



AMERICAN COUNCIL ON RURAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

44th ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Fins Up! Keeping Our Dreams Afloat When You're the Only Special Educator in Town

Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront Resort, Virginia Beach, VA
April 3-4, 2025

Conference Program Chair

Annemarie Horn, Radford University

Conference Headquarters, West Virginia University

Kim Floyd, Headquarters Co-Coordinator

Alex Hollo, Headquarters Co-Coordinator

Thank you for joining us at the Annual National Conference of the **American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES)**. Did you know ACRES holds the only national conference devoted to rural special education issues? Our goal is to gather and share the most current knowledge, research, and practices in rural special education for in-service and pre-service educators, administrators, related service providers, parents, and policymakers. We hope your conference experience is enjoyable and productive.

Special thanks to all the individuals who participated in the proposal review process.

2025 ACRES Schedule At-a-Glance

Time	Session type	Events	Location
WEDNESDAY, April 2, 2025			
1:00 pm – 5:30 pm		Conference Check-In & Registration	Seaside Registration
1:00 pm - 5:30 pm		Silent Auction- <i>Drop off your items!</i>	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
6:00 pm – 7:30 pm	Meeting	Board of Directors (Closed Meeting)	Calloway
THURSDAY, April 3, 2025			
6:45 am - 7:40 am		Buffet Breakfast	
7:40 am - 7:50 am		Welcome and Ringing of the Cowbell	
7:00 am - 5:00 pm		Conference Check-In & Registration	Seaside Registration
7:30 am - 5:00 pm		Silent Auction	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
8:00 am – 8:50 am	Breakout 1		
9:00 am - 9:50 am	Breakout 2	Roundtables 1	Salon D
10:00 am - 10:50 am	Breakout 3	Skill Builders 1	Salon D
11:00 am - 11:50 am	Breakout 4		
12:00 pm – 1:25 pm		Keynote Address & Buffet Lunch*	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
1:30 pm - 2:20 pm	Breakout 5		
2:30 pm - 3:20 pm	Breakout 6	Roundtables 2	Salon D
3:30 pm - 4:20 pm	Breakout 7	Roundtables 3	Salon D
4:20 pm – 4:30 pm		Q & A with HQ	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
4:30 pm – 4:45 pm	General	Town Hall Meeting	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
4:45 pm – 6:00 pm		Welcome Reception*	Seaside Terrace
Friday, April 4, 2025			
6:45 am - 7:45 am		Buffet Breakfast	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
7:30 am - 5:00 pm		Conference Check-In & Registration	
7:30 am – 4:00 pm		Silent Auction ends 4:00, must be picked by 4:30	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
8:00 am – 8:50 am	Breakout 8		
9:00 am - 9:50 am	Breakout 9	Roundtables 4	Salon D
10:00 am - 10:50 am	Breakout 10	Skill Builders 2	Salon D
11:00 am - 11:50 am	Breakout 11		
12:00 pm – 1:25 pm		Awards Ceremony & Buffet Lunch*	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
1:30 pm - 2:20 pm	Breakout 12		
2:30 pm - 3:20 pm	Breakout 13		
3:20 pm – 4:50 pm	Posters	Poster Session & Ice Cream & French Fry Social**	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
4:50 pm – 5:00 pm		Close of Conference & Ringing of the Cowbell	Ballroom (Salon D/E)
5:00-5:30 pm		Open Board Meeting	Ballroom (Salon D/E)

* **Vote on the conference theme**

****Winning theme announced**



Make sure to visit the exhibitors' tables!



2025 ACRES Conference Program

Wednesday April 2, 2025

Conference Check-In & Registration & Silent Auction Drop Off

1:00 pm - 5:30

Check out the Silent Auction for interesting finds from all over the country! Bid on your favorites and have fun trying to out-bid others. All proceeds support the ACRES Teacher Scholarship Award.

Thursday April 3, 2025

<p>7:40 am Ballroom (Salon D/E)</p>	<p>Conference Opening and Welcome Pamina Abkowitz, Board President After a short welcome speech, she will formally kick off the conference by ringing the traditional cowbell! Enjoy your breakfast and get ready for the opening session at 8:00!</p>
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Breakout 1: Thursday, 8:00 am – 8:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Olivia Schimp, Terry Burgener, Abby Clark, and Kristina Unverferht, Kaskaskia Special Education District #801</i> Choose Your Own Path: Potential Pitfalls on the Path to SLD Eligibility In this interactive presentation, participants will be introduced to a fictional student and will navigate the path from Response to Intervention to potential Specific Learning Disability eligibility. As the case unfolds, participants will choose their own path regarding interventions and instructional strategies. Each decision will impact the eligibility outcome.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Amanda Bowers, University of Oklahoma; Mia Dianda, University of Oklahoma; Paige Prough, University of Louisville; Michael Green, University of North Florida</i> Coaching Special Education Teachers in Evidence-based Practices Using BST Model in PK-12 Settings This session will focus on equipping special education teachers in PK-12 rural settings with skills to coach paraprofessionals using the Behavioral Skills Training (BST) model and evidence-based practices such as Behavior Specific Praise (BSP) and Opportunities to Respond (OTRs) using web-based modules, in-person classroom observations, and micro-coaching sessions.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Karen Eastman, Minnesota State University, Mankato</i> Native American Parents of Children with Autism: Perceptions and Life Experiences There is a dearth of professional literature about Native American individuals who have autism and their families in the US. For this project, family members of 12 Native American children with autism were interviewed. Results of this research will be shared, along with recommendations for school, therapeutic, and medical personnel.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Margaret Pizzullo, Whitney Idol, Radford University</i> A Closer Look: Exploring the Factors Shaping Teachers' Classroom Management Practices This presentation will explore factors that influence teachers' classroom management strategy selection process, the strategies they select, challenges they face, and the support they need to be successful. Information on teacher preparation tracks those teachers took to become classroom educators in addition to other factors potentially impacting their process will be discussed.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Kim Muschaweck, Stephen Wills, and Mary Hiller Crook, Georgia College & State University</i> What Can Universities Do? Connecting Teacher Preparation to New Teacher Induction Participants will be provided with tools needed to replicate a special education teacher induction program that addresses the critical issue of teacher retention that plagues rural areas. Components of the program which is self-perpetuating and guided by higher education faculty will be shared. Findings regarding retention and factors that impact those decisions will be included.</p>
Salon C	<p>Shared session with 2 talks on a related topic</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Lyndsay McCabe, University of Northern Colorado</i> "Be Better, Do Better": Exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ students with disabilities LGBTQ+ students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable in the current educational climate. Special educators must advocate for these students and ensure their needs are met. This session centers on a study of 2 LGBTQ+ middle school students with disabilities and their school experiences, using portraiture to understand students' perceptions of self-identity. <i>Jennifer Hamrick, Texas Tech University</i> SES and Actors of Special Education in Texas: Diversity in Access and Engagement This session investigates how socioeconomic status (SES) influences the perceptions and experiences of parents, teachers, and administrators within Texas special education programs. Through an analysis of qualitative data, attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the systemic inequities faced by low-income families and practical strategies for fostering equity in special education services.

