

an
atlas

of
good
work



RURAL SCHOOLS
COLLABORATIVE

2018-19 ANNUAL REVIEW

strengthening the bonds...



Dear Friends,

The Rural Schools Collaborative was launched in 2015 by a small group of rural school and community advocates. Our mission is straightforward—to strengthen the bonds between rural schools and communities through place-based engagement, rural philanthropy, and the development of teacher-leaders. RSC is led by a volunteer board of directors and includes nine Regional Hubs, which are located throughout the United States. A small staff and a group of dedicated Advocates support our work.

RSC's mission-driven work now includes four signature programs. The overarching goal of these efforts is to support the development of thriving and sustainable rural communities:

- **School-Centered Philanthropy** — promoting strategies that address rural capital flight and enhance resources for student learning;
- **Place Network Schools** — supporting Teton Science Schools' Place Network, a place-centered learning community of small and rural schools;
- **Grants in Place** — making grants to rural teachers in support of innovative place-based learning projects;
- **Rural Teacher Corps Initiative** — strengthening the recruitment, preparation, placement, and retention of rural teacher-leaders.

These ongoing efforts have been bolstered by two exciting new ventures. First, RSC's "I am a Rural Teacher" initiative has received a major grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that will result in the launch of a collaborative, national advocacy campaign! Secondly, Monmouth College and the Galesburg Community Foundation have partnered to create a national support office for RSC and its programs.

I want to thank everyone who has been a part of this grassroots effort. Thanks to you, we have made great strides.

Sincerely,
JOSHUA D. GIBB, CHAIR



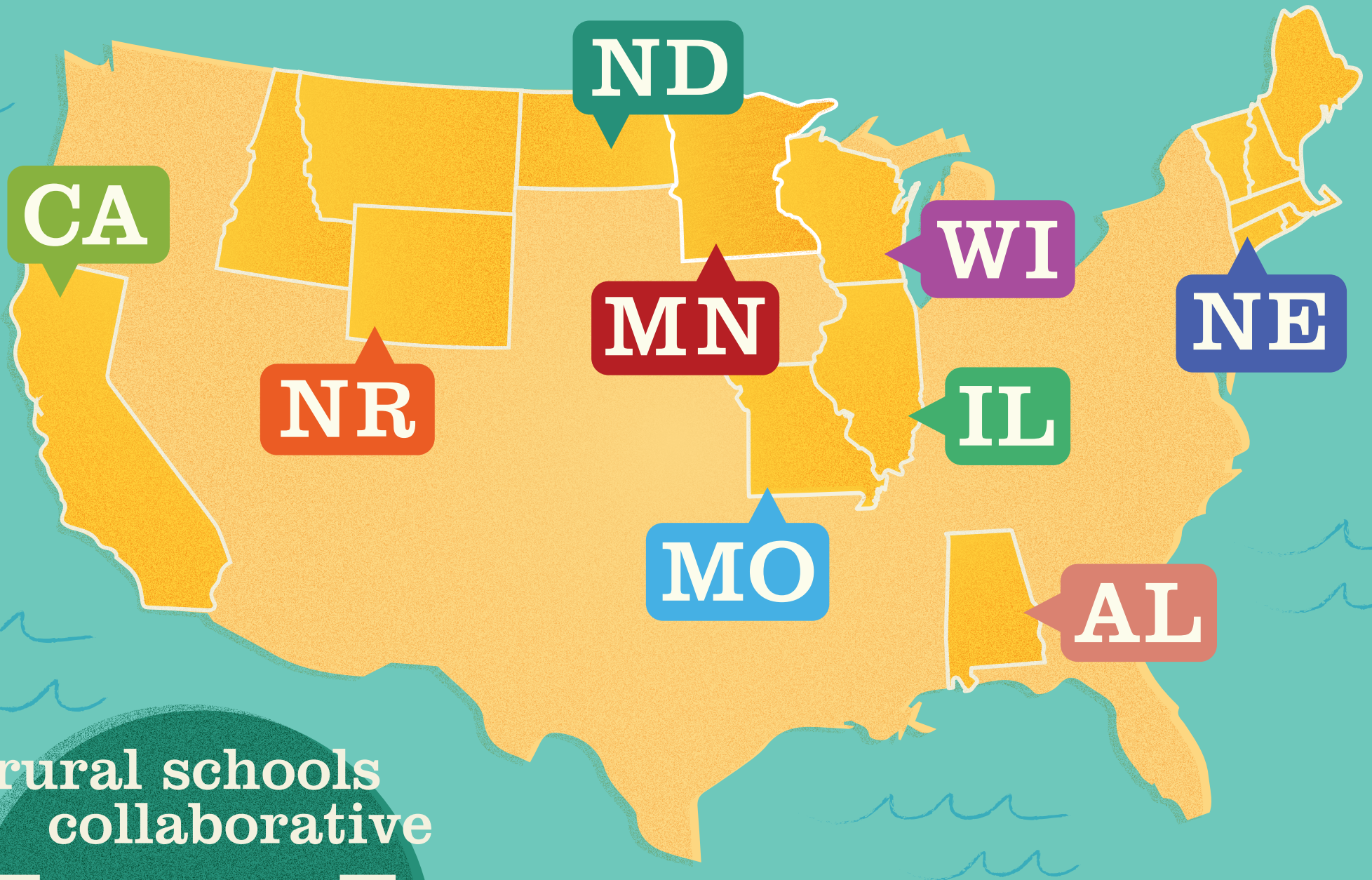
...between
**rural
schools
& communities**

