



Rural Centered

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A Quarterly Newsletter from the Colorado Center
for Rural Education



Reimagining "School" with Transcend

Have you heard of [Transcend](#)? It's an innovative partnership of a nonprofit organization with school, community, and philanthropic partners. Founded in 2015, the 125 staff members of Transcend help schools pull in students, teachers, administrators, local businesses, parents, and other community partners to turn "school" upside down and reimagine what it could and should look like.

With free downloadable resources, hands-on support, one-on-one coaching, and professional development, Transcend has served more than 250 schools, which have served more than 500,000 students. They consider themselves "an R&D engine for innovation in school design." And in Colorado, they've helped reshape the future for the students of [Clear Creek Independent School District](#) (CCISD).



Ninth graders at Clear Creek Middle / High School learned about a range of innovative school models from around the country and shared their thoughts about what they wanted to implement at their school in the future.

Where It All Started

In 2021, the district and Transcend brought together a core team—including students—to think deeply about what was working, what was not working, and what CCISD wanted to be true in their school. “We worked with the community to rethink and redesign the blueprint of their school model,” said Taina Torres, Managing Partner of the Rural Portfolio at Transcend.

“We were in alignment with Transcend’s mission,” said CCISD Superintendent Karen Quanbeck. “Students need and deserve relevant, authentic, engaging learning experiences. And the best way to navigate sustainable transformation is to create in collaboration with the community. Transcend did that! They provided incredibly talented, brilliant coaches who worked with us throughout the process. We felt inspired and challenged in a positive and productive way.”



CCISD teachers test out the expeditionary curriculum.

How It All Changed

For CCISD, that meant leveraging what they deemed “the gift of place.” They formed strong community partnerships—from fewer than five to more than 30—and took advantage of their rich mountain heritage to implement an expeditionary learning curriculum. What does that mean? They go outside the four walls of their schools.

For example, teachers tested the curriculum by going out in the field to find microplastics and brought them back to local community partners to brainstorm how to mitigate the impact on the environment. Students visited a local poet to learn about poetry. As CCISD Superintendent Karen Quanbeck put it, "Learning is more relevant and interesting when it is connected to the place around us."

Need hard evidence? Student behavior incidents and discipline referrals decreased more than 90% in one school year. "And that's just the start," said Quanbeck.

Quanbeck's personal takeaway is the discovery of "the gift of people and the gift of place." When the kids, community leaders, and local business partners get excited about the learning model, "...the school becomes a source of joy and energy for the entire community," said Quanbeck. "We cannot do the important work of education alone, if it's truly to be done well."

"There is so much promise in rural communities," said Torres. "I am constantly inspired by what they envision and how they innovate. We must change the narrative about possibility in rural communities. Yes, people are tired and frustrated with the system. And that's even more of a reason to rethink the whole thing together!"

Upcoming Application Timelines

Colorado Substitute Stipend applications accepted: Ongoing

Rural Inservice Educator Stipend applications accepted: May 1, 2023 through August 31, 2023

Colorado Rural (Student) Teaching Stipend applications for spring 2024 accepted: July 1, 2023 through October 31, 2023

National Board Certified Teacher Stipend applications accepted: January 1, 2024 through April 30, 2024

Visit TEACH Colorado's **Financial Aid and Scholarship Information** page for information about additional scholarships.

Download the **Colorado Department of Education's Educator Recruitment and District Supports flyer** for more information about financial aid available to in-service and aspiring educators, plus recruitment strategies and resources for school districts, BOCES, and charter schools.

Why YOU Should Consider National Board Certification

Ten years ago, the [Colorado Center for Rural Education](#) (CCRE) partnered with the [Colorado Education Association](#) (CEA) and the [National Education Association](#) (NEA) to help rural teachers obtain [National Board Certification](#) (NBC). [State funds](#) administered by CCRE cover the \$2,000 in fees associated with the certification process. Casey Kilpatrick, Director of Learning Services at CEA, also works with rural candidates to help them pay for travel to required trainings.