Breakout 2: Thursday, 9:00 am - 9:50 am

Kave	<p>1. <i>Tori Colson, Rebecca Moore, Elizabeth Wilkins, Janell Pycior, & Stacey Murray, University of Southern Indiana</i> Innovating Teacher Preparation: Embedding the Science of Reading for Future Educators This session explores a university's efforts to embed the Science of Reading (SoR) into its teacher preparation program. Attendees will gain insights into the current status of the curriculum redesign, challenges in field placements, and the role of faculty in this process. The session will highlight how these changes are shaping the future of literacy, particularly in rural communities.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Lora Lee Smith Canter, East Carolina University; Karen Voytecki, East Carolina University</i> Distress to De-Stress: Laughing at Life's Challenges for Special Educators This presentation addresses the stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout commonly experienced by special educators. Evidence-based discussions highlight humor's power to manage stress, followed by comedy routines that tackle the top five educator stressors. This session blends serious content with humor, promoting laughter as a powerful tool for resilience in education.</p>
Salon A	<p style="text-align: center;">Shared session with 2 talks on a related topic</p> <p>1. <i>Melina Alexander, Weber State University; Shirley Dawson, Weber State University</i> A bumpy ride: Online program development Teaching our first cohort of teachers moving through a preparation grant, we developed a fully online curriculum. In this session we will workshop with participants the pedagogical strategies we implemented to address our shortcomings.</p> <p>2. <i>Kieran Nduagbo, Adams State University; Carolyn Casale, Henry Ford College</i> Supporting Pre-Service Teachers' Clinical Experiences Two faculty from different geographical institutions will share how they support and enhance pre-service teachers' clinical experiences. Their presentation will cover reflective practice, collaboration with partner schools and mentor teachers, modeling and co-teaching. The session will include an audience discussion highlighting effective practices that apply across diverse institutions.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Sarah Hawkins-Lear, University of Kentucky</i> Supporting Early Educators to work with Children Who Have Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) The presenter will give an overview of a preservice program focused on training early childhood educators and speech/language pathologists to work with young children with NAS and their families. Information on the needs of the population will be provided, along with how faculty created shared experiences to increase scholar competencies in this area.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Jess Rodriguez, IL SLD Support Project</i> Creating the Write Path: Strategies for Supporting Emergent Writers In this session, educators will learn strategies to support emergent writers in the early childhood setting. Participants will explore methods for nurturing writing skills, from pre-writing activities to guided techniques. Practical examples will help attendees create supportive environments and tailor instruction to diverse needs at various writing stages.</p>
Salon D	<p style="text-align: center;">Roundtables session 1. Attendees change tables every 20 minutes.</p> <p>1. <i>Heather Hayes, Northwestern College</i> Inclusive Literacy Opportunities for Students with Extensive Support Needs Students with extensive support needs require more than just exposure to literacy in general education contexts to have the same opportunities to learn (OTL) as their peers. This presentation will share a conceptual model for students' OTL literacy and address instructional implications for inclusive settings.</p> <p>2. <i>Cathy Galyon, East Tennessee State University</i> Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Certification: Will it Help Rural Schools Hire & Retain Teachers? The purpose of this session is to discuss a state that has combined early childhood & early child special education into one certification. Participants will share potential advantages & disadvantages with this type of certification. Participants view new integrated program of study to determine the strength & weaknesses & share their own experiences of this type of certification on rural schools</p> <p>3. <i>Yen Pham, University of New Mexico; Gabriella Garcia, University of New Mexico</i> A Window Into the Lives of English Learners with Disabilities in Rural New Mexico Online instruction provided teachers a window into students' lives. Interviews with teachers of ELs with disabilities revealed what they saw and how they responded. Conference participants will gain a deeper understanding of the lives of students from diverse backgrounds and recommendations to support teachers, students, and families in rural districts.</p>



Did you know?

The ACRES logo features a bald eagle flying with wings spread, a symbol of independence and strength soaring above a broad range of rural spaces, the embodiment of the organization's spirit, determination, and commitment to its rural mission.

Breakout 3: Thursday, 10:00 am - 10:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Calli Lewis Chiu, California State-Fullerton; Barbara Arreguin, Rancho Starbuck Intermediate School; Mandy E. Lusk, Clayton State University</i></p> <p>Inclusive Academic Instruction for Emergent Bilingual Students with Disabilities in Rural Settings</p> <p>Framing bilingualism as an asset rather than a deficit to be remediated, participants will learn evidence-based practices to support content area instruction for emergent bilingual students with disabilities in rural schools. The session also explores specific strategies for strengthening school/family collaboration.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Julie Atwood, University of Oklahoma; Sarah Heiniger, University of Oklahoma; Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma</i></p> <p>PRIME Time for Supervision: A Model for ABA Student Success</p> <p>This presentation will share an overview of the Project Rural Innovation for Mental health Enhancement (PRIME) ABA supervision model. Presenters will discuss the development of the supervision model, the technology tools and resources used, data relating to student progress, and lessons learned during the first two years of the project.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Jared Stewart-Ginsburg, North Carolina State University; Kim Floyd, West Virginia University</i></p> <p>A Pirate Looks at 40: Battling the Storms of Special Education Teacher Stress</p> <p>Stress plays a crucial role in teacher burnout and attrition, but teacher candidates can develop skills to mitigate stress and develop the resilience and self-efficacy necessary for the current reality of the teaching profession. In this presentation, we will share effective and ineffective strategies for helping teacher candidates and teachers develop resilience and self-efficacy.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Karen Koehler, Doug Sturgeon, Shawnee State University; Emily Maginn, South Central OH ESC; Abby White, Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services; Mary Beth Kelty, Greg Williams, South Central Ohio ESC</i></p> <p>Camp Adventures: Summer ECC Opportunities for Children with Low Incidence Sensory Disabilities</p> <p>Participants will learn about Camp Adventures, a unique summer camp for children with low incidence sensory disabilities. Camp Adventures has grown and evolved over a 4-year period and participants will learn about the changes and lessons learned. Each year the camp strives to address more areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for children with low incidence sensory disabilities in rural Ohio.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>David Bateman, American Institutes of Research</i></p> <p>What Teams Need to Know about Section 504</p> <p>School teams play a crucial role in ensuring students with disabilities receive appropriate services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Goals: (1) differentiate Section 504 and IDEA services; (2) implement compliant 504 plans that meet student needs; (3) describe the history and rationale of Section 504; and (4) engage families in collaborative decision-making.</p>
Salon C	<p>Shared Session (two brief talks on a related topic)</p> <p>1. <i>Elaine Wilson, University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown; Hemron Henry, University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown</i> Game-Based Tools for Pre-Service Teachers: Bridging the Gap in Behavioral Skills Training This session introduces Game On!, a framework combining game-based learning and immersive simulations to train pre-service teachers in behavior skills. Grounded in Applied Behavior Analysis and trauma-informed practices, it equips educators with tools to address behavioral challenges, develop replacement skills, and refine interventions through realistic, feedback-driven experiences.</p> <p>2. <i>Nikki Callaghan, Cara Wilmot, University of North Florida; Sophia Norberg, University of Louisville</i> Transitions Toolkit: Empowering Rural Parents of Students with Disabilities Explore post-secondary transition support for students with disabilities in Florida's virtual school district, including rural and Department of Juvenile Justice areas. Presenters will share an online parent resource hub with accessible strategies and tools. Participants will discover resources, methods, and tools to boost parent involvement and student outcomes.</p>
Salon D	<p>Skill-Builders Session 1: Hands-on workshops without a slide presentation</p> <p>1. <i>Debra Lockwood, Marshall University</i> Evaluate the depth and breadth of teacher candidate knowledge using concept maps We will provide participants with the skills to use concept maps to evaluate content knowledge and depth/breadth of knowledge for rural special education teacher candidates. Implications for instructors in rural pre-service education programs will be discussed.</p> <p>2. <i>Stephanie N. Baker, Northern Illinois University; Louise Yoho, Southern Illinois University</i> Empowering Transition Planning Teams: Effective Transition Planning in Rural Settings This presentation focuses on creating high-quality transition plans that support students with disabilities in achieving their post-school goals. Participants will be able to understand the importance of transition planning in rural special education, the key components of effective transition plans, and strategies for addressing challenges faced by rural schools.</p> <p>3. <i>Jordan Lukins, IRIS Center</i> Hands-On with the IRIS Center: Free Resources and PD for Special Educators This hands-on session empowers educators to further their own learning at no cost by accessing free, high-quality resources about evidence-based instructional and behavioral interventions. We will acquaint participants with the IRIS Center's extensive resources. Participants are encouraged to bring laptops, tablets, or other devices to engage with these web-based resources.</p>

