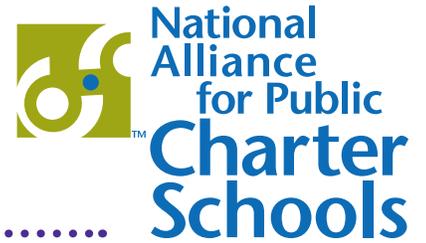


Kids Dream Big in Small Towns Too



The **Rural Community Academy** in Graysville, Indiana, opened in 2004 after the local district school was slated to be closed. But it wasn't just the school that was closing. The town—like so many towns in rural America—was losing its vitality. Today, Rural Community Academy breathes life into a building that first opened to students in 1927. About 140 students attend class and the community has been reinvigorated. "Because this school is here we've kept our post office [and] three new businesses have come along," says School Leader and COO Susie Pierce. Of course, a school's first mission is to serve students well, and Rural Community Academy is hitting it out of the park. The school is the only one in the county to receive an A from the Indiana Department of Education for four of the past five years. More than 90 percent of fourth graders passed math, science, and language arts exams—exceeding state averages and giving students a strong foundation for continued excellence. Children at Rural Community Academy are thriving—evidence that strong schools and strong communities go hand-in-hand.

The **Pataula Charter Academy** combines Expeditionary Learning, which takes students outside the classroom to do field work relevant to their studies, and a "looping" model that keeps one teacher with the same class of students for two years. The results speak for themselves: In every subject tested, Pataula students—two-thirds of whom come from low-income families—score above statewide averages on Georgia's achievement test. Pataula Charter Academy is demonstrating how rural students benefit when parents and community leaders ensure that children have a choice in where they go to school.

Located 8,000 miles above sea level and four hours south of Denver, in Colorado's second-poorest county, **Crestone Charter School** is the shining star of its community. Crestone students have met or exceeded state goals for academic achievement, academic growth, and college and workforce readiness for the past three years, and the school received the John Irwin Award for Academic Excellence, which recognizes the top 8 percent of Colorado schools. A Crestone education gives students the opportunity to engage the world – whether taking to the wilderness at their doorstep to study rivers, plants, and animals, or exploring ecology and culture on field trips to Costa Rica and Northern India. By combining a deep appreciation for their natural environment and a focus on rigorous academics, Crestone Charter School reflects community values while helping students discover and reach their potential.



Students who enter **KIPP Delta Collegiate High School** in rural Helena, Arkansas, understand the big goal: they're expected to go to college. Over the past four years, 98 percent of KIPP Delta graduates have been accepted to four-year universities, receiving more than \$3.5 million in scholarship offers. KIPP Delta has been recognized as the fourth-best high school in the state by *U.S. News & World Report* and as one of five exemplary schools by the Arkansas Department of Education. "We have students who came to our school in fifth grade unable to read, and are now off in college pursuing their passions and dreams," says School Director Todd Dixon. Results don't come easy. Students at KIPP Delta—87 percent of whom come from low-income families—arrive early and stay late. College is always top of mind, with time allotted for college visits and SAT and ACT preparation. With hard work, dedicated teachers, and high expectations, KIPP Delta students are proving that success can take root in every community.



It's all hands on deck at **Upper Carmen Charter School** in rural Carmen, Idaho. The school's teachers also serve lunch and the school's founder and principal, Sue Smith, is also a teacher. The extra work is no burden to the staff at Upper Carmen, who are proud to be a part of the community's first school since the 1950s. Upper Carmen serves about 90 students in grades K through 8, and the school is small by choice; 40 more children are on a waiting list to attend. Since the school opened in 2005, students have traveled upwards of 30 miles each way to attend class, and for good reason: Upper Carmen Charter School ranks among the top 10 percent of Idaho's schools, earning five out of five stars from the Idaho Department of Education. The school credits individualized instruction for its success. Each student receives ample personal attention and has access to a variety of computer-based learning programs to help them catch up or leap ahead. The education they receive at Upper Carmen Charter School ensures that these small-town students have bright futures.



The small town of Walton, Kansas, is built on agriculture—and so is its school. The **Walton Rural Life Center**, which reconstituted itself as a public charter school in 2007, produces outstanding results with an innovative curriculum that combines in-class instruction and hands-on farm work. Students have met the state's standard of excellence in all grades in reading, math, and science since the charter school was formed, and 100 percent of fourth-graders have rated proficient or above in reading

for the past three years. But it's the work on the farm that generates the most excitement for students. Students raise animals and cultivate vegetables, learning about math and science by seeing the farm in action. And they discover how farms become successful businesses by selling eggs and produce to the local community (the proceeds fund school or farm supplies, and field trips). By educating the next generation of students and demonstrating how agriculture can be fun and fulfilling, the Walton Rural Life Center is laying the foundation for their children's—and their community's—long-term success.

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