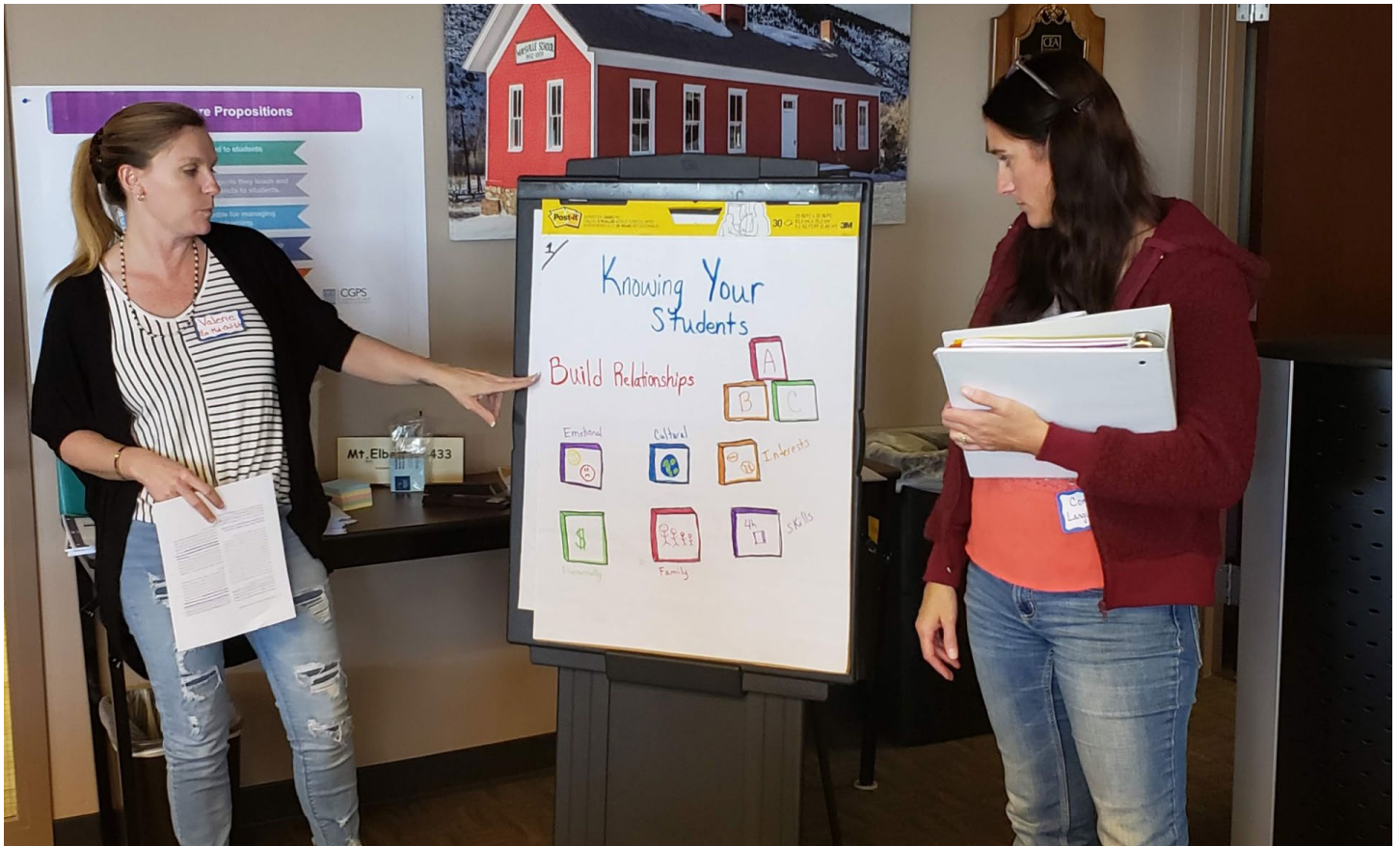


The Colorado Center for Rural Education's National Board Certification cohort members represent rural districts from all over Colorado. Teachers from communities as varied as Sterling and Telluride collaborate to support each other through the rigorous Board certification process.

Why Should Rural Teachers Become Board-Certified?

In short, Board-certified teachers improve the quality of education and student outcomes. In addition, they are more satisfied with the teaching experience. Eighty-five percent (85%) of Board-certified teachers are in the same school three years after completing the program.

According to the NEA, teachers who have gone through the Board certification process say that it is the most valuable and transformative professional development they have ever received. “National Board Certification changed my planning, my analysis of student learning, and the reflection I needed to help all students be successful,” said one Board-certified teacher.



Teachers in the National Board Certification cohorts take the lead in their learning.

What Does the Certification Process Involve?

Teachers created the National Board Standards, which represent a consensus about what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. To become Board-certified, teachers must provide evidence that they deeply understand their students, have content knowledge, use data and assessments, reflect on their teaching practice, and participate in learning 'communities.

The process takes one to five years. In Colorado, four trained facilitators form cohorts of rural teachers and lead them through the rigorous process over a two-year period. They meet virtually once a month, where the facilitators help them build capacity for self-evaluation and reflection.

For example, a teacher might say they've changed their grading system or their method of discourse in order to enact equity in their classroom. “We teach candidates how to write about that experience,” said NBC facilitator Kris Kaplinski. “Then we give them a construct for how to read each other’s work and give feedback.” The candidates tackle two [components](#) of the certification in year one and the other two components in year two.

About the Colorado NBC Facilitators

Kaplinski is based in Aspen, Colorado. The other three facilitators—Karl Remsen, Rachel Graham, and Jeff White—are also based in rural school districts. They all had to become Board-certified themselves before they could consider taking the three-day facilitator training. “It’s been the best thing I’ve done in my 30 years in education,” Kaplinski said, referring to Board certification. “You become a better teacher by filming yourself working with your kids and your content in your classroom. It’s different than any other professional development or getting a master’s degree.”

After taking the facilitator training, they spent a year observing a cohort in action and being mentored by an experienced facilitator. At that point, they each started their own two-year cohort. They’ve been facilitating for six years now.

About being an NBC facilitator, Kaplinski said, “It’s gratifying to work with adults and see teachers push themselves to take their instruction and pedagogy to new levels. They take pride in being more active in their communities and making a bigger difference to their students.”

Featured Partners

Learn more about our featured partners and how they are helping to solve the teacher shortage in rural Colorado. To have your organization added as a featured partner, please email Robert Fulton.

[Our Partners](#)



The [Colorado Center for Rural Education](#) supports educators by providing financial support to pre- and in-service teachers and special services providers. Visit our website for more information about our mission and available stipends.

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