Breakout 4: Thursday, 11:00 am - 11:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>McCook, John Lincoln Memorial University; Kerr Rhonda Lincoln Memorial University</i></p> <p>Discipline versus Behavior: What is the difference?</p> <p>An analysis of the IEP form and the box on does the child's behavior interfere with the child's learning or others. What does it mean to check or leave it blank? We think of behavior as disciplinary issues and it have very little if any to do with it. What are the requirements legally and effectively. An inspection of the 10-day rule and supports needed.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Adrainne Thomas and Shelly Bazemore, Virginia State University</i></p> <p>Reducing Teacher Shortages and Increasing Diversity through Teacher Residencies.</p> <p>The participants will learn about how Virginia State University, an Historically Black College and University (HBCU) created a teacher residency program to reduce the critical shortage and increase the diversity of the teaching workforce in the state.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Cari Presley, University of North Florida; Robin K. Tabor, University of Louisville; Nicholas A. Newton, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>An Untapped Resource: Parent Interventionist</p> <p>This session will present a module developed for parents of students in rural schools to use in supporting foundational reading skills at home. Research has shown that early intervention focusing on foundational reading skills—such as phonological awareness, phonics, and vocabulary—can significantly improve reading outcomes.</p>
Salon A (2 brief talks)	<p>Shared session - 2 talks on a related topic</p> <p>1. <i>Angela Norris, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Exploring Factors in Teacher Retention and Attrition in Rural Special Education Post-COVID-19. This study draws on insights from veteran teachers to explore retention and attrition in rural special education. Interviews reveal challenges around resources, high caseloads, and restricted advancement worsened by COVID-19 and suggest solutions such as targeted professional development and mentorship to sustain the workforce and inform supportive policy changes.</p> <p>2. <i>Zoe Dean, University of Florida</i></p> <p>Unpacking Rural Families' Advocacy and Access in Special Education: A Systematic Literature Review. Families in rural communities navigate special education differently than in non-rural communities. This systematic review examines advocacy experiences of families of children receiving special education services in rural schools. Thematic analysis investigates barriers and facilitators of rural parental advocacy efforts and parental perceptions of their experiences.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Patricia Peterson, Jonica Flores, Aaron Otondo, Kiahley O'Connor, Tatum Rausch, April Meza, Carlos Morales, Brianna Gutierrez, Nayahara Barbosa, Veronica Llamas, Northern Arizona University</i></p> <p>Engaging Rural Diverse Exceptional Learners in STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, ARTS, Math. Presenters demonstrate STEAM activities for culturally linguistically diverse learners with disabilities. Learn how instruction embraces diversity and equity by integrating STEAM in contexts of Indigenous, Latino, and other cultural ways of knowing. Audience can replicate STEAM materials and teaching strategies to empower diverse students with disabilities in their own communities.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Mark Butler, Anderson University</i></p> <p>What do the Teachers Say? Challenges with Recruitment & Retention of Educators</p> <p>This session presents findings from listening sessions with teachers held across South Carolina to discuss issues related to recruitment and retainment. Listening sessions, conducted in 2023 and 2024, were organized to seek input from teachers on issues of recruitment and retention of educators. Sessions occurred in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the state.</p>



Keynote Address and Luncheon, 12:00 pm – 1:25 pm

Dr. Melinda Jones Ault

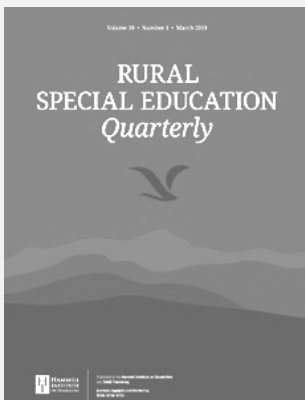
Roots, Growth, and Wings: Charting ACRES' Journey and Future

Dr. Ault is professor of special education and Acting Chair of the Department of Early Childhood, Special Education and Counselor Education at the University of Kentucky.

Dr. Jones is a former special education teacher in a rural Kentucky district and has 40 years of experience researching and teaching at the college level. Her area of expertise is using evidence-based practices to meet the needs of individuals with extensive support and complex communication needs. She has authored or co-authored 75 peer-reviewed publications and two textbooks on these topics. Her research focuses on systematic instruction, communication of learners with severe disability, education in rural regions, and participation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in their faith communities. She has been part of the ACRES community for 14 years, serving on the Rural Special Education Quarterly editorial board, as Associate Editor, and as co-editor of three topical issues. She has served on the ACRES Board as Historian from 2013-2015 and Chair-Elect, Chair, and Past Chair from 2016-2019.

Breakout 5: Thursday, 1:30 pm - 2:20 pm

Kaye	<p><i>McCook John, Lincoln Memorial University</i></p> <p>Making sure the persons we license understand special education law</p> <p>Until we require that newly licensed administrators understand special education law, we will never have any changes in implementation.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Annemarie L. Horn, Whitney Idol, Christine Powell, and Karen Douglas, Radford University</i></p> <p>Optimizing Rural Special Education Teacher Preparation: Practice-Based Learning with Feedback</p> <p>The quality of pre-service preparation has been linked to educator retention. Our presentation will highlight a preparation model used at a rural university. Unlike traditional methods, aspiring educators spend less time receiving didactic-based instruction and more time applying instructional and behavioral practices in rural K-12 classrooms while receiving feedback from university faculty.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Jerrie Brooks, Fort Hays State University; Matthew Posey, Fort Hays State University</i></p> <p>Grow Your Own Special Educators - Lessons Learned</p> <p>This session will present the lessons a rural university learned through seven years of implementing a Grow Your Own special education teacher preparation program. Participants will be able to identify key points to implement a Grow Your Own Program, including strategies for recruitment and retention of candidates, and identify items that produced less than successful candidate outcomes.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Jacquelyn Purser, University of Oklahoma; Robye Kay Jackson, University of Oklahoma</i></p> <p>Supporting Student Wellness in Rural Special Education through Evidence-based Interventions</p> <p>Social-emotional competence is critical to student wellness. This presentation shares evidence-based strategies and resources to support special education teachers in implementing wellness programs with fidelity in rural schools.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Todd Sundeen, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Self-Sacrifice or Self-Preservation? Teachers' Dilemma During School Shootings</p> <p>The prevalence of school shootings across the U.S. has ignited a contentious dilemma for classroom teachers when confronted with the prospect of a shooter entering their school. This session examines teachers' roles and responsibilities related to active shooter incidents. We will address and invite your discussion on the question that teachers must consider: Self-Sacrifice or Self-Preservation?</p>
Salon C	<p style="text-align: center;">Shared session with 2 talks on a related topic</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Nicholas A. Newton, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Behavior-specific praise: Enhancing on-task behavior in a rural elementary school</p> <p>This session will discuss an ABAB withdrawal design experiment using behavior-specific praise (BSP) in a rural cotaught classroom. Discussion of literature, design, results, and limitations will support classroom teachers to implement BSP.</p> <p><i>Amber Priddy, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Building Peer Support Skills: Project-Based Learning for High School Students</p> <p>Discover how Project-Based Learning (PBL) can equip high school students with essential support skills. This session will highlight a project used to prepare students to become effective peer leaders. Attendees will learn strategies for designing PBL experiences that foster empathy, communication, and collaboration, empowering students to make a positive impact in their rural school community.</p>



Share Your Work! Publish in *Rural Special Education Quarterly*

Rural Special Education Quarterly invites conference participants to submit a manuscript sharing their work with others in the field. RSEQ is a respected, national, peer-reviewed, professional journal published quarterly for over 30 years.

Find an overview of the journal and the submission guidelines on the ACRES website at <http://acres-sped.org/journal>

Breakout 6: Thursday, 2:30 pm - 3:20 pm

Kaye	<p><i>Kim Floyd, Alex Hollo. & Colleen Wood-Fields, West Virginia University</i></p> <p>Changes in Learning, Attitudes, and Latitudes: College Students' Shifting Goals Post-Pandemic</p> <p>This mixed-methods study examined shifts in college students' goals and expectations pre- and post-COVID-19. Findings revealed decreased emphasis on traditional academic achievement and increased focus on well-being, connection, and personal growth. Discussion will focus on implications for practice.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Collin Shepley, University of Kentucky</i></p> <p>What does “good” progress monitoring actually look like?</p> <p>Despite widespread recognition of progress monitoring as an essential tool to support the development of children with special needs, there are no established checklists or standards dictating exactly what research-informed progress monitoring should look like in preschool classrooms. This presentation will overview an online training module addressing high-quality progress monitoring practices.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Jennifer Macko, North Carolina State University</i></p> <p>Enhancing Belonging and Well-Being for Gender-Diverse Autistic Assigned Female at Birth Students</p> <p>This session explores the intersection of autism, gender diversity, and rural education. Presenters will share insights from recent research and provide strategies for educators to recognize, support, and enhance the sense of belonging and well-being of gender-diverse autistic assigned female at birth (AFAB) students in inclusive classrooms, with a focus on rural contexts.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Terry Burgener, KSED #801; Olivia Schimp, KSED #801; Kristina Unverfehrt, KSED #801; Abby Clark, KSED #801</i></p> <p>Teach, Organize, Succeed: Executive Function Strategies for Early Learners</p> <p>This session equips K-2 teachers with practical tools to boost executive functioning skills in young students. Participants will explore how to integrate self-regulation, organization, and attention-building activities into daily routines, enhancing focus, task completion, and academic success. Attendees will leave with strategies they can apply immediately.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Sean Wachsmuth, Bemidji State University; Karen Eastman, Minnesota State University, Mankato</i></p> <p>Increasing transitions using video modeling intervention with American Indian students with autism</p> <p>The presenters will discuss a research project intended to determine if there was a functional relationship between a video modeling intervention and an increase in independent transitions between settings by elementary American Indian students with ASD. The presenters will describe how they supported two teachers to develop videos and implement the point-of-view video modeling intervention.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Jenny Hogg, Kentucky Educational Development Corporation and University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Let's Flip the Table: Supporting Reverse Career Fairs</p> <p>In the “Let's Flip the Table: Supporting Reverse Career Fairs” session, presenters will share their personal experiences with planning and conducting Reverse Career Fairs. Presenters will highlight specialized training, resource building, application, and networking activities that brought their Reverse Career Fairs to life.</p>
Salon D	<p style="text-align: center;">Roundtable Session 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Karla McAdam, Illinois New Teacher Collaborative at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign</i></p> <p>Rooted in Relationships: Supporting New Teachers through Induction and Mentoring</p> <p>Teaching in rural areas can be challenging and met with professional isolation. This seclusion can be exacerbated when teaching in specialized fields. Research supports induction and mentoring to help teachers navigate demands and develop supportive networks. Join this roundtable discussion to explore diverse perspectives, gain insights, and coalesce around supporting special education teachers.</p> <p><i>Kathy Randolph, Texas State University</i></p> <p>Professional Development & Implementation Support - Using iCoaching to Support Rural Teachers</p> <p>Professional development (PD) is typically delivered without concern for teacher implementation. iCoaching has been successful in facilitating teacher implementation of evidence-based practices, including behavior specific praise and opportunities to respond by general and special education teachers. This session will provide a history of and a framework for iCoaching teacher EBP implementation.</p> <p><i>Alice Tesch Graham Salve Regina University</i></p> <p>Epistemic Empathy: How to Facilitate Effective Communication to Foster Respect and Connections</p> <p>Session attendees will learn how epistemic empathy enhances communication and understanding to build respectful connections. The session objectives include defining epistemic empathy and using epistemic empathy in interactions with other professionals, families, and teacher candidates. The presenter will share research and model cases to practice effectively using epistemic empathy.</p>

