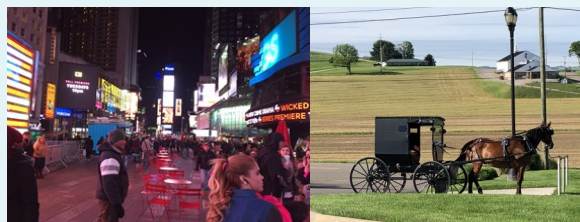




# RSA TODAY

News for New York State's  
Rural Schools

September 2019



I don't live in New York,

I live in New York

**"Communities Committed to Educational Excellence"**

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## RURAL ISSUES FORUMS

Our rural communities are facing unprecedented challenges. Political, economic and social factors are combining to make rural education and indeed rural life, a struggle.

Is the future of your community and its children worth 90 minutes of your time?

What frustrates you in making your school, your community or your business thrive in your rural setting? Your Rural Schools Association is holding regional Rural Issues Forums to start the process of recovery. At these forums, you'll first hear a short briefing on the state of rural schools and communities by David Little, the Executive Director of the Rural Schools Association of NYS and Director of Cornell's Rural Schools Program. Then, YOU will have the chance to offer your thoughts on the challenges and issues faced by rural schools and the communities that support them.



**David Little,**  
**RSA Executive Director**

Your listing of those challenges, your examples and your suggestions for addressing them will be reviewed by a statewide task force of experts and included in a Policy Brief presented to national and New York State leaders. We need to clearly identify the obstacles to building thriving rural communities in our state and offer a plan to remove those barriers.

The issues included in the Policy Brief will form the basis of an advocacy campaign intended to urge our leaders to rid us of those barriers and to make intentional improvements to rural life in New York State.



It all starts with you!

Join us on the following dates to begin pulling up our bootstraps.

Oct. 2, 2019	Chautauqua County School Boards Assn. (Shorewood Country Club 4958 W Lake Rd, Dunkirk, NY 14048) 5:30 PM
Oct. 7, 2019	SUNY Oneonta –(5:30-8 p.m. Morris Conference Center) Dinner 5:30, forum 6-8 PM
Oct. 17, 2019	Riverhead, Long Island (Large Instructional Center of the Ward Technical Center, Eastern Suffolk BOCES)
Nov. 5, 2019	St. Lawrence BOCES
Nov. 6, 2019	Plattsburgh (CVS BOCES Instructional Services Center) 6 PM
Nov. 7, 2019	Erie County, dinner catered at the Erie 1 BOCES 355 Harlem Road, West Seneca, New York 14224
Jan. 14, 2020	Warrensburg Central School District



## RSA PUSHES FOR RURAL BROADBAND

Watch the testimony [here](#)  
Read the written testimony [here](#)





**Kevin King, Deputy Commissioner of NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets**

## **RSA AND CORNELL CALS CO-HOSTS EVENT TO FOSTER RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Rural areas across the U.S. face unique challenges when it comes to developing and retaining their workforce. The issues go beyond basic “brain drain,” a term used when smart, talented people leave small hometowns for opportunities in bigger cities.

To better understand and address these complex issues, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Agency is conducting listening sessions across the country to brainstorm more effective ways to keep rural areas vibrant, productive and entrepreneurial.

On Sept. 13, Cornell University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), the Rural Schools Association (RSA) of New York State, the USDA and New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR) co-hosted the Northeast Region Rural Workforce Summit on the Ithaca campus. The event brought together researchers, policy makers, administrators and educators from across New York state.

Two members of the Department of Development Sociology shared their expertise in an afternoon panel centered around success stories and best practices. Robin Blakely-Armitage, senior extension associate and program manager with the Community & Regional Development Institute (CaRDI), spoke about the different demographics within New York state. John Sipple, associate professor and director of CaRDI and the NYS Center for Rural Schools, discussed the connections between rural education and local participation in the workforce, in addition to the limitations of current rural development programs.



