RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

INVITATION TO PRESENT AT RSA SPRING CONFERENCE: *SEASON TO THRIVE*

April 29-30, 2027 | The Lake House on Canandaigua | Canandaigua, NY

An invitation to share what works

Strong rural schools evolve from the care we provide for our students, our staff, and one another. RSA and WFL BOCES invite proposals that help district leaders turn a focus on care into practical decisions, sustainable services, and new opportunities for their communities.

This spring we will explore the people, partnerships, and systems that help rural schools thrive. We are seeking sessions that connect health and wellness with staffing, budgeting, regional collaboration, and meaningful opportunities for students. We also welcome complementary proposals that focus on student safety, coordinated supports, and strengthen systems focused on prevention.

Who should submit and attend

We encourage rural school districts, BOCES, higher education institutions, health and mental health providers, community organizations, researchers, and other P–12 partners to share their work. Joint proposals that bring school leaders and partners together are encouraged.

Suggested session strands

Proposals may address one or more strands, and related ideas are welcome when they offer clear value for rural schools.

1. Expanding access to health, mental health, and related services

School based health centers; school and community provider partnerships; telehealth; coordinated referral systems; family engagement; and sustainable access to counseling, nursing, and related services. Share how your approach addresses distance, transportation, provider shortages, or continuity of care.

2. Supporting staff wellness and leading through change

Practical approaches to staff well-being, mindfulness, workload, supportive supervision, recruitment, and retention. We welcome strategies for supporting employees through organizational change, new expectations, including changes to systems and working conditions that make wellness sustainable.

3. Sustaining services and budget decisions

Understanding health insurance cost drivers; evaluating benefit and purchasing options; regional consortia; and budgeting for health, mental health, and related services. Share approaches that help leaders weigh costs, access, quality, staffing, and long-term sustainability, with clear explanations of financial assumptions and tradeoffs.

4. Growing capacity through regional collaboration and NY Inspires

Shared staff and services; BOCES partnerships; regional programming; and structures that expand opportunities while maintaining community connection. Proposals may explore regionalization or NY Inspires through practical planning, staff engagement, student supports, resource sharing, and implementation in small districts.

5. Building workforce and apprenticeship pathways

Apprenticeships, grow-your-own programs, and partnerships with higher education, employers, and community providers that strengthen rural workforce pipelines. Topics may include education, early childhood, health care, mental health, and related service professions. Explain partner roles, supports, funding, and the steps districts can take to participate or adapt the model.

We welcome proposals that offer:

- Practical strategies and tools
- Real-world examples and case studies
- Research-based insights
- Collaborative or interactive session formats
- Stories of resilience, creativity, and leadership that reflect rural experiences

Presentation proposals should be limited to 500 words or less and must be submitted electronically **by midnight December 11, 2026 by visiting https://rsany.org/2027-spring-proposal**. Please feel free to share this link with others who you feel may be interested in participating.

The selected sessions will be scheduled for either April 29 or 30 in Canandaigua, NY at the Lakehouse on Canandaigua. Sessions are an hour in length, please plan for approximately 45 minutes of presentation time and 15 minutes for Q&A.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Rural Schools Association. The selected presenters will be notified by January 8th and will have until January 15th to confirm their presentation. Presenters will be asked to pay the registration fee appropriate to their conference participation.

If you are a vendor interested in presenting with a district, please contact Scott Bischoping at sbischoping@rsany.org.

Thank you very much for your continued support of the Rural Schools Association. If you have any questions concerning the proposal process, please contact Andrea Durmiaki at adurmiaki@rsany.org.