Breakout 7: Thursday, 3:30 pm - 4:20 pm

Kaye	<p><i>Melissa Hudson, Kristin Burnette, and Tosha Owens, East Carolina University</i></p> <p>Throw Me a Lifeline! Effective Practices for Students with Extensive Support Needs</p> <p>Ahoy mates! Results from a research study conducted with 13 public school units in a rural southeastern state are discussed. With emphasis on high-leverage practices, this study focused on equipping educators of students with extensive support needs with effective practices, professional learning communities, and grade-level curricular alignment.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Michelle Rasheed, Ph.D., University of South Carolina Aiken; Melissa Martin, Ph.D., University of South Carolina Aiken</i></p> <p>Preparing Preservice Teachers for Diverse K-12 Students in Rural Communities</p> <p>Researchers will discuss the development of a full-day conference about diversity in K-12 schools for preservice teachers during the internship semester. The conference provided interns with sessions related to various topics about diversity including rural education. Session leaders will provide strategies related to conference development and its impact on preservice teachers.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Dr. Megan Pitrat, Syracuse Public Schools</i></p> <p>Mind-Body-Spirit Framework: Fill your trauma-responsive pedagogical toolbox with impactful strategies</p> <p>Incidents of opposition, defiance, and aggression are rising, placing unprecedented demands on classrooms. The Mind-Body-Spirit (MBS) Framework offers a repository of strengths-based trauma responsive strategies that can be applied immediately to foster a positive classroom climate and build social-emotional and behavioral success for all students.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Julie Atwood, University of Oklahoma; Jenny Hogg, University of Louisville; Bre Martin, University of Oklahoma; Kevin Muns, University of Oklahoma; Jodi Arroyo Nagel, University of North Florida</i></p> <p>Building Bridges: Lessons Learned from a Rural Behavior Consortium</p> <p>Presenters will share the experiences of a consortium for school-based behavior practitioners aimed at offering support, providing professional development, and fostering a collaborative community of providers. Presenters will discuss the consortium development process, how to collaborate across districts/states with clinicians and educators, and share valuable lessons learned along the way.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Karen Douglas, Radford University</i></p> <p>Student Engagement Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms</p> <p>Many strategies for differentiating instruction and supporting students with disabilities in general education classes will be presented in this session. Specific examples for promoting active and meaningful engagement in age-appropriate formats across content areas and grade levels in inclusive settings will be shared.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Jenny Peddicord, TSCO; Deborah Gritton, Elkton Community Education Center</i></p> <p>Youth Employment Program: community partnerships providing training & employment for all learners</p> <p>The Elkton Youth Employment is a cornerstone initiative providing local high school students with valuable work experience. Students are employed in various roles, providing participants with hands-on experience. In addition to earning wages that positively impact the local economy, the program helps students develop critical, transferable skills that prepare them for future success.</p>
Salon D	<p style="text-align: center;">Roundtable Session 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Chevonne Sutter, University of Nevada, Reno; MaryAnn Demchak, University of Nevada, Reno; Todd Sundeen, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Definitional Issues of Rural Settings in Special Education Research</p> <p>Examining the terminology used to describe rural settings can help identify for whom and in which contexts study results may be relevant when making policy and practice decisions. This session will present the results of a descriptive study that analyzed current definitions of <i>rural</i> used in rural special education research.</p> <p><i>McCook John, Lincoln Memorial University</i></p> <p>Least Restrictive Environment the four different but similar court decisions</p> <p>A review of the four different court decisions that are dependent upon geographical court decisions. What is required in each and how does it impact inclusion and mainstreaming?</p> <p><i>Avington Medeiros, Troy University; Eva Kane, Troy University</i></p> <p>Advocating for Special Education preparation in Rural Alabama.</p> <p>In a recent article (Medeiros & Kane, 2024), we discussed the urgent need for better teacher preparation in rural Alabama schools. To further this conversation, this session will explore the integration of special education into our ongoing study. This forum will enable us to identify and assess the future needs of rural educators in these specialized settings.</p> <p><i>Lisa Rai Mabry-Price, American Speech-Language Hearing Association</i></p> <p>Navigating Postsecondary Transitions: Supporting Student Success</p> <p>This roundtable discussion will address the role of related service providers to support student transition from high school to higher education, employment and community living.</p>

All are welcome at the Town Hall Meeting & Welcome Reception!

4:30 pm on the Seaside Terrace (weather permitting)

Please join us for a brief information session before the social gathering.

Heavy hors d'oeuvres (tacos and sliders) are on us; beer, wine, and spirits are available for purchase.

Come see what Jared named our signature cocktail!

FRIDAY, April 4, 2025

6:45 am – 7:45 am	<p>Breakfast will be served in the Ballroom (Salon D/E)</p> <p>Be sure to check on your silent auction bids and stop by the exhibitors' tables before the last session today!</p>
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Breakout 8: Friday, 8:00 am – 8:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Amanda Witte, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Pam Brezenski, Educational Service Unit 13; Weiman Xu, University of Nebraska-Lincoln</i></p> <p>Get SET Nebraska: Impact and Promises for Special Education Teacher Retention</p> <p>Special education teacher shortages are a growing national issue with widespread effects on students, teachers, and communities. This presentation introduces a statewide teacher retention program and examines its impact on educators and administrators. Participants will access a website with resources, including online modules and tools, to support retention efforts in their districts.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Tracy Gershwin, University of Northern Colorado; Laura Trapp, University of Northern Colorado; and Silvia Correa-Torres, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Before the Chalk Hits The Fan: Training Pre-service Teachers for Resilience</p> <p>This session introduces the CALM framework (Care, Acknowledge, Let Go, and Manage) to address special education teacher burnout. Presenters will guide participants through a resilience curriculum focused on mindfulness, self-compassion, and work-life balance. The session aims to foster teacher resilience and retention in the special education field through evidence-based strategies.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Sarah Chesney, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown; Elanie Wilson, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown</i></p> <p>C-STREAMM: Creativity + STEAM + Mindfulness + Action Research – A Model for Inclusive Education</p> <p>In schools today, STEAM is a powerful motivator for learning and developing productive citizens with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learn about the C-STREAMM Learning Framework, which moves beyond these important outcomes for the inclusive classroom, by intentionally activating students' creativity (C), mindfulness (M) and active engagement in research (R).</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Tiffany Wild, The Ohio State University, Aubry Fowler, The Ohio State University Extension</i></p> <p>Making Agriculture Education Accessible to ALL Students</p> <p>This presentation will focus on making agriculture education opportunities in both formal and informal settings accessible to all students. Focus will not only be on farming but on access to organizations such as 4-H and FFA. Tips and tricks on providing access and equitable experiences to showing animals, agricultural production, & agricultural competitions will be emphasized.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Mary Anne Fleury, Black Hills State University; Wendy Stewman, Black Hills State University</i></p> <p>Supporting Students with Disabilities in Rural Settings: How Effective are Our Pre-service Programs?</p> <p>The purpose of this session is to inform participants about graduates' preparedness to teach children with disabilities, identify areas for improvement in existing courses, and explain how the study's findings have led to changes in programming to better equip pre-service teacher candidates for teaching students in special education in today's rural school districts.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Tara Harmon, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Compliance in Transition, Practitioner Practice</p> <p>Transition services are crucial for students with disabilities, influencing their success in employment, independent living, and education. Training sessions aim to evaluate current compliance planning, focusing on enhancing parent involvement and developing resources to support post-school outcomes for students with learning disabilities in both rural and urban areas.</p>

