



Folk School Alliance 2017 Survey of Interest Summary Report

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Schools for Life, also called Folk High Schools, were first conceptualized in 1831 by N.F.S Grundtvig, a Danish pastor, theologian, poet, and lyricist. Through the Schools for Life, Grundtvig sought to change the social and educational landscape of Denmark and promote resistance to the hegemonic forces of the time, which he felt would eventually lead to a decline in Danish society through a weakening in human fellowship (Broadbridge, Warren, & Jonas, 2011). The Schools for Life concept has spread across the globe and in North America it takes many forms. One such form that has enjoyed a small presence is the Folk School. According to the Folk Education Association of America (FEAA) there have been three waves of folk school founding, the mid 1920s to early 1930s, the late 1970s to early 1980s (Spicer, 1991, Fall), and once again beginning in the late 2000s and continuing today (*Lifted by the heart*, 2009).

The Folk Education Association of America (FEAA), established in 1976, during the second wave of folk school founding in the United States, was founded with the mission of advocating and organizing around the Scandinavian concept of the folk school. The FEAA continues its work today and in 2014 created a new project, the Folk School Alliance (FSA). This project seeks to “revitalize the connections between schools,” supporting this new wave of folk school founding through to sustainability thereby contributing to the health and well-being of communities across North America (History-FEAA, 2018)

SECTION 2: SURVEY OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the results of the Folk Education Association of America’s 2017 Folk School Alliance (FSA) Survey of Interest. This report is intended as an initial analysis of school priorities and needs, service categories, and willingness to participate in ongoing activities of the Folk School Alliance. The Folk Education Association of America (FEAA) analyzed the results of the survey and used them to formulate an action plan for Folk School Alliance 2018 programming. The Folk School Alliance programming aims to increase engagement between the FEAA and individual schools as well as engagement between schools, with an overall goal to “Build a cohesive and collaborative network of Folk Schools which will support new school development and sustainability of existing schools” (Murphy et al., 2016).

The last FEAA survey of folk schools was completed in 2014. The 2014 survey was the first survey conducted with the intention of creating a Folk School Alliance, and resulted in an online directory of schools, which has been updated on an on-going basis, and an initial attempt at a closed social media group for schools. In 2016, the FEAA began development of their work plan, fondly referred to as the “Play Plan” as the FEAA is entirely staffed by volunteer board members. The FEAA plans to revise and update their “Play Plan” on a biennial basis, conducting a School Survey on the odd years as a means of monitoring progress towards the achievement of goals and updating those goals, should the schools identify new opportunities.

SECTION 3: HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The survey was administered by the FEAA Board Secretary, Dawn J Murphy from May 29, 2017 until November 3, 2017. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent by email through the Folk Education Association of America's Mailchimp account to all folk schools listed on the online directory (www.folkschoolalliance.org) as of May 28, 2017 (42 schools). On June 4, 2017, the FEAA distributed their Spring 2017 Folk School Alliance eNewsletter. At the time of the mailing, this newsletter had a subscriber list of 148 recipients. The subscribers include folk school representatives, however the FEAA does not limit subscription to the newsletter and therefore it is open to the public. The eNewsletter included a link to the survey in the header section of the newsletter with a request for schools to participate. An additional Mailchimp email invitation to participate was sent June 8, 2017 to schools on the online directory (45 schools).

The Mailchimp email invitations and eNewsletter link resulted in seven completed responses to the survey. Beginning on July 1, 2017, the Board Secretary, began contacting individual schools via phone and direct email from the FolkEdu@gmail.com email address. This type of outreach continued throughout the summer months and was directed to FSA listed schools and any new schools found. As of September 22, 2017, there were 17 survey responses collected. One school had two respondents and therefore 16 schools were represented in the data. Preliminary [results](#) of the survey, based on the 17 respondents, were shared in the Fall 2017 FSA eNewsletter on October 10, 2017. Two additional schools were contacted by other FEAA board members over the course of the next month for a total of 19 respondents representing 18 schools (one school having two different respondents). The survey closed following the last respondent's entry on November 3, 2017.