**Attendees at the RSA Rural Workforce Summit**

“One-off policies and programs that do not link with the ‘thicker’ needs of individuals, families and communities are less likely to meet the local needs of a community,” said Sipple. “Integrating our understandings of policy and practice related to agriculture, land use, energy, healthcare, taxation, childcare, education and infrastructure is essential to the development of coherent and effective rural workforce development programs.”

Opening remarks were made by David Little, executive director of the Rural Schools Association of New York State, Kathryn J. Boor, the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of CALS, and Richard Mayfield, state director of New York USDA Rural Development.

“As part of our mission as a Land-Grant institution, Cornell CALS is committed to developing the talent pipelines that support New York’s rural economies,” Boor said. “Our many programs and partnerships respond to the needs of local communities, as well as to the demands of industries that increasingly require specialized training and certification.”



**RSA Executive Director David Little Opens the Summit**

According to a USDA report commissioned from Purdue University about jobs in the food, agriculture and STEM fields, there will be more than 57,000 jobs opening in these fields. However, only 20,000 students a year graduate with bachelor’s degrees in related STEM fields.



**SUNY Cobleskill President Dr. Marion Terenzio and Her Panel**

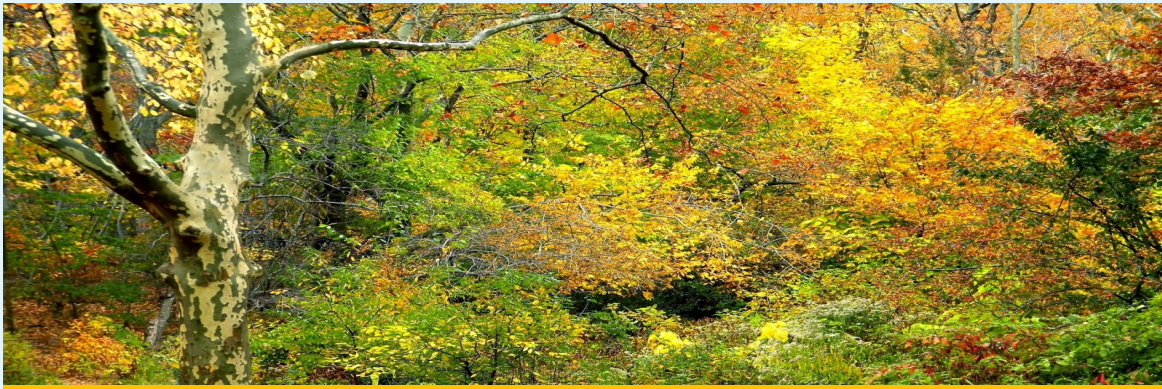
In the keynote address, Kevin King, deputy commissioner of agriculture and markets, talked about how some of the current challenges faced by food and farm systems can be turned into opportunities for new partnerships. For example, collaboration between academia and private industry could lead to continual workforce training, including how to use technology related to digital agriculture and helping farmers make more informed decisions.

“A rapidly changing and modern economy will require new skill sets for our future workforce,” Mayfield said. “Summits like these are crucial to understanding the challenges and needs of our rural stakeholders—including businesses and the education sector—so we can craft an effective strategy for the future. Because when we work together, America prospers.”

The event concluded with roundtable discussions inviting all participants to become a part of the solution, plans for keeping rural development agencies engaged with the needs of their communities and ideas for better pathways to training opportunities.

This event was sponsored by the Rural Schools Association of NYS.





## RURAL SCHOOL FALL SUMMITS RSA PARTNERS WITH NYSSBA AND NYSCOSS

Your Rural Schools Association works to bring you the most helpful information in venues that make it easy for you to participate. Having great information to share doesn't mean much if our schools never get it! So, we host our events at locations around the state to make sure everyone can get to them. One of the best ways to get information to our members is to go where they'll already be. This fall, that means we'll be at both the NYSCOSS Fall Institute in Saratoga Springs on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and the NYSSBA Convention in Rochester from the 24<sup>th</sup> through the 26<sup>th</sup> of October.



Partnering with NYSCOSS, we'll be hosting one of our **Rural Issues Forums** to allow superintendents and other administrators to provide their perspective on the issues facing our rural schools in this challenging environment. (See story in this edition of RSA Today for further details.)

