§ 1204. New York state center for rural schools established. 1. Subject to the availability of funds appropriated, allocated or otherwise supplied from any other public or private source, the New York state center for rural schools is hereby established in order to provide a state-level focus and forum for conducting and disseminating specific research and for developing policy recommendations targeted toward the improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of educational services delivery and opportunities in rural New York. Such center shall be established within the college of agriculture and life sciences at Cornell University, and function cooperatively with the rural education advisory committee established pursuant to the provisions of this article.

2. The center, in cooperation with the committee, shall:

(a) Promote awareness of special educational needs and conditions in rural areas;

(b) Promote assessment and analysis of such factors and variables impacting the quality of rural education as:

(i) Existing statutory and regulatory measures;

(ii) Current levels of federal, state and local support, in relation to the financial capacity of school districts to maintain required educational services;

(iii) Academic and occupational-training opportunities and program offerings, including those which may serve the physically challenged;

(iv) Access to state of the art technology in instruction, including telecommunications equipment and microcomputers;

(v) Academic and occupational training performance testing and standards;

(vi) Staffing, including salary levels, recruitment and retention incentives, and advanced training prospects;

(vii) Career guidance, counseling and placement services;

(viii) Capacity of school districts to engage in strategic and long-range planning;

(ix) Physical condition of existing facilities, inventories and infrastructure;

(x) Transportation, including services rendered pursuant to chapter five hundred ninety-eight of the laws of nineteen hundred eighty-nine;

chapter eight hundred ninety-five of the laws of nineteen hundred eighty-six as amended;

(xi) Geographic sparsity and isolation, particularly in terms of travel distances for pupils and access to community resources;

(xii) Availability and integration of community support services; and

(xiii) Alternatives to reorganization for necessarily small school districts;

(c) Maintain an informational repository/clearinghouse of data and research results including innovative and cost-effective approaches in rural education, and disseminate research findings, information, materials and best practices;

(d) Encourage cost-effective, integrated services that address special needs and conditions in rural areas through joint efforts among private and public institutions and agencies, including but not limited to colleges, community action agencies, social services agencies, health agencies, employment and training agencies;

(e) Promote training and technical assistance for rural school district officials and employees in the use of cost-effective instructional and administrative practices;

(f) Foster demonstration projects and development of alternative models to enhance the delivery of academic and occupational-training services and programs specific to rural areas;

(g) Identify opportunities to advance equity in access and quality of educational and job skills training for residents of rural areas, including such special target or "at risk" populations as:

(1) illiterate adults,

(2) single mothers,

(3) individuals in poverty,

(4) substance abusers, and

(5) youthful offenders;

(h) Have the authority to accept and receive any grants, awards or other funds or appropriations as may be made available to the center and committee to effect the purposes of this article.