SECTION 4: SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

All Folk School Alliance schools as of November 3, 2017 were invited to participate in the survey, a total of fifty-one schools. Two of the identified schools call Canadian provinces home, while the other forty-nine schools are located in twenty-two U.S. states.

Although the survey link was shared via a public newsletter list, which contained individuals not directly associated with folk schools, a review of survey respondents showed all respondents had direct leadership association with a folk school.

Of the 51 schools who were invited to participate in the survey, 18 responded for an overall response rate of 35.3%.

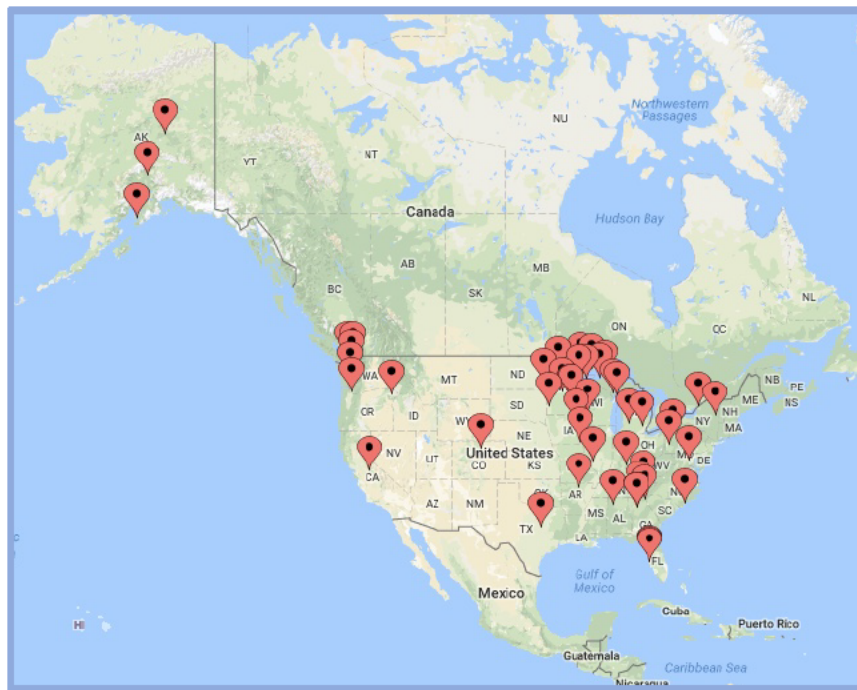


Figure 1: North American School Map

Location

Folk School Alliance school location categories are based on the U.S. Census Regions Maps (Census Divisions and Census Regions, 2015) and schools are categorized according to their state. The largest percentage of respondents came from the Midwest (see Table 1). This result is not surprising as this region is also home to the largest number of FSA schools overall.

Table 1: School Regions

Census Regions (US Census Bureau, 2015)	N	Respondent (%)	FSA Schools (%)
Northeast	4	11%	8%
New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont)	0	0%	0%
Mid-Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania)	4	2%	8%
Midwest	21	44%	41%
East North Central (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin)	9	22%	16%
West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota)	12	22%	24%
South	14	11%	27%
South Atlantic (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia)	9	11%	16%
East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee)	3	0%	6%
West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas)	2	0%	4%
West	10	22%	20%
Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming)	1	0%	2%
Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington)	9	22%	18%
Canada	2	11%	4%

Community Classification

As an initial attempt to understand trends associated with folk school locations. Data associated with community population density was gathered and tabulated. The classification used for this analysis was the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of rurality. "Counties with less than 50 percent of the population living in rural areas are classified as mostly urban; 50 to 99.9 percent are classified as mostly rural; 100 percent rural are classified as completely rural." (County Classification Lookup Table, 2016).

It may be surprising to some who associate folk schools with rural skills sets, but according to the system of classification used for this analysis 51% of FSA schools are located within Mostly Urban counties.