With NYSSBA, we'll once again be hosting our **Rural Schools Summit** at the convention. Rural schools leaders will be able to select a rural school-specific session in every time slot of the conference. The sessions include "Space and Its Impact on Academic Success", "Promoting Community Engagement in a Rural District", "Using STEM Partnerships to Increase Student Experiences", "C.O.L.T.S. Days Educational Programming", "Leveraging Personal Connections for District Partnerships" and "Farm to School: Planting Seeds of Success."



RSA will also have its **booth in the Education Expo**, where you can meet with RSA staff and board members to discuss your issues, or just catch up! Stop by to pick up information to take home or talk over what's happening in your district!

Also at the convention, RSA will be hosting the **Rural Schools Breakfast** on Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 a.m. To attend, just check off the breakfast on your convention registration form. We'll be discussing challenges like the historic drop in student enrollment, the changing political landscape and the rebuilding of our state's rural economy. Hey, you've got to eat! It may as well be with friends!

Your RSA has the most timely and relevant information for rural districts. NYSSBA and NYSCOSS partner with RSA to make sure our shared membership receives that information at convenient locations. Join with your fellow rural school leaders and make sure to take advantage of this fall's opportunities!



## FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM HITS MILESTONE

Your RSA helps lead the effort to support our state's Farm to School program. Our advocacy has helped pass new laws and regulations supporting the program and now (only a year into it!) schools are really hitting their stride. Here is a message from our partner Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager at the American Farmland Trust:

Good afternoon Farm to School advocates,

It's Back to School time, and I wanted to share some incredibly exciting news with you all—schools are now beginning to announce the successful achievement of 30% purchasing of NY grown food after only one year of this nation-leading Farm to School program's existence!

Amongst many other schools across New York (including Buffalo—the second largest district in the state serving nearly 15,000 students lunch daily), 15 school districts from Broome and Tioga counties have achieved 30% purchasing of New York grown food, **spending \$1.5 million at local farms to purchase healthy local food to serve to their students**. You can read more about it [here](#).

Please join me in wishing them all congratulations and patting them on the back for issuing this press release to share the news with the world, and importantly, take a moment to feel proud of the immense, positive ripple effects of our Farm to School advocacy work over the past two years in New York. I look forward to continuing to work alongside you all to ensure that this inspiring program becomes a permanent fixture of food and farm policy in New York—and perhaps eventually the country!

Happy fall harvest!

Sincerely,

**Samantha Levy , New York Policy Manager**

In addition, here are a couple of news pieces about Farm to School in the Southern Tier.

<https://www.morningagclips.com/farm-to-school-success-brings-thousands-in-new-state-aid-to-broome-tioga-region/>

<https://wbng.com/news/featured-reports/2019/09/04/farm-to-school-lunch-program-builds-community-ties-improves-food-quality/>

[Full list of NYS Schools that achieved the 30% Initiative.](#)





**Newfane CSD's new apple orchard.. orchard name is to be determined**

## **Newfane Local Learning Produces Real Results**

Local Learning is a project-based program that was created in 2017 for Newfane Middle School. It is a one-month program that is driven by student curiosities about their own community and school. Question Formulation Technique is used to tap into what students are interested in and to narrow the focus of study. Students and teachers learn side by side asking questions with on-site evidence based research, while community experts on the topic are invited to share their knowledge. Research teams work collaboratively to gather, interpret, and use the knowledge gained to create a tangible learning outcome. Project creation happens when new knowledge gained becomes authentic learning and inspires students to want to share what they have learned.



**Local Learning students on-site with Max Russell of Russell Farms In Appleton, NY**

In 2017 Local Learning studied the rising levels of Lake Ontario. Students and teachers went on-site to take pictures, interview local business owners, and listen to community members directly involved in this local issue. "Lake Ontario's Problem" books were created as a result of the student's work. Two hundred copies were produced and sold across New York State.

Local Learning class of 2018 produced a Rural Schools Association of NYS first place video which highlighted our local agricultural businesses. Student interests and questions determined we would research local vegetable growers, honey bees, medicinal plants, and how it impacts our local economy.

