



The Appalachian Higher Education Network

...working with schools, families, communities and diverse partners to raise educational levels across the Appalachian region.

AHE Network Fall ■ Starkville, MS
The Hunter Henry Center, MSU

November 14-16, 2012

“The Many Aspects of Sustainability “

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2012

HUNTER HENRY CENTER - MSU

Noon - 1:15 p.m.

Welcome and Lunch
Connect with Colleagues

1:15 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Debriefing of 2012 Bus Tour (MS and AL Programs) - **Network Colleagues:** Sarita Rhonemus, Angie Suggs, Phil Hardwick, Tyson Elbert, and Saderia Morman.

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Centers’ Data Collection Processes & Issues
Jeff Schwartz, ARC Educ. Program Manager

2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

BREAK

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Education Data Collection – In General and In Mississippi - Dr. Domenico "Mimmo" Parisi, Executive Director, National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC), MSU.

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Revisit Centers’ Data Collection Discussion

5:00 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.

BREAK

6:15 p.m.

Gather in Hotel Lobby
Travel to The Grill, 200 S Montgomery St

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Working Dinner – AHE Network Business Center Progress Reports – TN, GA, KY

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2012

HUNTER HENRY CENTER - MSU

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast Available in Hotel
8:30 a.m.	Gather in Hotel Lobby Walk to Hunter Henry Center
9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Auditing: A Key Element of Accountability (and Sustainability) – Hubert Sparks, Auditor General, ARC Respondents: Network Colleagues whose Centers have been audited - GA, KY, MS, TN
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	COFFEE BREAK
10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Preparing to Fund Raise (write grants, etc.) Pollyanne Frantz, Network Development Mentor Network Support for Grant Writing Betty Hale, Network Leadership Mentor
11:30 – Noon	Travel to Harvey's - 406 Highway 12
Noon – 1:30 p.m.	Working Lunch Debrief July 24-25 Meeting - Future of ARC's Higher Education Initiative Jeff Schwartz, ARC Educ. Program Manager Respondents: Network Colleagues at the meeting: KY, TN, and WV
1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Return to Hunter Henry Center
2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.	General Wrap-Up Discussion – Fund Raising/Future of Higher Education Initiatives
2:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	How Can ahecenters.org Support and Promote Centers' Work (and the Network) Facilitator: Sarita Rhonemus, Network Colleague
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Center Progress Reports – NC, MS
4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Wrap-Up and Adjourn Dinner on Own



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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2012

HUNTER HENRY CENTER

7:30 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

Breakfast Available

8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. (or before)

Check out of Hotel

8:45 a.m.

Walk to Hunter Henry Center

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Center Progress Reports – VA and WV

9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Lingering Questions: Data Collection, Fund Raising, and Auditing

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

11:30 a.m.

Adjournment



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PRESENTER BIOS

Domenico “Mimmo” Parisi

Director, National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center

Professor of Sociology

Mississippi State University

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Parisi’s research expertise is in workforce and economic development, community development, and public welfare policy. He has developed a research center that conducts groundbreaking work integrating agency administrative databases as a source of comprehensive analysis of policy issues in the area of place-based economic and workforce development, created a performance management system to assist the state of Mississippi with the management and allocation of public resources, and assessed community resiliency, workforce needs, and economic risks.

The Office of the Director is charged with overseeing all center activities and supporting the overall mission of the Office of Research and Economic Development at MSU. A major responsibility is to secure and manage resources necessary to enable people to achieve their personal and collective goals and is responsible for developing appropriate fiscal and management strategies and long-range plans. The office also ensures that the center provides an intellectual hub for promoting research and scholarship aimed at addressing complex social and economic issues in the state, the region, the nation, and the world. The office is also charged with formulating and implementing "big data, big picture" solutions for a wide variety of constituencies including state, federal, private and international entities and programs. To carry out all the center's activities, the office of the director is actively engaged with other units on campus.

Parisi is extensively published. His main work appears in technical reports, book chapters, policy briefs, and journals such as Demography, Rural Sociology, Social Science Quarterly, Community Development Society, Society and Natural Resources, and Journal of Poverty. For more information, please see his resume at:

<http://www.nsparc.msstate.edu/res/pdf/Parisi%20Vitae%2010-25-2012.pdf>

Hubert "Hubie" Sparks
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Hubert Sparks reflects on 4 decades of auditing agencies (Interview - 1/9/2012 -Federal News Radio.com)

Appalachian Regional Commission Inspector General Hubert Sparks (74), has tried to retire twice, but keeps coming back to the federal government. Now, after 43 years, Sparks said this tour-of-duty would be his last. Once a permanent IG is selected, he says he'll retire once and for all. Although, he says, even in retirement he plans to stay up-to-date with issues involving inspector general practices.