The current formula of rurality classification was developed and utilized for the 2010 U.S. census. Much criticism of this classification method exists because of its simplistic approach and as a result, alternative methods have been developed and are available, however these methods are much more complex and therefore require higher levels of analysis. Examples of

alternatives can be found through the Economic Research Service (ERS) County Typology Codes developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which classify locations through a matrix of characteristics including but not limited to metro, non-metro, small town, agriculture dependent, mining dependent, and other measurements. Another example is the Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) Codes which are based on Census tract commuting flows, 2006-2010. Both of these methods applied to the folk school locations may provide illumination to trends now hidden from view.

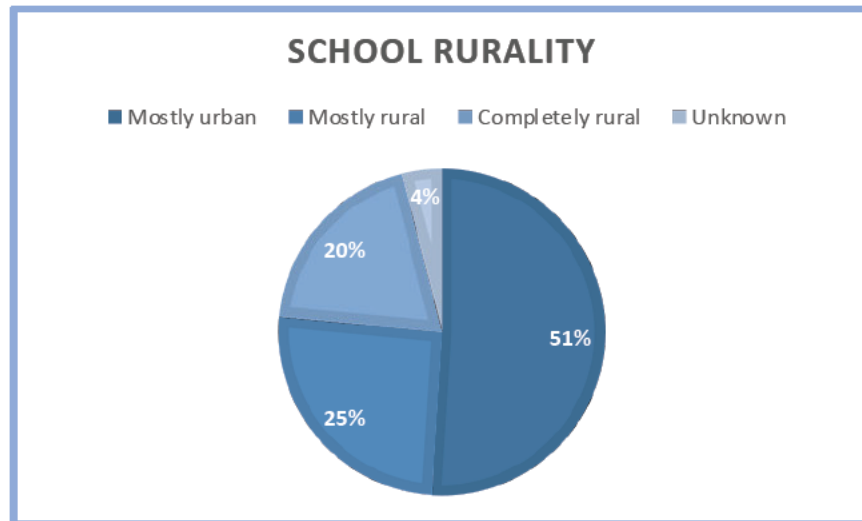


Figure 2: School Rurality

Table 2: School County Type

Type of County	N	Respondent (%)	FSA Schools (%)
Mostly urban	26	56%	51%
Mostly rural	13	22%	25%
Completely rural	10	11%	20%
Unknown*	2	11%	4%
Total	51		

*Schools in Canada

School Ages

In the figure and chart below, we find evidence of what the FEAA deems a ‘new wave’ of folk school founding. Of the fifty-one schools listed through the Folk School Alliance at the time of the survey, 39% had founding dates within four years or less and a total of 62% within the last ten years. Though this seems a strong indication of the resurgence of folk school founding, it can be questioned. Data regarding founding trends has not been consistently tracked, therefore only those schools that have persisted are present in the data. The possibility exists that schools founded previously simply did not survive long enough for them to be documented.