Breakout 9 Friday, 9:00 am - 9:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Lillian Rainwater Triplett, University of Oklahoma</i></p> <p>Effective Training for General Education Teachers: Implementing IEP Accommodations and Modifications</p> <p>The session explores effective training for general education teachers to understand and implement appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with IEPs. Participants will gain access to practical resources, including evidence-based strategies such as differentiated instruction and tiered assignments, to support inclusive practices.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Jamie Harris, Bailey Smith, Tammy Willis, & Julie Atwood, University of Oklahoma</i></p> <p>Rural Roots: Essential Tools for Educators</p> <p>Teachers working in rural schools are often faced with unique challenges and opportunities. This session presents rural educators with strategies and tools for navigating the distinct needs of rural schools, including exploring and embracing rural culture, fostering community connections, and emphasizing organization, time management, and adaptability.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Jasmine Justus; University of Oklahoma</i></p> <p>Increasing the Quality of Individualized Education Plans for K-12 Students</p> <p>The presentation will review the methods, results, and potential impacts of a single-case research design that intervened on IEP PLAAFP statements in high-needs elementary schools. The participants will be provided with resources used throughout the study and engaged in a discussion about the intervention's time and cost-effectiveness.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Amy Husk, Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC); Kayla Abrahamson, Center for Implementation and Evaluation of Education Systems (CIEES); Jonna Bobzien, Old Dominion University</i></p> <p>Movin' with Purpose Part 1: 6 Tips to Foster Connection and Inclusion</p> <p>This presentation emphasizes incorporating meaningful movement into the classroom to foster academic success and a sense of community. Research on movement to enhance belonging and school success will be discussed, followed by demonstration of movement techniques and opportunities to practice techniques participants can "adopt, adapt, apply" for any lesson.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Annemarie L. Horn, Christine Powell, Karen Douglas, & Whitney Idol, Radford University</i></p> <p>Effects of eCoaching Peer Mentors as they Support Students with IDD at a Rural University</p> <p>Many students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) attend postsecondary education and receive support from peer mentors. We experimentally evaluated effects of an eCoaching intervention on peer mentors' use of an evidence-based practice while working 1:1 with a mentee at a rural university. This session highlights findings and implications for practice.</p>
Salon C	<p><i>Sarah Heiniger, University of Oklahoma; Julie Atwood, University of Oklahoma; Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma; MaryAnn Demchak, University of Nevada, Reno; Matt Jameson, University of Utah</i></p> <p>Submitting to and Reviewing for RSEQ. The presenters will give step by step instructions on submitting manuscripts to RSEQ, describe accepted article types, and discuss upcoming special issues. The process of becoming a reviewer and how to review will also be discussed. Time will be reserved for questions and answers.</p>
Salon D	<p style="text-align: center;">Roundtable Session 4</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Arnold Nyarambi, East Tennessee State University</i></p> <p>Professional development training in classroom and behavior management in rural settings</p> <p>This discusses professional development training for early childhood teachers in HeadStart and Expanding Horizons programs in Appalachia who are dealing with an increase in behavioral challenges after COVID 19 and due to Opioids-NAS. The participants will discuss in-service programs in their region and or how to start an in-service program.</p> <p><i>Erin Elfers, University of Kentucky</i></p> <p>Addressing Barriers to Comprehensive Behavioral support for Students with EBD in Rural Schools</p> <p>This session explores barriers to effective behavioral support for students with EBD in rural schools, including a shortage of accessible mental health professionals, insufficient funding, geographic isolation, transportation difficulties, stigma, and lack of awareness about effective behavioral support strategies and aims to propose educational solutions.</p> <p><i>Danene Fast, The Ohio State University; Cathy Galyon, East Tennessee State University</i></p> <p>Building Equitable Agendas: Engaging Families and Communities for Shared Growth and Student Success</p> <p>This presentation highlights equitable family-school collaborations, focusing on diverse families, including those with disabilities. Participants will explore inclusive strategies for instruction and meaningful partnerships, gaining practical tools and resources to co-create supportive environments that enhance student success. practice effectively using epistemic empathy.</p>

Breakout 10: Friday, 10:00 am - 10:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Michael Faggella-Luby, Texas Christian University; David Bateman, American Institutes for Research</i></p> <p>What Principals Need to Know about SDI and How to Support Teachers' Implementation of it</p> <p>This session equips school leaders with essential knowledge about their legal responsibilities on the IEP team in identifying, assessing, and implementing Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). Practical examples and actionable steps are provided. Attendees will receive early access to resources from a forthcoming definitive guide to SDI to share with their teams.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Heather Hayes, Northwestern College; Carrie Thonstad, Northwestern College; Angila Moffitt, Northwestern College</i></p> <p>Stories of Inclusion and Practices in Higher Education</p> <p>This presentation will address how a small liberal arts college has impacted both students and families through a program for students with intellectual disabilities, the implications this has for the modeling of best practices in teaching, and the impact it has had on pre-service teachers.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Logan Minshew, Texas Education Agency</i></p> <p>Using (AI) to Enhance Special Needs Students</p> <p>AI-powered tools and technologies can provide personalized learning experiences, aid in skill development, and improve accessibility for students with special needs. For instance, AI can help in designing quality academic programs for those with challenging special needs in all settings (rural) adapting to the learning pace and style of individual students.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Amy Husk, Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC); Kayla Abrahamson, Center for Implementation and Evaluation of Education Systems (CIEES); Jonna Bobzien, Old Dominion University</i></p> <p>Movin' with Purpose Part 2: 6 Tips to Foster Connection and Inclusion</p> <p>This presentation emphasizes incorporating meaningful movement into the classroom to foster academic success and a sense of community. Research associating movement with an enhanced sense of belonging and school success will be discussed, followed by demonstration of movement techniques. Participants will have the opportunity to practice techniques they can "adopt, adapt, apply" for any lesson.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Channon K. Horn, University of Kentucky and Melinda J. Ault, University of Kentucky</i></p> <p>Supporting Exceptional Educators in Rural Communities from PreService to In-Service</p> <p>This presentation will address the unique challenges and experiences of rural special educators at the preservice and in-service levels. Solutions and strategies to address these needs will be presented for teacher educators including university coursework, supervision, retention, professional development, relationships, collaborations, advocacy, and policy.</p>
Salon C	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel</p> <p><i>Moderator: William McDermott, First Consulting</i> <i>Panelists: Susan King; CLP Consulting Group; Ted Stec, School District; Laura Green-Halley, First Group</i></p> <p>Partnership development to Improve rural transportation for students with disabilities.</p> <p>This session will focus on building partnerships with stakeholders engaged in transporting students with disabilities. A panel of experts will discuss strategies for developing collaboration, driver training, and behavior interventions on buses. Participants will be able to identify strategies and methods for partnership development and how to respond to student behavior versus reacting.</p>
Salon D	<p style="text-align: center;">Skill-Builders Session 2</p> <p>1. <i>Nicole Henderson, Athens State University</i></p> <p>Trauma-Informed Practices in Rural Special Education: Supporting Students with ACEs</p> <p>This session equips rural special education teachers with strategies for implementing trauma-informed care to support students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Participants will explore the impact of trauma on learning and behavior while learning practical, hands-on, low-cost interventions to create safe, nurturing classrooms.</p> <p>2. <i>Andrea K. W. Smith, University of North Florida; Jacquelyn Purser, University of Oklahoma; Amber Priddy, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Empowering Paraprofessionals: Building a Curated Website of Innovative Tools and Strategies</p> <p>This presentation explores the creation of a professional learning website designed to equip paraprofessionals with tools and strategies for supporting students with disabilities. Topics include evidence-based practices, behavior management, assistive technology, and visual supports. Attendees will gain practical insights and resources to enhance paraprofessional effectiveness.</p> <p>3. <i>Chrissy Blanchard-Alworth, Old Dominion University</i></p> <p>Fit Friends: Using Fitness to Build Friendships for Students with Autism</p> <p>Learners in this session will understand how participating in physical activity may offer a platform to enhance the lives of students on the autism spectrum. Strategies to promote social interactions while engaging in simple but effective physical activity will be discussed, demonstrated, and practiced.</p>