**PLACE-BASED
ENGAGEMENT**

**RURAL
PHILANTHROPY**

**DEVELOPING
TEACHER-LEADERS**

COVER: Devon Barker-Hicks' "Tiny Home Project" at Meadows Valley School received a \$1,000 Grants in Place award in support of a project that featured eighth graders working with the high school shop class to build an 8 x 24-foot tiny home. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Haley Sager, a University of West Alabama Black Belt Teacher Corps alumna, works with students in Demopolis, AL.



rural schools
collaborative

hubs

...a flexible and cost-effective infrastructure for fostering real change in rural communities.

The relationships between the Hubs and RSC are mutually beneficial. This model allows for sharing the important work of RSC partners in a specific geographic region.

key projects



ALABAMA HUB University of West Alabama Livingston, AL

This past year the University of West Alabama opened the new University Charter School on the UWA campus. Serving as the **first truly integrated school** in rural Sumter County, the UCS is an actively engaged member of Teton Science Schools' Place Network.

The University of Alabama's Black Belt Teacher Corps continues to make a difference for rural schools in this high poverty region. Program director Susan Hester, reports that 15 Black Belt Teacher Corps graduates are now teaching in seven rural Alabama counties. Furthermore, the Alabama state legislature has increased its annual funding to support this innovative program.

HUB CONTACT: Dr. Jan Miller

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HUB California State University, Chico North State Together

Our two Northern California Hub anchors work together to strengthen the fabric of rural school communities in their region. An excellent example of this work is **Expect More Tehama**, a community-based initiative in Tehama County. EMT raises the expectations of what rural communities can achieve by enhancing the awareness of and providing options for higher education and career training. Through its work with North State Together, EMT is building a regional coalition in support of best practices and resource management.

California State University, Chico's **RiSE Program** (Residency in Secondary Education) completed its fifth year. The program pairs RiSE students with local rural schools to provide a new generation of math, science, English, and special education teachers in secondary education. Of recent program graduates, 90% are teaching in high need rural schools.

HUB CONTACTS: Ann Schulte, Ph.D.; and Kevin O'Rorke, Ph.D.



good work in rural places



NORTHERN ROCKIES HUB **Teton Science Schools, Jackson, WY**

Wyoming's Teton Science Schools successfully launched the Place Network. This national network of rural and small schools is dedicated to connecting school to community through thoughtful place-based practices. The Place Network has received major financial support from the **NewSchools Venture Fund** and partners with **Getting Smart** and the **Rural Schools Collaborative**.

Students at Meadows Valley School in Idaho received a 2018 **Grants in Place** award to support a project where eight graders worked with the high school shop class to build an eco-friendly tiny home (see photo). Students studied housing issues in their region and learned more about green living, grant writing, the trades, construction, and re-purposing. After the tiny home was completed the students sold it at auction to help fund a new playground project, which they are designing in conjunction with their local community. The latter project, "Build the Ripple," and its lead teacher, Devon Barker-Hicks, received the 2019 **National Signature Project** award from RSC and the **National Rural Education Association**.

HUB CONTACT: Nate McClennen



ILLINOIS HUB **Galesburg Community Foundation** **Monmouth College**

RSC's Illinois Hub receives major support from Monmouth College and the Galesburg Community Foundation, with additional funding from the Association of Illinois Rural and Small (AIRSS) Schools and Eastern Illinois University. This year's shared Illinois work has included the establishment of five new rural teacher corps!

These new programs are Monmouth College's TARTANS, Western Illinois University's Great River Teacher Corps, the Eastern Illinois University Rural Teacher Corps, and new projects at Quincy University and Southern Illinois University.

RSC also works closely with the Galesburg Community Foundation on school-centered philanthropy, an effort that is based out of the new national support office on the campus of Monmouth College.

HUB CONTACT: Joshua Gibb



NEW ENGLAND HUB Rural Educational Leaders Network & Plymouth State University, New Hampshire

The Rural Educational Leaders Network and Plymouth State University work together to strengthen the leadership capacity of New Hampshire's rural schools. Funding support provided by estate gifts from philanthropist Ann Haggart, RELN and the University support social marketing efforts, school advocacy at the state level, and professional development activities. Their annual summer conference in the foothills of the White Mountains is a perennial favorite.