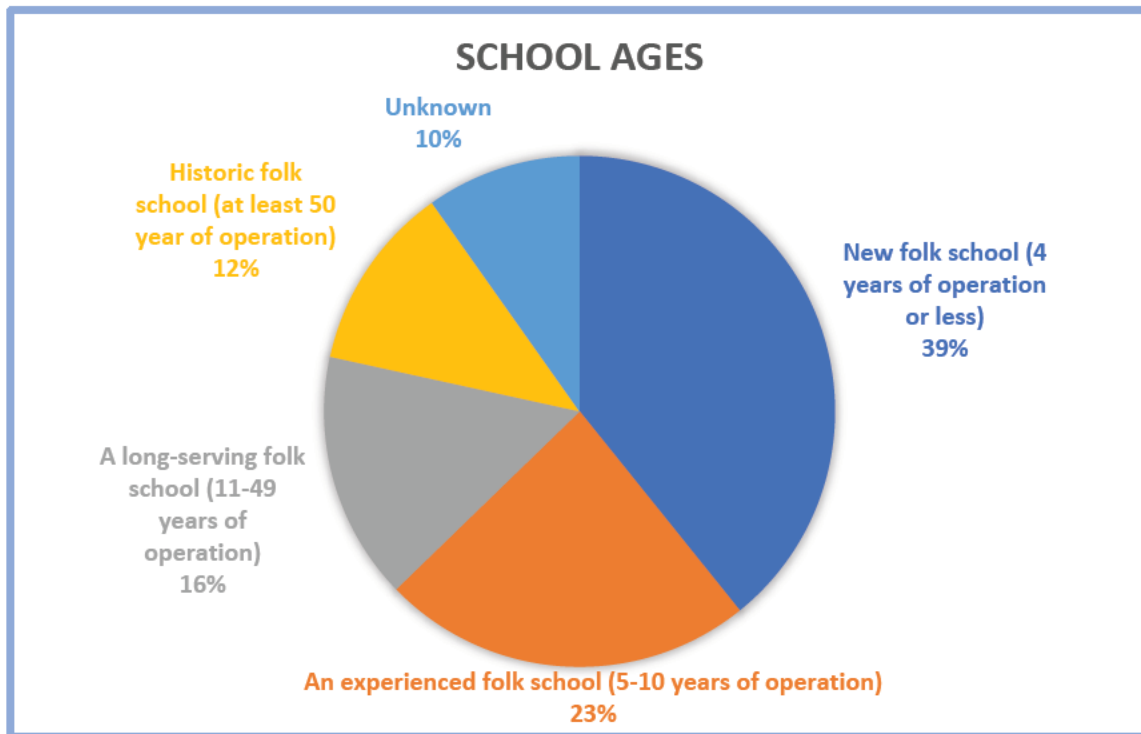


Figure 3: School Ages

Table 3: School Age

Age of School	N	Respondent (%)	FSA Schools (%)
New folk school (4 years of operation or less)	20	50%	39%
An experienced folk school (5-10 years of operation)	12	28%	23%
A long-serving folk school (11-49 years of operation)	8	6%	16%
Historic folk school (at least 50 year of operation)	6	11%	12%
Unknown	5	5%	10%
Total	51		

Based on founding dates reported on school / organization websites

Rurality and Age

The combination of rurality classification and age reveals the trend of new folk school founding occurring predominately within mostly urban counties in the United States.