This past summer Local Learning students set out to grow something of their own. Questions revolved around growing grapes or apples. After soil testing and field work in vineyards and apple orchards, students decided it is apples they want to grow. In July of 2019 students of Newfane Middle School built a twelve tree apple orchard on the grounds of Newfane High School. With proper maintenance these students should have an abundant crop of apples as they enter their senior year.



**Local Learning Class of 2019**

2020 will bring a new group of students with varying interests and a new project to create!

## THE CORNELL CONNECTION



**Dr. Gretchen Rymarchyk,**  
**Deputy Director RSA**

1. Advancing Mental Health and Wellness in Schools, Families and Communities. This is the theme of the Mental Health Association of NY's annual conference. The program looks rich, and geared toward schools. Make a point to get there if student mental health is at the top of your priority list! Registration link:

<https://mhanys.org/civcrm/?page=CiviCRM&q=civcrm%2Fevent%2Fregister&reset=1&id=191>

2. The Cornell Connection is partnering on a civic storytelling project with Dr. Jon McKenzie, the Dean's Fellow for Media and Design and Visiting Professor of English at Cornell. You may have met him at our summer conference, as he was in the Research Room hoping to talk with you about this project. We will be working with students in a couple rural districts to create media to tell a story of importance to them: real stories by real people about real issues. We will create a kit that teachers can use to do this on their own with students.

Why is this important?

- ◇ Rural advocacy! While bringing numbers to the attention of politicians (how many are affected? What does it cost? Etc) is important to get their attention, it's the STORIES that pull at the heartstrings, and get people to take on your cause. Because rural areas struggle to come up with numbers due to dwindling populations, they need to use their stories! Training students to create compelling stories using a variety of media is a great way to get the attention of people in a position to help.
- ◇ Mental health! We train students how to write a good paper, but how does that translate to other genres? It takes creativity. Using the creative part of the brain is a powerful tool in the healing process of emotional and mental trauma. Students become engaged in new ways, are more committed, and show up for class more often when there is something interesting and creative for them to work on. We plan to measure some mental and emotional wellness indicators during this project to help show how this is good for kids beyond achieving academic milestones.
- ◇ Community cohesion! If rural areas want to thrive, they need a strong community. These storytelling projects can encourage kids to reach out to other generations and other segments of the community to help tell their story. When kids see adults acting to address community issues, they understand their neighborhood is a place worth fighting for!

This project is part of a larger effort supported by a grant for a Rural Humanities initiative, designed to "reinvigorate thinking about and active engagement with" NY's rural communities.

Read more and the grant here: <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2019/02/mellon-funded-rural-humanities-initiative-launches>

3. Another project funded by this grant, and described in the link above, is to have students get out into rural communities and work on projects there. Please contact Gretchen if you are interested in learning more about what these students might do with/for your community (GKR1@cornell.edu)
4. The Cornell Connection is working with a cohort of 4 interns who will be reading rural, or rural-education relevant books and writing reviews for you. Watch for their work in our blog section of our website in December.
5. Our Face book should be linked to Twitter now, so more people should be able to see our daily posts!



## **ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO TRANSFER \$3.6 BILLION FROM MILITARY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION TO FUND BORDER WALL**

Last week, the federal administration announced plans to use \$3.6 billion appropriated by Congress for 127 Department of Defense (DOD) military construction projects (including schools and child care centers) to instead construct 175 miles of new or reconstructed border wall. The Administration is using its authority under the national emergency the President previously announced to divert already appropriated defense spending. The Administration has said the projects Congress had assigned for funding will be delayed until Congress provides new funding for them. If Congress does renew funding for the projects, there is no guarantee that they won't be diverted again for additional border wall work. Congressional leaders strongly opposed the Administration's decision to transfer funding that Congress had appropriated for specific military construction projects, among them half a billion dollars for renovating and building schools and child care centers on military installations in the U.S. and abroad.



Mark Your Calendars for the RSA Winter Conference to be held  
December 13th at the NYSSBA building in Latham, NY.  
We'll be partnering with the Well Campaign to focus on The  
Whole Child.