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Federal grants boost rural educator recruitment, retention efforts

Colorado Department of Higher Education hands out funding to seven institution-district partnerships

DENVER – Jan. 29, 2018: To help improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness, the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) awarded \$300,000 among seven colleges and universities that have forged partnerships with rural districts and boards of cooperative education services (BOCES).

The funding comes from a federal grant and will support programs aimed at shoring up Colorado’s rural teacher workforce, including recruiting local residents, offering rural field experiences for teacher candidates and expanding professional development for teachers and administrators in high need areas, such as science, math and special education. See the attachment for award amounts and descriptions.

“Although the educator shortage has affected all areas of the state, Colorado’s 147 rural and small rural districts have felt it most acutely. In fact, some schools have struggled to fill key positions for years,” said Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, executive director of the CDHE. “These grants will go a long way in recruiting and retaining more great educators to rural classrooms as we work to ensure all Colorado students have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.”

The grantee recipients include the following institutions:

- Adams State University and Alamosa, Center, Monte Vista, North Conejos, Sanford, Sierra Grande and South Conejos school districts
- Colorado College and Pikes Peak BOCES
- Fort Lewis College, San Juan BOCES and Durango School District
- Regis University, Morgan County School District and Lake County School District
- University of Colorado Boulder and Northeast Colorado BOCES
- University of Colorado Denver, Otero Junior College and Cheraw, Crowley County, East Otero, Huerfano, Karval, Kit Carson, Las Animas, Manzanola, Rocky Ford and Swink school districts
- University of Northern Colorado, East Central BOCES and Northwest BOCES

CDHE is administering the grant in tandem with the [Colorado Center for Rural Education](#), housed at the University of Northern Colorado. The Center works to serve the needs of rural educators in Colorado by focusing on growing and sustaining the pipeline of rural educators.

The funding boost comes on the heels of [a CDHE report](#) and [action plan](#), which warned of a looming educator shortage crisis across the state. Colorado sees about 5,000 educator openings each year, but the supply has not kept pace with demand: Enrollment in and completion of educator preparation programs have declined by 24 and 17 percent respectively since 2010, and nearly a third of Colorado educators will be eligible for retirement over the next several years. Compounding these trends, Colorado loses approximately 16 percent of new classroom teachers within the first five years of teaching.

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