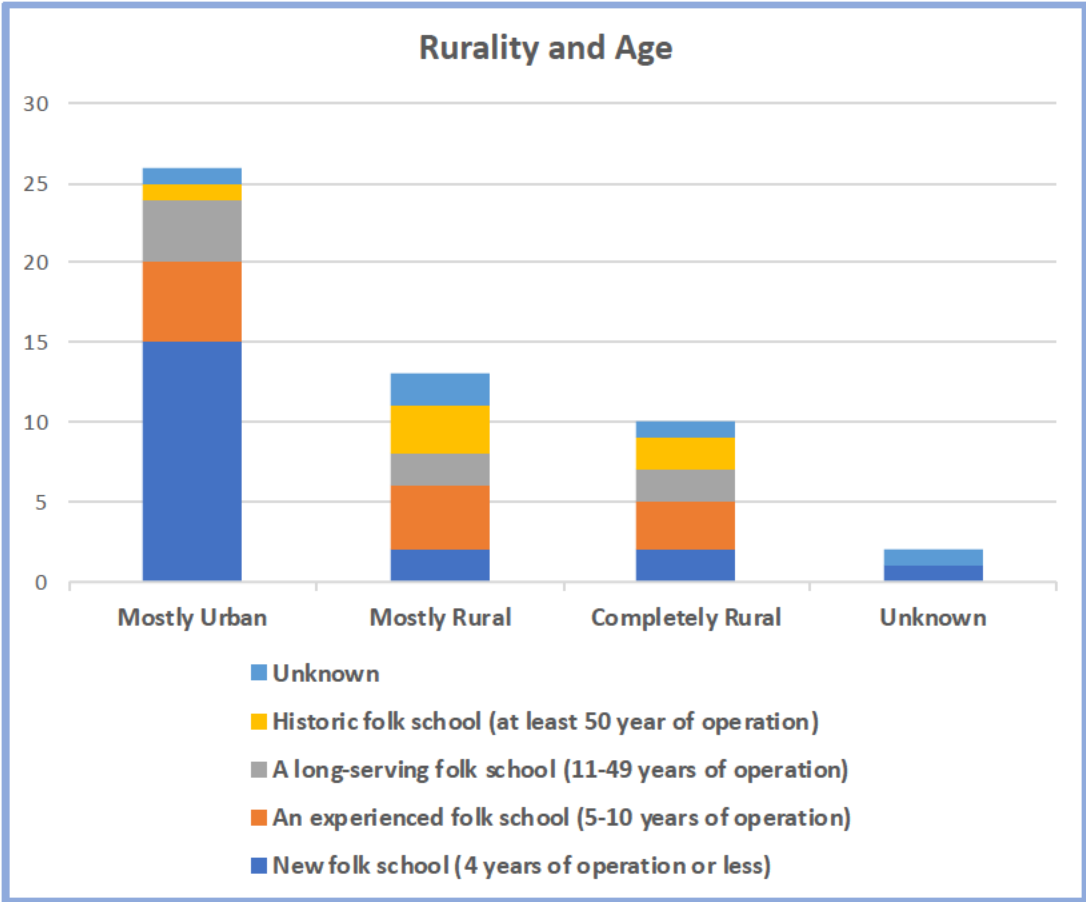


Figure 4: Rurality and Age

SECTION 5: THE SURVEY FINDINGS

The results of the survey enabled the Folk School Alliance to assess school priorities and needs, school service categories, and the willingness and ways schools are likely to participate in activities of the Folk School Alliance.

School Priorities and Needs

If school age and a Life Cycle approach to understanding School Priorities and Needs are taken into consideration, the results of the survey were predictable. The majority, 39% of the schools surveyed are within their first 4 years of operation. From an organizational development perspective, these schools may fall into the first two stages of organizational development defined by Lester, Parnell, and Carraher, that of Existence and Survival (2003). Therefore, many of the replies to the survey’s open-ended question, “What topics or discussion do you think would be most beneficial for the Folk School Alliance to address?” could be classified into two categories, Revenue Generation and Management. Only one respondent indicated a desire to discuss “school founding principles and motivations for various folk schools and how organizations stay true to those principles as they grow.” This particular respondent represented a historic school (50 years of age or more).

Revenue Generation

- Publicity, Outreach, and Marketing
- Social Media Use
- Sources of funding
- Relevancy
- Sustainable commerce
- Fee structures

Management

- Budget and expense management
- General non-profit support
- Insurance coverage
- Regional collaborations and partnerships
- Instructor agreements

Table 4: School Service Categories

Focus or foci of the school / organization	Number of Responses	(% of total Responses)
Traditional Skills	15	83%
Lifelong Learning	14	78%
Arts and Crafts	13	72%
Nature, environment, or ecology	12	67%
Personal Development	12	67%
Community Development	10	56%
Music	9	50%
Regional cultural and/or historic preservation	9	50%
Economic Development Including Micro-prenuership	5	28%
Dance	3	17%
Community Organizing	2	11%
Grundtvigian	1	6%
Religious or Spiritual	1	6%
Other: Canoe building, writing, social justice, peace building, cleaning skills, community participation, and cooperative process	2	11%

Table 5: Willingness and Types of Alliance Participation

Methods of Participation	Number of Responses	(% of total Responses)
Attending online (Zoom) folk school / education related presentations	17	85%
Participating in an online forum for questions and answers such as through a private Facebook group	16	80%
Sharing your story with other folk schools (the good, the bad, the ugly on your way to success)	14	70%
As a featured school in the FSA eNewsletter	13	65%
Contributing short written articles and photographs for the FSA eNewsletter or FEAA website	13	65%
Being mentored by an experienced or long-term folk school through telephone or online meeting formats (Zoom, email, etc.)	13	65%
Attending Regional face-to-face gatherings of the Folk School Alliance	11	55%
Attending national conferences related to Folk Education / Popular Education	9	45%
Mentoring a new US folk school leader through telephone or online meeting formats (Zoom, email, etc.)	6	30%
Facilitating an online meeting (Zoom) or discussion	3	15%
Becoming a member of the FEAA board and meeting monthly to plan and implement support strategies for US folk schools	3	15%
Creating a resource guide for folk school funding	1	5%
Focus on what works and share through dialogue	1	5%
Other: Sorry we're spread too thin to participate	1	5%