Breakout 11: Friday, 11:00 am - 11:50 am

Kaye	<p><i>Anthea Teska, Carbon County School District 2; Ryan Puckett, Carbon County School District 1</i></p> <p>Wyoming Teacher Mentor Corps: Supporting Early Career Educators</p> <p>The Wyoming Teacher Mentor Corps is a teacher mentor training program based in the University of Wyoming. The goal of the WTMC is to reduce early career teacher attrition. Research has shown that having a high quality, well-trained mentor not only improves teacher retention, but mentors also help new teachers improve in their instructional strategies, classroom management, and job satisfaction.</p>
Miller	<p><i>McCook John, Lincoln Memorial University; Susan Wagner, Lincoln Memorial University.</i></p> <p>The LMU Symposium on Special Education: Training and Developing Faculty, Districts, Parents and Students</p> <p>The LMU Symposium on Special Education addressed approximately 85 participants that included faculty, undergraduate and graduate level students, parents, advocates, and school partners. The symposium consisted of a mock IEP meeting with 3 hours of breakout sessions. Attendees felt they could ask questions in a safe environment. Participants will learn how to replicate a training session for all.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Pamina Abkowitz, St. Bonaventure University</i></p> <p>Visible Learning in Higher Education</p> <p>In an increasingly diverse world, Special Education teachers, particularly those in rural areas, must utilize research-based strategies for improving student outcomes. This study will review practices around the specific area of Teacher Efficacy, which John Hattie has shown has a tremendous impact on learning in schools.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Mary Anne Fleury, Black Hills State University</i></p> <p>Strengthening General Educators' Collaboration, Involvement, and Leadership in the IEP Process</p> <p>The purpose of this session is to share research regarding a tool for the general education teacher's involvement and leadership in the IEP process, with a focus on the unique challenges within rural school districts. The work goes beyond co-facilitation of the IEP process and moves toward ownership, addressing the critical role general education teachers play in resource-limited environments.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Laura Trapp, Tracy Gershwin, University of Northern Colorado; Jason Robinson, Florida Gulf Coast University</i></p> <p>What about Practice Makes Perfect: Exploring Simulated Manifestation Determination Meetings</p> <p>This session will include research findings from an exploratory study that investigated the perceived usefulness of a training package that included direct instruction, simulated Manifestation Determination meetings, and VA for a targeted group of preservice teachers. Implications for future practice and replication will be discussed.</p>
Salon C	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel</p> <p><i>Moderator: Joanna Ryan, University of North Dakota</i></p> <p><i>Panelists: Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma; J. Matt Jameson, University of Utah; Ginevra Courtade, University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Conducting Intervention Research and Using Research-Based Educational Practices in Rural Schools</p> <p>During this interactive session, presenters will discuss definitions of rurality, dissemination of rural intervention research, methodological issues in rural educational research, and a research agenda for rural schools that includes translation to practice. The session will emphasize inclusive practices and diverse research representation.</p>

Awards & Recognition Lunch

Friday, 12:00 pm – 1:25 pm, Ballroom D/E

Congratulations to the 2025 Award Recipients!

The Eagle Award: To be announced at the luncheon!

The Kim and Kasey Floyd Social Justice Award: David Emenheiser

The Exemplary Rural Special Education Program Awards

Vocational Training and Transition: Abilities Unlimited

Preservice and Inservice Training: Special Education Program at Radford University

Services in Inclusive Environments: Syracuse Middle School Learning Lab

Rural Special Education Quarterly

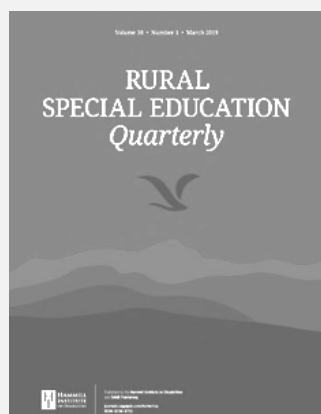
Article of the Year: Annmarie Horn, Kim Floyd, Karen Douglas, Olga Karadimou, Jonna Bobzien, & Selena Layden. What Do Rural Special Education Teachers Say? Examining Reported Needs and Recommendations for Retention

Reviewer of the Year: Kathy Randolph.

Doctoral Student Reviewer of the Year: Amber Priddy

Breakout 12: Friday, 1:30 pm - 2:20 pm

Kaye	<p><i>Megan Carpenter, Clemson University</i></p> <p>Virtual Professional Learning and Development for Rural Teachers Supporting Students with Autism</p> <p>In this session, we will give an overview of The ECHO® Model, a virtual professional development structure that we used to support educators across rural areas in our state to meet the behavioral needs of students with autism and related developmental disabilities. We will discuss how the model is innovative and the potential impact on rural educators and students with autism.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Susan Wagner, Lincoln Memorial University</i></p> <p>Enhancing Fluency through Phrase-Cued Reading and Reader's Theater in Rural Special Education</p> <p>This session demonstrates how Phrase-Cued Reading and Reader's Theater strategies can boost fluency and engagement among rural special education students. Participants will experience adaptations to support struggling readers and learn to integrate these strategies effectively in resource-limited environments.</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Elise Murray, Tori Colson, Rob Carroll, Janell Pycior, Stacey Murray, Mary Ann Cahill, Jill Raisor, Elizabeth Wilkins; University of Southern Indiana</i></p> <p>Addressing Recruitment Challenges: An Immersive Event to Inspire Future Rural Special Educators</p> <p>The presenters will discuss "Be a Teacher Day," an innovative strategy to address recruitment challenges throughout rural southwestern Indiana. "Be a Teacher Day" introduces high school students to the teaching profession through hands-on, immersive experiences.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Christopher T. Closson, State University of New York at Fredonia</i></p> <p>Investigating the Mindset of Educators Regarding Students with Disabilities</p> <p>This session will share information about a current research study about the mindset of educators who serve students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. This research explores the mindset of educators towards students with disabilities, aiming to understand how their beliefs and perceptions influence their teaching practices and the outcomes of students.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Jennifer Hamrick, Texas Tech University</i></p> <p>Enhancing Teacher Efficiency: Leveraging AI for Program Planning in Special Education</p> <p>This session introduces considerations for use of AI tools to help teachers streamline lesson planning, IEP goal development and paperwork in ways to potentially reduce administrative workload. Participants will learn practical AI applications for enhancing efficiency and decision-making in their classrooms.</p>
Salon C	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel Session</p> <p><i>Moderator: Mark Butler, Anderson University</i></p> <p><i>Panelists: Channon Horn, University of Kentucky, Cindy Baughan, Anderson University, Jared Stewart-Ginsburg, North Carolina State University, Tori Colson, University of Southern Indiana</i></p> <p>Examining Special Education Teacher Preparation Across Rural States: Panel Discussion</p> <p>Participants will learn from experienced teacher preparation faculty across 4 different states as they discuss the unique challenges found in local contexts and describe efforts to prepare high quality special education candidates in rural contexts.</p>



Share Your Work!

Submit a paper to *Rural Special Education Quarterly*

Rural Special Education Quarterly invites conference participants to submit a manuscript sharing their work with others in the field.

RSEQ is a respected, national, peer-reviewed, professional journal published quarterly for over 30 years.

An overview of the journal and the submission guidelines are posted on the ACRES website at <http://acres-sped.org/journal>.

