this agenda: 1) spatial inequity, or how equity challenges are related to place, and 2) how equity, or rather, inequity relate to diverse identities and social circumstances present within the rural school and community. Lines of inquiry include:

- Research from intersectional perspectives
- Attention to power within and across communities
- Effects of remoteness/isolation
- Effects of deficit portrayals of rural people and places
- Dynamics of white supremacy/identity

TEACHER & LEADER PREPARATION, RECRUITMENT, & RETENTION Workforce is a pressing issue for rural schools. The agenda suggests research that addresses recruitment of new teachers and leaders, retention of current educators, and teacher preparation programs that prepare candidates for positions in rural communities. Lines of inquiry include:

- Defining the scope and impact of rural teacher/leader shortages across content areas and contexts, such as the disproportionate impact of teacher/leader shortages on certain subgroups of students and families (i.e. disabled and linguistically diverse learners)
- Identifying approaches to addressing rural teacher/leader recruitment and retention
- Promising models for contextually relevant rural teacher and leader preparation
- Centering equity and justice in rural teacher and leader professional development and pre-service preparation
- Approaches to recruiting and retaining more racially and linguistically diverse teachers and leaders to the rural education workforce

COLLEGE & CAREER TRAJECTORY This category recognizes the need for research on both college and career pathways for rural students, including expectations and aspirations, access to information and academic offerings, and transition to post-secondary pathways. Lines of inquiry include:

- Access to college and career information across diverse rural contexts and communities
- Identifying deficit ideology imposed by adults in college and career processes (e.g. racism/classism)
- Promising pathways and supports for post-secondary education
- Understanding both secondary pathways and local labor markets

POLICY & FUNDING The agenda calls for attention to issues ranging from inequitable funding to local and state governance to adoption of policies that leverage the strengths of rural educational settings. Lines of inquiry include:

- Achieving funding formula equity
- Identifying nimble policy/funding responses to changing student racial and linguistic demographics
- Articulating the impacts of school consolidation
- Promising approaches to rural educator salary equity
- Policies related to early childhood education access and system building

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS This category identifies the richness and strengths found in rural educational partnerships while also recognizing the tensions that sometimes complicate community relationships. This agenda suggests partnership research is pivotal to addressing inequities and building upon rural education assets. Lines of inquiry include:

- Identification of transferable partnership qualities
- Interdisciplinary teams working with multi-sited partnerships or networks
- Bi-directional partnership establishment with mutual benefit
- Conditions for access to diverse partnership opportunities
- Understanding partnership power dynamics
- The ways that public and political discourse on contentious topics shape relationships between communities and school/district leaders

HEALTH & WELLNESS This theme includes two major subthemes: mental health inequities and the effects of chemical/drug dependency on the whole community. Lines of inquiry include:

- Models for supporting rural student, family, teacher, and leader mental health
- Models for supporting access to specialized staff - both those that serve diverse student populations as well as those who are the sole provider of health and wellness services in their district (e.g. bilingual staff, school psychologists, counselors, and/or nurses)
- Identifying interrelationships between community health and environmental health
- Factors mediating access to diagnosis and early intervention supports for young children
- The long-term effects of COVID-19
- Identifying access and equity issues related to chemical dependence and substance use recovery