SECTION 6: OUTCOMES

The Folk School Alliance's overarching goal is to build a cohesive and collaborative network of Folk Schools, which will support new school development and the sustainability of existing schools. We believe that in order to do this the FSA must create ways for the schools to engage with each other.

2018 Programming

As a result of survey analysis and an assessment of resources available to the FSA, the FSA chose to focus efforts on the three mechanisms to support their goals (1) Moderating a private Facebook Q&A forum; (2) Facilitation of online (Zoom) folk school/education related presentations or sharing meetings; and (3) Continued efforts to solicit and publish written articles and photographs in the FSA Newsletter or FEAA website.

1. A Folk School Alliance Closed Group was created on Facebook and launched in February 2018. Currently, the FEAA Board Secretary, Dawn Jackman Murphy, is moderating the group. As of the writing of this report there are forty-four individual members in this group, representing approximately twenty-nine schools. Over the remaining months of the 2018 programming year, the FSA plans to continue expanding the reach of this group and to recruit additional moderators for this social media group.

2. In March of 2018 the FSA began offering a schedule of online facilitated discussions on topics requested through the survey and/or requested in the closed social media group. The first meeting topics included a funding opportunity, supporting instructors' pedagogical growth, and a brief discussion of residential housing options at schools. Additional topics for future meetings may include an overview of Folk Education principles, marketing and publicity, fiscal management, funding and fee structures, and general non-profit support. The FSA will do its best to facilitate discussions on these topics or to find presenters with the expertise to help.
3. The FSA Newsletter is published quarterly and the Folk Education Association of America's website currently posts the most comprehensive listing of North American based folk schools. Board members of the FEAA produce the newsletter and maintain the website. School leaders and representatives who wish to contribute to the newsletter should contact the FEAA board through the following email address FEAA@folkschoolalliance.org.

Social Transformation Project

In July 2017, during the implementation of the FSA Survey of Interest, a request for proposals inviting applications for the 2017-18 Social Transformation Project (STP) grants was announced to Fielding Graduate University (FGU) Students and Alumni. Dawn Jackman Murphy, a current student at FGU and FEAA Board Secretary, contacted Vicky Eiben EdD, an alumna of FGU and former FEAA Board Member, and Chris Spicer, an alumnus of FGU and current FEAA Board Treasurer to submit a grant proposal. David Willis PhD, an FGU faculty member, sponsored the grant proposal, which was submitted in September 2017 and requested \$8,000 for activities in support of what is now called "The Folk School Alliance Community of Practice: Creating Spaces for Social Transformation" project. On October 15, 2017 the proposal team received notice of the grant awarded. Primarily, this grant award supports the addition of two regional face to face meetings of the Folk School Alliance Community of Practice to the 2018 programming proposed following the analysis of this survey. These meetings are currently in the planning stages and are scheduled for fall 2018. See Appendix B for the STP proposal submission.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY TEXT

Folk School Alliance - Survey 2017

In 2014, the Folk Education Association of America (FEAA) launched the Folk School Alliance with the primary purpose of building a national network of folk schools to engage new, experienced, and long-serving schools across the USA in mutually beneficial communication and collaboration. These efforts continue and we request your help in determining how the FEAA can best serve your needs.

Please complete the brief survey below.

* Required

Name of school/organization *

Who do you represent? *

Mark only one oval ([These categories of age were not used in the analysis above](#)).

- A new folk school (founded within the last 2 years)
- An experienced folk school (2-10 years of operation)
- A long-serving folk school (10+ years of operation)
- Other:

Tell us how your school would like to participate in the FSA. Check all that apply.
Check all that apply.

