

## The Kentucky Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) Program

**Background:** When low-income or minority students earn test scores that are lower than the test scores of other students, this is called an “achievement gap.” In 2002, Kentucky passed a new law (KRS.158.649) which requires schools to identify and deal with persistent gaps in student achievement. Recently, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) asked the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) to help develop systems that would enable schools and districts to lower achievement gaps. For example, the ARCC agreed to help the Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) program find ways to encourage rural school districts to adopt innovative practices that improve instruction and student achievement.

**The Challenge:** To increase the use of research-based innovative practices by districts in Kentucky’s RLIS program.

**What We Did:** Staff at the ARCC helped the state by:

- Managing annual surveys that ask RLIS district coordinators about effective strategies they use
- Conducting a literature review of research-based strategies for dealing with achievement gaps
- Preparing a report about innovative practices that combines the literature review with the results of the surveys

**What Happened:**

- KDE staff understand how RLIS grantees use their funds.
- KDE staff can use the report about innovative practices to encourage RLIS district coordinators to integrate new strategies into their annual grant applications.
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of district coordinators who responded to the survey are more satisfied with KDE and ARCC support than they were a year ago.
- More than a third of district coordinators who completed the survey responded positively about the information received, especially information about ways to improve student growth and achievement.