As a college student, Sparks spent summers fighting fires in Northern California with the Forest Service. "I really wanted to end up a forest ranger, but a kid from Brooklyn with an accounting degree wasn't what they were looking for." After college, he spent two years in the military stationed at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. There, he heard about an opening at the Department of Agriculture, which had just established an Office of the Inspector General and was looking for auditors to investigate the use of farm subsidies. He spent the next 20 years at the USDA, auditing programs in more than 40 countries, including Vietnam in 1968. From there, he joined the Department of Veterans Affairs' IG office. Then, in 1989, he became the IG of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). He stayed there until retiring in 2002. He ended his retirement to join the Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General to audit the cleanup of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. He retired again two years later, but came back to ARC as inspector general until some legislative issues are resolved and a new IG can be selected.

THE HUBERT SPARKS FILE:

Length of federal service: 43 years and counting; Number of retirements: 2

What has been your proudest achievement? Surviving 43 years! Seriously, I've had a lot of proud moments but overall it's feeling that you've made a difference. Auditing is hindsight and the easiest thing about auditing is to identify the problem and make recommendations; the easiest recommendation is 'fix it.' The toughest problem is to get the people to agree with your conclusions and take the action that you've recommended.

What has been the impact of your federal career on your life? On the personal side, the government afforded me the opportunity to meet my wife. My boss at USDA sent me to Harrisburg to do a two-month audit; it took me seven months. I met my wife there, the secretary to the head of the agency. She now has 45 years in government service and is still working. We've been married for 42 years.

What do you like most about being an inspector general? You're in charge. Maybe that's an ego thing, but you're in charge.

How has the government changed during your career? In the IG's office, we haven't changed very much. I wish we would address more of the major issues and exchange staff to look at critical issues like Medicare rather than doing our own little parochial things in our own agencies.

What would you change about the profession? I'm one of those persons who believe that our job to oversight agencies doesn't end because the sign on the door says 'Office of the Inspector General.' I've always been one to recommend improvements for the OIG operations, rather than say we're doing a wonderful job.

How has the office environment changed? Technology has done a lot of great things, obviously. It's improved efficiency and effectiveness in many areas and opened up exchanges of information. But on a personal level, particularly with emails, you've destroyed personal communications that I think build trust and confidence between people.

What would you say to someone who wants to join the government? There are many challenging positions, no matter your education or profession, where you can actually make a difference. You can come in and be part of the action that runs the government, be it state, local or federal.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to work for the IG? The IG community needs generalists. Maybe because I didn't get an 'A' average, I haven't hired too many 'A' students. You have to have the educational background and accounting is still a basic requirement, but I'd be looking for a well-rounded person who had traveled and done things and was interested in government, geography, politics and the whole range of things you're going to be affected by, as opposed to someone who, as they say about us financial types, 'wears green eyeshades' and can't see anything outside the box. This is a job where you've got to go outside the box.

You don't expect to be here longer than a year. When you retire for the third time, what will you do? I'll probably decide this time that the third time is the final time and I'll actually retire. I've reached my actuarial age, if you look at all the tables. I'm going to enjoy improving in golf and seeing my family in Phoenix, Ariz. I will continue to be very involved in OIG activities from the outside.



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RESOURCE MATERIAL

Promoting Learning in Rural Schools (Excerpts)

Sam Redding and Herbert J. Walberg

Center on Innovation & Improvement, Academic Development Institute

www.centerii.org

Introduction

The research reviewed here suggests that some of the contentions about schools, districts, and communities in rural areas are mistaken. Many of the issues they face also confront urban and suburban educators, and rural communities offer several distinctive educational advantages. While we have not found research to substantiate that student motivation to learn is particularly lacking in rural schools, it is a problem often cited by rural educators. Rather, it seems a widespread problem in most of the nation's schools—rural, urban, and suburban. With that in mind, this report gives special attention to student motivation to learn, along with other contributing factors to student outcomes in rural schools. Our recommendations build upon the advantages of rural settings and address their perceived disadvantages.

At one time, most American students went to small schools in small school districts in small rural communities. Over recent decades, however, both schools and districts grew dramatically in size. Districts merged and consolidated to grow in size as they decreased in number, from about 115,000 school districts at one time, many responsible for a single, sometimes one-room school a century and more ago, to about 15,000 districts today. In the half-century from 1940 to 1990, the size of the average U.S. school district rose from 217 to 2,637 students—a factor of more than 10, and the size of the average school rose from 127 to 653 (Walberg & Walberg, 1994).