RELN has also supported RSC's Grants in Place program, as evidenced by Amber Comtois' Baker River Project (pictured). This Wentworth Elementary School place-based unit allowed students to become citizen scientists and collect data that will improve the health of the Baker River.

HUB CONTACT: Dr. Linda Carrier

the
rural
advantage

WEST-CENTRAL MINNESOTA HUB West Central Initiative, Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Our West Central Minnesota Hub is anchored by the West Central Initiative (WCI), a nationally recognized regional community foundation known for its work in rural and small town community and economic development. Since 2017 WCI has been a leading partner in the Rural Schools Collaborative's Grants in Place program, providing funding and networking support.

Kathrina O'Connell's "The ABC's of John James Audubon: Art, Birding, and Conservation" received \$1,000 in Grants in Place funding to support a cross-curricular project, which focused on the artwork, birding, and conservation efforts of John James Audubon, and explored the conservationist's influence on the little town of Audubon, Minnesota. This place-based effort helped students to learn not only about Audubon, but about their community and the wildlife surrounding them at Lake Park Audubon Elementary.

HUB CONTACT: Wendy Merrick



ABOVE: Students from Lake Park Audubon Elementary School explore their rural backyard through the lens of birding.
LEFT: New Hampshire's Baker River Project engages students in a place-based learning opportunity with a public impact.



MISSOURI HUB

Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) is the lead partner for RSC's Missouri Ozarks Hub. CFO's Rural Schools Partnership and Ozarks Teacher Corps were the genesis for the Rural Schools Collaborative.

The Ozarks Teacher Corps has been a highly successful venture since its launch in 2010, and a new partnership cemented this year between the Rural Schools Partnership, the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, and Missouri State University – West Plains ensures that this success will continue into the future. The new agreement allows MSU-WP to administer the scholarship program on behalf of CFO and enables the university to create a specific course for the program, which will build skill sets important to rural teaching. This curriculum will include mentorships, studying new and innovative approaches to teaching, as well as on-site learning in rural districts. In addition, a report, *Ozarks Teacher Corps: Placement, Retention, & Perception, 2010-2019*, found that the placement and retention rates of Ozarks Teacher Corps alums exceeded expectations.

Philanthropy is the cornerstone of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, and its impactful Rural Schools Partnership continued its groundbreaking work in establishing and supporting rural school foundations. Since 2010 CFO has established more than 550 rural school funds with assets totaling more than \$30 million.

HUB CONTACT: Dr. Julie Leeth

WISCONSIN HUB

Wisconsin Green Schools Network

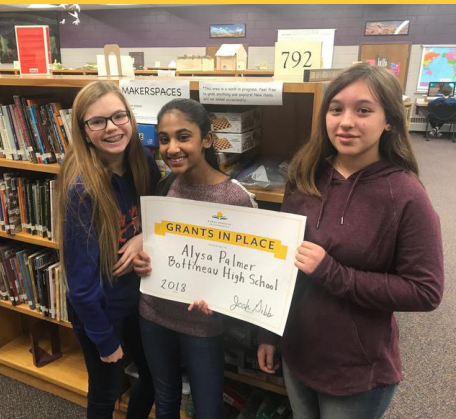
Wisconsin Green Schools Network (WGSN) connects with educators to explore natural and cultural systems and engage learners and leaders for thriving individuals and communities. WGSN invites all educators to join their organization free of charge, with benefits including social networking, student summits, and professional development.

In fall 2018, Koshkonong Trails School launched a partnership with Teton Science School's Place Network Schools. Koshkonong Trails joins a growing network of place-based learning schools with critical support services to further place-based learning.

HUB CONTACT: Emma Keese



ABOVE: The newest cohort of the Ozarks Teacher Corps, an initiative to recruit and retain excellent rural educators.
RIGHT: Students from Cambridge, Wisconsin's Koshkonong Trails School visit a local state park.



NORTH DAKOTA HUB North Dakota Small Organized Schools

The North Dakota Small Organized Schools anchors our North Dakota Hub. NDSOS works on behalf of all rural schools in The Peace Garden State.

This year North Dakota Small Organized Schools hosted several Rural Schools Collaborative “conversations” at statewide events. The primary topics were school foundation development, information related to rural teacher

corps efforts, and how NDSOS and RSC are working together to promote rural education throughout the state. A Grants in Place award to Alysa Palmer of Bottineau High School provided support funding for a new makerspace program in the school’s library (at right). The project allows for a variety of STEAM-related activities for students and teachers alike.

HUB CONTACT: ElRoy Burkle

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In memory of Evelyn Ruckman, by Pat Funk, Springfield, MO

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Rural Schools Collaborative Advocates make important contributions to rural schools and communities in their respective regions. Their willingness to support our work enhances both the credibility and capacity of our organization.

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