

Kentucky Encourages Innovative Practice in Rural Schools

In 2002, Kentucky passed a new law (KRS.158.649) which requires schools to identify and deal with persistent gaps in student achievement. Recently, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) asked the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) to help develop systems that would enable schools and districts to use research-based innovative practices to lower achievement gaps. For example, the ARCC agreed to help the Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program find ways to encourage rural school districts to adopt research-based innovative practices that improve instruction and student achievement. ARCC staff members are continuing to assist the state by managing annual surveys that ask RLIS district coordinators about effective strategies they use, updating the literature review of research-based strategies for dealing with achievement gaps, and preparing an annual report about innovative practices that combines the literature review with the annual survey results.

As a result, KDE staff understand more about how RLIS grantees use their funds. They can also use the innovative practices report to encourage RLIS district coordinators to integrate new strategies into their annual grant applications. More than one-third of district coordinators who completed the survey responded positively about the information received, especially information about ways to improve student growth and achievement. Ninety-five percent of district coordinators who responded to the survey were more satisfied with KDE and ARCC support than they had been the previous year.