Breakout 13: Friday, 2:30 pm - 3:20 pm

Kaye	<p><i>Katrine Gosselin, University of Northern Colorado</i></p> <p>Mindful and Effective Implementation of Paraeducator Support in Rural Communities</p> <p>Presenters will explore a mindful approach to optimizing paraeducator training and implementation within rural communities considering long term student outcomes. The presentation will provide research-based information on direct and indirect paraeducator support models and fading paraeducator support as students transition into increasingly independent roles within schools and rural communities.</p>
Miller	<p><i>Susan M Schultz, St. John Fisher University; Kim Floyd, West Virginia University; Jessica Schultz, Prince William County Schools</i></p> <p>Understanding Teacher Workload and its Impact on Student Development</p> <p>Engagement in job-related tasks cause reduction in classroom presence and instructional hours, adversely impacting the development of P-12 students. This research asks, 1. What is the extent of time teachers are diverted from direct instruction? 2. How much time do teachers allocate outside of school hours to administrative and preparatory tasks? 3. What are the repercussions for P-12 students?</p>
Calloway	<p><i>Louise M. Yoho, Southern Illinois University; Michelle Connet, Southern Illinois University</i></p> <p>Disability, discipline, and law enforcement: Insights from a rural school's efforts to reform</p> <p>This session will present data from a case study conducted at a small school for students with disabilities in the Midwest, and the systemic changes they enacted to reduce their reliance on exclusionary discipline and law enforcement. Details about the changes they made at school, classroom, and student levels will be provided, followed by a discussion and resource sharing time with participants.</p>
Salon A	<p><i>Lauren Werner, Tyler Breninghouse, Waynesburg University</i></p> <p>Implementing Service-Learning Projects and Pathways to Peer Relationships for Neurodiverse Students</p> <p>This session showcases the benefits of implementing service-learning projects and facilitating opportunities through typical peer mentorship to build rapport with same-age peers and foster interpersonal and social skills for neurodiverse youth.</p>
Salon B	<p><i>Abby Clark, Terry Burgener, Olivia Schimp, and Kristina Unverfehrt, Kaskaskia Special Education District</i></p> <p>It Takes a Village: Creating a Transition Planning Committee in a Rural Community</p> <p>In this session, we will discuss a recent effort to revitalize a deactivated TPC in a rural area. Steps taken to initiate the process, suggestions for identifying key members and their roles, and action plans for the committee will be discussed. Natural barriers related to the rural areas and high poverty climates will also be addressed along with solutions for overcoming them.</p>
Salon C	<p style="text-align: center;">Panel Session</p> <p><i>Moderator: Ginevra Courtade.</i></p> <p><i>Panelists: Melinda Ault, University of Kentucky; Kera Ackerman, University of Kentucky; Patricia Peterson, Northern Arizona University; Brittany Hott, University of Oklahoma; David Hoppey, University of North Florida; Pamela Williamson, University of North Florida</i></p> <p>OSEP Funded Projects Focusing on Rural Education: Descriptions, Successes, and Challenges</p> <p>Participants will learn about three separate projects across five different institutions of higher education preparing professionals to provide services in rural regions. These include the preparation of future faculty and state level leaders and administrators. Presenters also will discuss funding opportunities for both training and research grants focused on rural education.</p>

Reminder: THE SILENT AUCTION CLOSING AT 4:00 p.m.

(during the poster session, right before the closing Board Meeting).

Come enjoy and ice cream sundae or fries & tots with the works while you chat with our poster presenters.
Then head over to pick up the items you won!

Preferred payment methods: Ca\$h, check made out to ACRES.

Electronic payments (Venmo, Zelle, Cash App, PayPal) will be available courtesy of Cathy Galyon

Items must be paid and picked up by 4:30 or they will go to the next highest bidder.

Any items not picked up by 5:00 will be returned to ACRES HQ.

Poster Session and Ice Cream Social

Friday, 3:20 pm – 4:50 pm

1	<p><i>Aryan Azizian, Audrey Biswell, & Melissa Baughman, Robin Hill Public School</i> Implementing a Token Economy House System in Rural PreK-8 Schools.</p> <p>This poster outlines implementation of a token economy house system in a rural PreK through 8th grade school. Attendees will learn about the system's structure, point-earning opportunities, and its impact on student engagement, attendance, and parental involvement. Data include the cost benefit, student outcomes, and student/staff perceptions of the initiative.</p>
2	<p><i>Andrea M. Vega, Texas State University; Kathleen Randolph, Texas State University; Annemarie Horn, Radford University</i> An updated literature review on using coaching to improve the fidelity of evidence-based practices.</p> <p>Continued improvements to coaching strategies for educators in turn have measurable impacts on student performance. Participants in this session will gain a deeper understanding of the essential components of effective coaching, the role of coaching in supporting teacher development, and strategies for implementing coaching programs in schools.</p>
3	<p><i>Collin Shepley, University of Kentucky</i> Developing and Validating a Measure to Appraise Progress Monitoring Quality.</p> <p>We sought to develop and validate an easy-to-use teacher/classroom quality measure specific to progress monitoring. This measure may help teacher educators, school districts, and early childhood programs to understand the ability of their special education teachers to engage in high quality progress monitoring and support students with intensive and diverse needs.</p>
4	<p><i>Stephanie N. Baker, Northern Illinois University</i> Educators' Perspectives of Support Importance and Intensity in Inclusive Settings.</p> <p>As a result of this session, participants will describe a social-ecological understanding of disability and the importance of identifying support needs of children with disabilities through this approach. Furthermore, they will describe the relationship between support importance and intensity as well as implications for practice.</p>
5	<p><i>Amanda L. Witte, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; HyeonJin Yoon, University of Nebraska-Lincoln</i> Teachers and Parents as Partners: Technology-Supported Connections to Address Rural Behavioral Needs.</p> <p>Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) is an intervention wherein a consultant guides parents and teachers through collaborative problem-solving to promote student social-behavioral skills. Access to TAPP is limited in rural communities. Teleconsultation (tele-TAPP) may increase TAPP's availability for rural students. Presenters will describe tele-TAPP and share preliminary efficacy evidence.</p>
6	<p><i>Bailey Smith, University of Oklahoma; Bailey Blewett, University of Oklahoma</i> Educator Burnout in Rural Schools: A Scoping Review of Contributing Factors and Interventions.</p> <p>The presenters will discuss a scoping review of factors contributing to educator burnout in rural areas, particularly for special education teachers. Participants will learn about unique challenges, interventions to mitigate burnout, and strategies for fostering supportive environments, along with practical ideas to advocate for supportive practices.</p>
7	<p><i>Jerrie Brooks, Fort Hays State University</i> Building Parent Partnerships for Rural Diverse and Exceptional Learners.</p> <p>Parent partnerships are designed to support students through collaboration among schools, parents, and the community. This is particularly relevant for diverse and exceptional students living in rural communities. Our project surveyed rural district school personnel and parents about their efforts to build parent partnerships, identifying ways to better support exceptional learners.</p>
8	<p><i>Hannah Keene, University of Kentucky; Sally Shepley, University of Kentucky</i> UNITY: A model for pre-service partnerships in special education and ABA to support rural classrooms.</p> <p>This poster presents a university training model promoting interdisciplinary partnerships between rural special education teachers, ABA graduate students, and BCBA's to address classroom challenges. Through shared coursework, assessments, and interventions, students collaborate to improve classroom management and skill acquisition, supporting rural schools while developing behavioral skills.</p>
9	<p><i>Alexandra Hollo and Jennifer Ludrosky, West Virginia University</i> Do Children with Teacher-Identified Behavioral Problems in Rural Schools Differ from Norm Samples on Narrative Tasks?</p> <p>This poster shares the results of a study comparing narrative language sample analysis to standardized scores on a narrative language assessment in a sample of children with teacher-referred problem behavior in rural K-12 schools.</p>
10	<p><i>Lillian F. Ruble, Radford University; Annemarie L. Horn, Radford University</i> Increasing Inclusive Learning Opportunities in Rural Schools.</p> <p>Rural schools face unique challenges when it comes to providing inclusive learning opportunities to students with disabilities. This poster session will include several research-based recommendations for increasing collaboration and implementing proactive, tiered frameworks to ensure the needs of all students are met in an inclusive classroom.</p>

