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THE RURAL SCHOOLS CHECKLIST

Solutions for common rural school challenges.

Written by ESC Region 13



THE RURAL SCHOOLS CHECKLIST

Challenge #1

Many teachers are the only one in their grade level or subject area and don't have collaboration through a PLC.

Solution

Create a co-op style PLC where teachers from neighboring districts regularly meet together.

- Decide who will attend the PLC.
 - Include an Assistant Principal or Instructional coach to help facilitate the discussion.
- Decide on a virtual vs. in-person platform.
 - Zoom or Google Hangouts works well.
- Choose a start date, and create a regular plan for meeting.
- Decide on a general topic for discussion.
 - Use collaboration tools like Google Docs to plan and document ideas from the discussion.
- Create norms of how the PLC should be run.
 - Focus more on instructional strategies than student data.

If a co-op is not an option, find online resources/tips for your grade level that have been shared by other teachers such as the Teacher Toolkit.



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Challenge #2

Hiring quality staff and retaining them can be difficult in a rural district.

Solution

Build a positive staff culture which will increase teacher participation.

- Provide mentoring opportunities with veteran teachers on your campus.
- Encourage collaboration to create innovative ideas and give teachers opportunities to try new things.
- Find and provide relevant professional development.
 - Look to your local Education Service Center to find free resources and workshops.
- When recruiting teachers, highlight the positives of working in a rural district.
 - Focus on the small class size, the small town feel, the close-knit community, and less links in the chain of command when you need support.
- Create a communications plan that outlines expectations and provides a clear vision from the district's superintendent.



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Challenge #3

Resources, curriculum, staff support, and special programs are not as plentiful in rural districts.

Solution

Be creative and involve the community whenever possible.

- When creating the master schedule, build in time for teachers who need to pull intervention or enrichment groups.
 - Staff members who aren't providing intervention can help the other students.
- Involve parents and community members.
 - Trained parents could help volunteer in the book room, monitor the lunchroom, etc.
 - Retirees could be reading partners.
- High school students and teacher certification program participants can also earn hours through volunteering with miscellaneous tasks.
- For curriculum needs, check with your regional Education Service Center to see what's available.
 - One option is the TEKS Resource System that is fully aligned curriculum.
 - Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and other companies sell curriculum adoption materials that are digital or have consumables.



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Challenge #4

Many students in rural schools don't have the same life experiences as students in larger cities.

Solution

Provide real-world experiences that expose students to life outside of their own community.

- Partner with companies and non-profits to provide free experiences.
 - Reach out to nearby colleges and universities for learning days.
 - Work with non-profits that provide opportunities for college visits.
- Create virtual field trips through sites like Discovery Education, Scholastic, and Google Expeditions.
- Bring experts into your classroom through Zoom video conferencing.
 - Connect2Texas can help you find experts that are willing to share with your class.
- Create digital pen-pals with students who live in other cities.
 - Students can virtually work on projects with students in other geographic areas or build friendships through email, Zoom, social media, etc.

For more rural school resources, attend the
Texas Rural Schools Spring Conference.
events.escl3.net/ruralschools

