

## Exploring Perceptions Related to Teacher Retention Issues in Rural Western U.S.

**Tuesday 3 August 2021 - Parallel Session 1 - 11.30am to 12.30pm (GMT+1)**

**MURRAY - Preparing Teachers for Rural Schools**

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The rural setting is one that must be better understood because of the broader discussions of changing demographics, growing diversity, the need for economic development, and community engagement. Additional research is needed to understand the interconnection of rural spaces and teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of educational stakeholders in a rural region of the western United States as they relate to retaining teachers in rural school communities that are experiencing shifts in the community due to limited rural opportunity and underdevelopment, aging populations, poverty, out-migration, and shrinking economies. Our study collected data from teachers, administrators, parents, patrons, legislators, students, and other educational stakeholders through a survey instrument (n= 806). We conducted the study from October of 2017 to January of 2018. The methodological approach was a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative inquiry. The mixed-method approach comprised several open-ended questions on the survey, along with the quantitative, closed-ended survey questions. The findings illuminate the critical role leadership plays in retaining teachers, and the significant need for robust mentoring and support programs for new teachers. Our findings also consider the relationship between rural education policies, leadership practices, teacher recruitment and retention, and broader issues related to rural development. In addition to finding ways to better support mentoring, there are several implications for teacher and leadership preparation programs to better support rural placements.