- as a featured school in the FSA Newsletter
- contributing short written articles and photographs for the FSA Newsletter or FEAA website
- attending online (Zoom) folk school/education related presentations
- facilitating an online meeting (Zoom) or discussion
- sharing your story with other folk schools (the good, the bad, the ugly on your way to success)
- participating in an online forum for questions and answers such as through a private Facebook group
- attending regional face-to-face gatherings of the Folk School Alliance
- attending national conferences related to Folk Education/Popular Education
- mentoring a new US folk school leader through telephone or online meeting formats (Zoom, email, etc.)
- being mentored by an experienced or long-term folk school through telephone or online meeting formats (Zoom, email, etc.)
- becoming a member of the FEAA board and meeting monthly to plan and implement support strategies for US folk schools
- Other:

What topics or discussion do you think would be most beneficial for the Folk School Alliance to address?

Please list any other schools/organizations who you think should be included in our survey.

Listing on the Folk School Alliance website?

If you would like your folk school/organization added to the FSA online network list or if your listing needs to be updated, please fill out the information below.

60-100 word description of your school/organization for the FSA online network listing.

City

State

Website Link

What is the focus/foci of your school/organization? (check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Traditional Skills
- Arts and Crafts
- Music
- Dance
- Nature, environment, or ecology
- Regional cultural and/or historic preservation
- Lifelong Learning
- Personal Development
- Economic Development including Micro-prenuership
- Community Development
- Community Organizing
- Grundtvigian
- Religious or Spiritual
- Other:

Contact Email (will not be posted...for FEAA contact purposes only)
Contact Phone Number (will not be posted...for FEAA contact purposes only)
Contact Person (will not be posted...for FEAA contact purposes only)
Comments, questions, suggestions?

APPENDIX B: STP APPLICATION

Fielding Graduate University Social Transformation Project Application Form Please submit completed forms to research@fielding.edu .		
Section I		
Name: David Blake Willis		
Address: [REDACTED]		
City: Sacramento	State: [REDACTED]	Zip Code: [REDACTED]
Email Address: [REDACTED]		
School/Program Name: School of Leadership Studies / HD & ODC		
Percentage of Time of Faculty Appointment:		
Phone Contact: [REDACTED]		
Names, Schools and Email Addresses of Other Faculty Participants (If Any):		
Name	School	Email Address
Student Participants (If Any):		
Name	School	
Dawn Jackman Murphy	School for Leadership Studies/ HD; Marie Fielder Fellow – US Folk School Project; Current FEAA Board Member	
Alumni Participants (If Any):		
Name	School	
Vicky L. Eiben	Leadership for Change, EdD 2008; Founding Board Member, Driftless Folk School; Former FEAA Board Member	
Chris Spicer	Integral Studies Certificate Program; Current FEAA Board Member	

Section II**Other Sources of Funding by Source, and Amount (If Any):**

- \$1,800 - Cash: Folk School Alliance Participation Fees estimated to be \$36 per participant for a total of \$1,800 (estimate of 50 participants) See this link for a North American map of the Alliance Schools https://www.mapcustomizer.com/map/Folk_School_Alliance
- \$1,000 - In-Kind: South Puget Sound Community College conference meeting space and theater facility estimated at \$1,000 for a three-day conference and one three-hour use of the theater space

Publication and Dissemination Plans (List)

Highlander Research and Education Center <http://highlandercenter.org/>

Fielding Highlander Intensive Presentation (intensive tentatively planned for fall 2018)

American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) www.aaace.org

Adult Education Quarterly <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/aeq>

AAACE's Special Interest Groups Quarterly Newsletter

Popular Education Special Interest Group (Dawn Murphy is a member of the leadership team for this Special Interest Group)

Group Newsletter

Group Forum Postings

Group Sponsored Folk Education and Popular Education Webinar

Community, Minority and Nonformal Education Special Interest Group

Group Newsletter

Group Forum Postings

Journal for Transformative Education <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jtd>

New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Journal

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-ACE.html>

Folk Education Association of America (FEAA) website www.peopleseducation.org

Folk School Alliance, a project of the FEAA

Facebook Private Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FolkSchoolAlliance/>