Similarly, small family farms consolidated, and many families quit farming and moved away, leaving large distances between the remaining farm families and communities. It is said that demography is destiny, and such remoteness or isolation substantially affected rural families, their communities, and their schools and school districts. In some rural areas, economic decline and increased poverty accompanied depopulation. Not unlike urban settings, rural schools serve isolated sub-cultural groups such as itinerant workers, Appalachian Whites, rural Blacks in the South, and American Indians in parts of the West. To promote student learning in rural schools, both the distinct advantages of rural communities and their possible disadvantages should be taken into account. In the balance, the small size of their schools is an asset, as is the strength of relationships among the people who constitute the schools and communities.

While student motivation to learn does not appear to be a generally distinguishable variable between rural and non-rural schools, rural educators often attest to a dampening effect on student aspirations where families do not see education as an essential vehicle to advancement in life, and the improved life chances an education provides require a relocation away from a shrinking rural community.

For rural students inhibited by a “low horizon” mindset, the educational remedies are similar as those for students in other settings. The centrality of the school to rural community life, however, places a greater responsibility on the rural school to elevate students’ aspirations. Likewise the avenues to higher academic achievement are largely the same in rural as in urban and suburban schools. With little district capacity to support its schools’ improvement efforts and few education service providers nearby, the rural school must rely more heavily on its own resources and ingenuity to drive its improvement than elsewhere. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but it requires teaming, defined purposes, ample planning, and disciplined work.

When the remoteness of a rural community is a barrier in attracting and retaining school leaders and teachers, the school’s internal systems for ensuring consistent application of effective practice is paramount. The policies, programs, procedures, and practices must be engrained in the daily operations of the school in ways that optimize the productivity of current staff and readily assimilate new staff. With this in mind, this report recommends actions that drive student learning in any school setting and are necessary and achievable in rural schools.

Conclusion

Experienced rural educators and empirical evidence suggest insights and evidence for improving rural students’ motivation and increasing their learning. Rural communities, by definition, are small and geographically remote, as are their schools. There is little evidence that community or school size militates against student performance, all else being equal. Geographic remoteness presents its challenges, but distance technology available today helps close the miles in ways not possible in the past. In many ways, rural schools are advantaged—conscientious governance by school boards with a vested interest in the well being of their small communities, school personnel who assume broad responsibilities for their students’ success, close-knit families, abundant social capital (or close social relations among area families), and the centrality of the school in community life.

Rural schools struggle with many of the same obstacles to improved student learning that bedevil schools in urban and suburban settings. Some of these obstacles are contextual in nature—pockets of poverty, limited English usage in migrant and immigrant populations, the distractions of mass media, the temptations of drugs and alcohol to youth, and the difficulty in attracting and keeping quality personnel in places in which not everyone wants to live. But the avenues to greater learning outcomes and persistence in school in rural schools are primarily within the control of the schools and are not substantially different from the paths to improved performance evidenced in non-rural schools.

Because rural schools may not count on the recruitment of new talent to elevate their level of human capital, they must intentionally ingrain systems (policies, programs, procedures, and practices) that optimize the productivity of current staff and readily assimilate new staff. These systems, supportive of the action recommendations offered in this report, are necessary and achievable in rural schools.

Center Directors' Challenges and Lessons Learned (Spring 2012 Survey Responses)

CHALLENGES

Balancing time spent on fund raising with much needed site-based program support
Leveraging rather than layering other programmatic efforts
Sustainability: educational reform efforts and cultural shifts take time - usually longer than grant cycles and sustainability of funding – at both the host agency and the school level
Serving schools effectively with a limited staff
Continuing to be of value to the host organization/agency
Reporting: overworked teachers/administrators find it hard to submit reports on time
Partnership sustainability: many struggling schools in small communities can't expect much from community partners because there isn't much going on in economic development
A lack of program continuity; new hires have no idea about the program and why it is important
Helping overworked school staff use the AHE resources to build a college-going culture

LESSONS LEARNED

Relationships are the key; trust must be built with all stakeholders
Ongoing support for and communication with schools vital; constant contact necessary
Building-level leadership is critical to sustainability; principals must understand the importance of college access opportunities being available to all students; involvement of the superintendent and school board is important to program success; it is necessary to involve the entire school community
Cultural change is necessary to promote "higher education is for ALL students"
Consistent and concise data are needed through the program year; data supplied by the schools and data obtained from a third party can be vastly different
Evaluation is vital
Community involvement is vital to program success; partners must be picked with care; people make a program successful, not the funding
An actual resource person working directly with the school is more beneficial than just a check
Every school/community is different: flexibility of design/delivery is critical (1 size does not fit all)
Deliberate investment in fundraising must be incorporated into long term planning.
The collaborative work of all entities is required to improve the college-going rates in Appalachia; collaborative efforts between the overall education community improves the success rate
The schools' capacity to write a grant is low



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