

Project Name

Rural Schools Virtual Project [RSVP]: Expanding Access to Advanced & Elective Online Coursework

Principal Investigator Thomas Giblin

Campus Brockport, State University College at

Year of Project 2013

Tier Tier Two

Overview Summary

Partnership between rural K-12 schools and teacher colleges to expand course offerings and provide collaborate online support.

Outcomes Summary

Virtual School experiences are detailed in a JETS article available at https://commons.suny.edu/iitg/files/gravity_forms/4-d3f60bf821d6ef10a09681073a284fc5/2015/07/Wilkens-et-al-2015-VSFEs.pdf

Project Abstract

What we propose to do with SUNY IITG support is to help a rural school in New York State offer an advanced or elective online course; to provide graduate professional development (to both the rural teacher and two SUNY teacher candidates); and to supervise our teacher candidates as they teach online with the participating rural teacher. In a very real sense, this project primarily benefits rural high school students by expanding coursework options, while helping teacher candidates learn to teach online.

The Rural Schools Virtual Project [RSVP] has several outcome goals, including:

1. Creation of a partnership model for rural schools and teacher education colleges throughout SUNY;
2. Expanded course offerings for students in rural schools;
3. Expanded teacher candidate opportunities, specifically focused on online k-12 teaching and learning;

With the assistance of SUNY IITG funding, the PI and Co-PI will:

- a) Recruit one secondary teacher in a rural school and two teacher candidates at the College at Brockport, to collaboratively teach one high school course not available at each rural school site (e.g. through the VHS Collaborative).
- b) Visit the participating teacher with teacher candidates in the Fall, 2013.
- c) Supervise teacher candidates as they observe, assist, and learn to teach online with the rural secondary teacher online during Spring, 2014.

The project flow has four distinct phases, detailed in Q8 (Project Timeline). Given a May 6, 2013 notification schedule, we expect to recruit and select participant teachers and teacher candidates during Summer, 2013. We then plan to secure school-site agreements, visit the participating teacher in person, and have the participant teacher and teacher candidates complete a graduate VHS teacher training course on NetCourse Instructional Methodologies. We will then supervise teacher candidates as they observe, assist, and learn in the participating teacher's online course during Spring, 2014.

Support from a SUNY IITG provides a unique opportunity to form a partnership between SUNY and rural schools statewide to deliver secondary coursework otherwise unavailable due to resource constraints. The need is great; New York currently has 252 school districts that enroll fewer than 1,000 students each (NYSED, 2009), including 353 small high schools that enroll fewer than 500 students total. Most of these districts are unable to offer students a range of coursework comparable to that available at larger campuses (Monk & Haller, 2011; Iatarola, Conger, & Long, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009).

Such coursetaking constraints mean students in rural schools often have little opportunity for enrichment or advanced study, placing them at serious disadvantage when continuing to college or careers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Graham, 2009). Online courses provide one possible answer, because they bring together students from multiple sites; distribute the resource and personnel demands across sites; and grant students in rural schools access to skilled teachers. The unique nature of the VHS collaborative model additionally means that, by teaching a single course, our participating teacher gains access for 25 students at their school to the entire VHS Collaborative course catalogue (currently several hundred courses). This project meaningfully expands rural student opportunity, while helping us learn how to train teacher candidates for online k-12 environments.

The project we propose presents significant possibilities for sustainability and replication SUNY-wide. Why? This grant will support a pilot project that has the potential to provide a replicable model for partnerships between a range of rural SUNY campuses and New York State's hundreds of rural and small secondary schools. Right now, we are witnessing a transformation of k-12 education – including the rapid expansion of online courses to young students – but a huge unknown is the training and development of the next generation of k-12 teachers, many of whom will be asked or expected to teach online at some point in their careers. All SUNY teacher education campuses need to be thinking about how to support teacher candidates in their future careers, and all of us need to figure out what role we will play in the provision and supervision of structured learning opportunities for our candidates.

What we gain through this pilot project is access of SUNY teacher candidates to structured, rigorous online k-12 instruction, where we are able to learn, guide, and supervise. This is no small step - to our knowledge, no SUNY campus trains its teacher candidates to teach online in the k-12 domain. The learning and guidance developed from this project, we believe, could easily and quickly apply systemwide: teacher candidates benefit from having specific training in online teaching, as well as enhanced learning experiences and awareness of the challenges unique to rural schools. Teacher education programs benefit from learning how to partner with k-12 schools offering online coursework, and how to providing instruction and support in an online environment.

As well, the project, if and when expanded to other SUNY campuses and rural schools in New York, requires little to no start-up funds or ongoing expenditures. This is because the VHS Collaborative model operates on a unique barter/partnership basis: rural teachers teach one course in the system, and thereby gain access for

~25 of their own school's students to take courses in the collaborative tuition-free. The model works across a variety of districts and avoids many of the complications of contract-unfriendly vendors. And perhaps best of all, the model functions without the input of significant or ongoing capital from external sources, and will continue to do so with or without the participation of SUNY in the process.

Reports and Resources

- [Final project report](#)
- [Article in the Journal of Educational Technology Systems](#)
- [Mid-project report](#)

Assessment, Understanding, Monitoring Student Progress

- Outcomes Assessment

Discipline Specific Pedagogy

- Faculty Digital Literacy

Instructional Design

- Online Education