11	<p><i>Laura H. King, East Carolina University; Kim Floyd, West Virginia University</i> Examination of Approaches Assistive Technology Labs Use to Support Teaching Inclusive Practices. Teacher candidates in all areas of Education need to learn about accessibility and assistive technology to work effectively with today's diverse K-12 populations. This session will demonstrate how two university assistive technology labs approach this task in alignment with both knowledge and practical skills to better prepare all teachers for effective inclusive practices.</p>
12	<p><i>Emma Jones, University of Kentucky</i> Exploring the Collective Efficacy of Special Educators in Relation to Distributed Leadership. This presentation explores the connection between distributed leadership and collective teacher efficacy among special education teachers in rural schools. Participants will learn how shared decision-making and collaboration can enhance CTE. The session provides practical strategies for fostering a supportive culture, improving teacher retention, and supporting students with disabilities.</p>
13	<p><i>Callie Welch, Tennessee Tech University</i> Indicator 14 Data and The Potential Impact on Students and Services. Research on supports and services for students with disabilities as they transition of high school into adulthood is abundant; however, relatively little is known about the relationship between the type of special education services they received and their postschool outcomes. The data and suggestions provided by this poster look more deeply at these relationships.</p>
14	<p><i>Courtney Hilyer, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown; Elaine Wilson, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown</i> Educators' Knowledge, Perceptions, & Implementation on Assistive Technology in the Rural Classroom This study investigates the perceptions, knowledge, and implementation practices of assistive technology (AT) among educators in rural schools, with a focus on Central and Southwestern Pennsylvania. This descriptive study identifies barriers rural educators face in accessing and effectively using AT, as well as potential solutions to overcome these challenges.</p>
15	<p><i>Emily Karl, Eryn Marsh, and Elaine Wilson, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.</i> Building BRIDGE(s): Empowering Transitions Through Collaborative Teaching. The Building BRIDGE(s) Program helps students with special needs develop essential skills for life after graduation. Through weekly, real-world lessons, pre-service teachers promote skills like digital literacy and workplace etiquette, supported by Supplemental Instructors. Presenters will share their insights as both peer mentors and contributors to the program's growth and development.</p>
16	<p><i>LuAnn Jordan, University of North Carolina Charlotte</i> Progress Monitoring and Prompt Analysis Support Teachers with edTPA Tasks Beginning teachers across the US are required to pass edTPA, an assessment of their planning, teaching, and evaluation skills. By implementing a process using progress monitoring and a method to analyze prompts, candidates in a special education program have been equipped to provide thoughtful responses to multi-faceted questions. Participants will learn how questions and prompts are analyzed.</p>
17	<p><i>Alexandra Hollo and Almara Hutchinson, West Virginia University</i> Assessing Emotion Words and Prosocial Behaviors in Preschool-Aged Children: A Pilot Study. This poster details test construction and outcomes from the Test of Emotion Word Knowledge (TEWK). We developed and piloted this measure as part of an intervention study to evaluate the hypothesis that teaching young children the language of emotion improves prosocial skill development.</p>
18	<p><i>Faisal Alqraini, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University</i> Enhancing Linguistic Development in Children with Cochlear Implants: The Critical Role of Family Support. This study examines the role of family involvement in supporting language development in children with cochlear implants. Through interviews, it highlights the impact of communication routines, family dynamics, and parental confidence. Findings emphasize the importance of family support and the need for tailored professional services to address challenges and enhance rehabilitation outcomes.</p>
19	<p>This session is presented by the winner of the 2024 John W. Schuster Research Award. <i>Kristie Jones, Purdue University</i> Dedicated Yet Drained: Exploring Burnout Among Rural Special Educators of Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities This session will present the results of a mixed methods study on the phenomenon of burnout in rural special education teachers (SET) of students with low-incidence disabilities. The presenter will share quantitative results, qualitative results, and integration findings. Current literature, study methods and future implications will be discussed.</p>

Stay tuned after the posters to find out the winner of the theme contest!
Did your picks make the cut? We will announce next year's theme at the closing ceremony.
Check out the board to see the final bracket.

Post-Conference Open Board Meeting

Immediately following the poster session at 5:00

Everyone is welcome to attend!

The Board would love to hear your ideas for ACRES and welcome our new Board Members and Officers

ACRES Executive Board

Officers 2025-2026	Members at Large
Todd Sundeen, President	Brittany Hott (1)
Annmarie Horn, President - Elect	Matt Jameson (1)
Pamina Abkowitz, Past President	Mark Butler (1)
Louise Yoho, Secretary	Chris Closson (1)
MaryAnn Fleury, Treasurer	Colleen Wood-Fields (1)
Channon Horn, Past Historian	Stephanie Baker (1)
Joanna Ryan, Historian	Cindy Baughan (1)
Cathy Galyon, Apprentice Historian	Christine Powell (1)
	Channon Horn (1)
Headquarters	Student Member
Kim Floyd & Alex Hollo, Co-Directors	Tara Harmon
RSEQ	
Brittany Hott, Editor;	Julie Atwood & Sarah Heiniger, Managing Editors

Number in parenthesis represent term of service. Members at Large can only serve two consecutive terms and then must sit out one year before seeking election.

Ready to get more involved with ACRES?

Make the most of your membership by staying informed, connecting with others, and contributing to meaningful initiatives. At the Town Hall Meeting, each Chair will share their committee's purpose and highlight key accomplishments from the past year. Explore the different committees to find one that aligns with your interests and skills. Sign up to participate and help shape the future of our organization!

Standing committees may include

- (1) Exemplary Program Awards and Student Scholarship Committee
- (2) the Conference Teacher Event Committee
- (3) the Social Media and Communications Committee
- (4) the Budget and Financial Oversight Committee
- (5) the Membership Committee
- (6) the Nominations and Elections Committee,
- (7) the Partnerships Committee, and
- (8) Research Committee.



*Check us out on
Social Media!*



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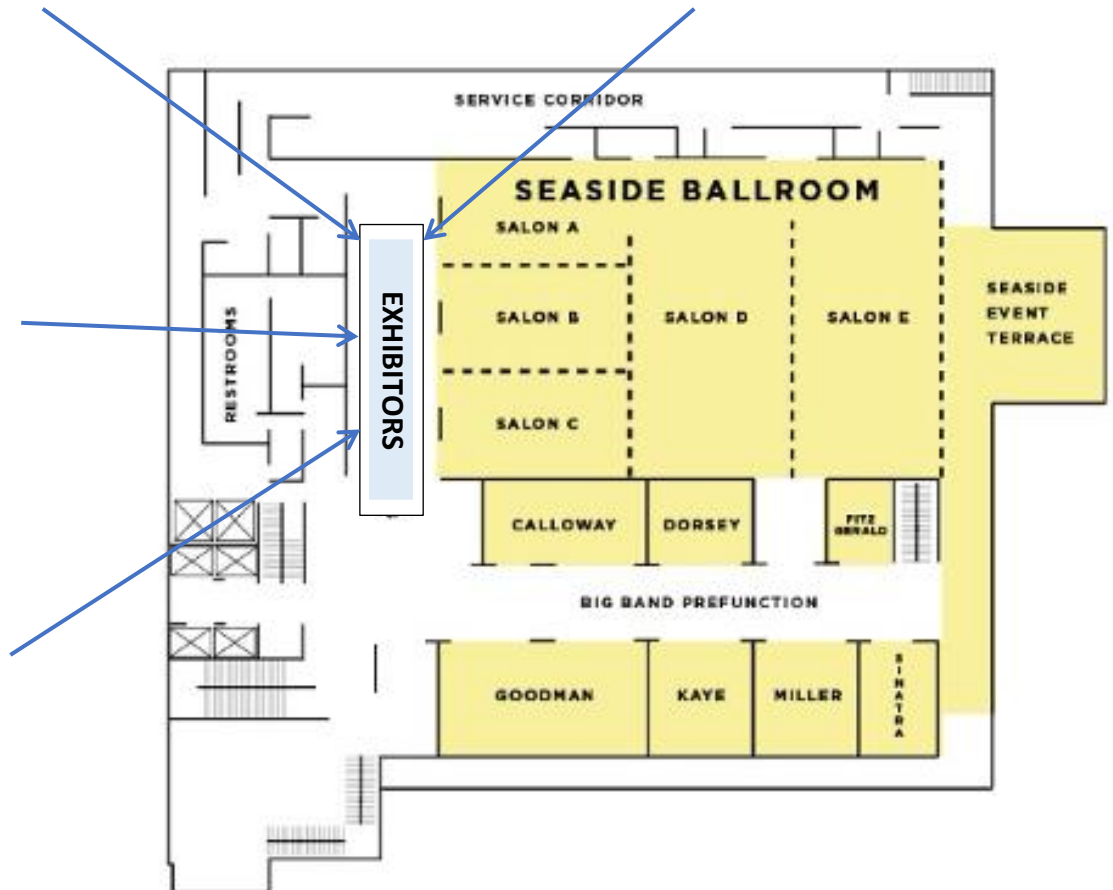


Conference Session Planning

Session	Room	Topic
1		
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13		
Posters		



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American
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Join Us at the 45th Annual National Conference

***Vote for next year's theme in the ACRES
March Madness Bracket!***



Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel

March 26-27, 2026

FMI: acres-sped@mail.wvu.edu

Deadline for proposal submission will be October 2025

Please share this announcement with colleagues and students.

Learn more about ACRES and why you should join us

If you have enjoyed learning from and networking with us at the conference but are not already a member of ACRES, we invite you to join our unique professional organization focused on topics and issues in rural special education and disability services. You can learn more about our organizational structure, conference, publications, and advocacy efforts at <http://acres-sped.org> or <http://acres-sped.org/membership>