Folk School Alliance Quarterly Newsletter

Section IV**Date of Submission: September 15, 2017****Project Title:**

The Folk School Alliance Community of Practice: Creating Spaces for Social Transformation

Description:

The Folk School Alliance (FSA), a project of the Folk Education Association of America (FEAA) launched in 2014, has been working to support the US Folk School community of practice by providing resources regarding the history and transformational impact of Grundtvigian inspired folk schools such as John C. Campbell Folk School, Highlander Folk School, and the Clearing Folk School. Under the guidance of the FEAA board of directors, the FSA developed and maintains a national listing of US and Canadian based folk schools (www.peopleseducation.org) and has issued a biannual and now quarterly newsletter addressing the emergence of new schools, history of folk education, and current happenings within the folk school community. In 2016, Dawn Murphy, a Fielding Human Development PhD student, initiated an unfunded Marie Fielder Center Project with the FSA that focused on the building of organizational capacity within the FEAA and FSA including strategic planning, communication materials and plans, structured membership process, and much more. Over this first year of the Marie Fielder Center Project, momentum has been building towards direct connection between schools with the aim of facilitated discussion and Study Circle-like face to face events. Based on a school survey conducted in May/June of this year, the FEAA and FSA members believe enhancing direct communication between schools is the next step to strengthening the folk school community of practice and encouraging collaboration on a regional and national level between the historic schools, long serving schools, and the new schools. The new schools will move toward full participation in the community, and long serving and historic schools will share their mastery in community transformation through Folk Education.

The Creating Spaces for Social Transformation project seeks to support the objectives of the Folk School Alliance by planning and facilitating ongoing asynchronous discussions through a private Facebook group, four to six synchronous online community of practice Study Circles, and two regionally hosted and facilitated face to face meetings of the FSA Community of Practice. Based on the interests indicated in the school survey, topics such as school sustainability, Folk School Roots: Grundtvigian Folk Education Philosophy, US Folk School History and Impact, Non-profit management, Popular Education, and leveraging community and/or municipal partnerships will be addressed.

Outcomes:

- Increased collaboration at national and regional levels within the US Folk School Alliance membership
- Greater connection for new US Folk Schools to the traditions of Grundtvigian Folk Education Philosophy and community development/empowerment through Popular Education
- An ongoing mediated asynchronous discussion group of the Folk School Alliance
- Four to six synchronous online national study circle meetings of the Folk School Alliance Membership (topics to be determined by survey of the membership)
- Two regionally facilitated face to face meetings of the Folk School Alliance membership (Upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest)
- Video, audio, and print media resulting from asynchronous discussions and synchronous online and face to face meetings of the Folk School Alliance
- Publications identifying and analyzing the trends of Folk Education in the US, with a focus on those trends impacting social transformation within the communities where folk schools are located and the potential for broader social transformation efforts through the Folk School Alliance

Faculty Sponsor and Relevant Expertise:

David Blake Willis, the faculty sponsor for this project, has a deep interest in social justice and transformative education. Undoubtedly, folk schools have a history and an ongoing potential for cultivating these two elements within the adult learners and communities in which they are built.

Student Learning Opportunities:

- Cross disciplinary collaborations between the faculty sponsor, current student, and alumni (Human Development, Educational Leadership for Change, and Integral Studies)
- Convening of regional and national community folk school leaders
- Documenting and publishing materials, narratives and analysis community of practice trends

Community Partners:

- Folk Education Association of America Board of Directors – Carol Voigt, Mary Catani, Marilyn Jackson, and Jennifer Ramsey
- Folk School Alliance Membership (49 schools)
- Arbutus Folk School Founder – Stacey Waterman-Hoey
- Portland Folk School Founder – Amanda Kanter
- Bellingham Folk School Founder - Cayley Schmid
- South Puget Sound Community College (meeting venue)
- Driftless Folk School Director – Greg Wright
- Driftless Folk School Founding Board Member - Jacob Hundt
- North House Folk School Founder - Mark Hansen
- Danebod Folk School (meeting venue)

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