

Sharing Stories between Australian and US Rural Leaders: Lessons from the Pandemic

Tuesday 3 August 2021 - Parallel Session 2 - 12.45pm to 1.45pm (GMT+1)

FRASER - Building Enduring Partnerships

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This “practice focus” presentation showcases an evolving partnership project between Australia and US-based rural education leaders and scholars. Through opportunities to share and exchange ideas, issues and strategies across the two contexts, the partnership strived to better understand the lived experiences of rural school leaders as they navigated the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project sought to provide an international forum for rural school principals in different contexts to tell their stories in addressing school closings and other challenges of the pandemic. Rural school leaders were brought together via zoom from three different contexts across Queensland in Australia, and Kansas and Pennsylvania in the US. Introductions and principal leadership stories were shared as facilitated panel forums. Follow-up interviews of panel members were conducted by the partnership team members to further understand the unique rural contexts and challenges addressed. Partnership team members also interviewed various state officials and other colleagues to elicit examples of state, regional and other support structures provided for the school leaders. Subsequently, the partnership team created a film, released as a YouTube video that tells the story of the rural school leaders, supportive colleagues, and the partnership project. Reinforcing the ISFIRE theme of educating for cultural sustainability and innovation, this presentation will showcase the film and highlight key themes that emerged across the three contexts. Evolving the partnership gave voice to local school leaders and suggests more similarities may exist across diverse international rural locations than between rural and urban contexts.