DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 168 750 RC 011 133

AUTHOR Sher, Jonathan P.
TITLE Revitalizing Rural Education: A Legislator's Handbook.
INSTITUTION National Conference of State Legislatures, Washington, D.C.; National Rural Center, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Sep 78
NOTE 48p.; Parts may be marginally legible due to small print

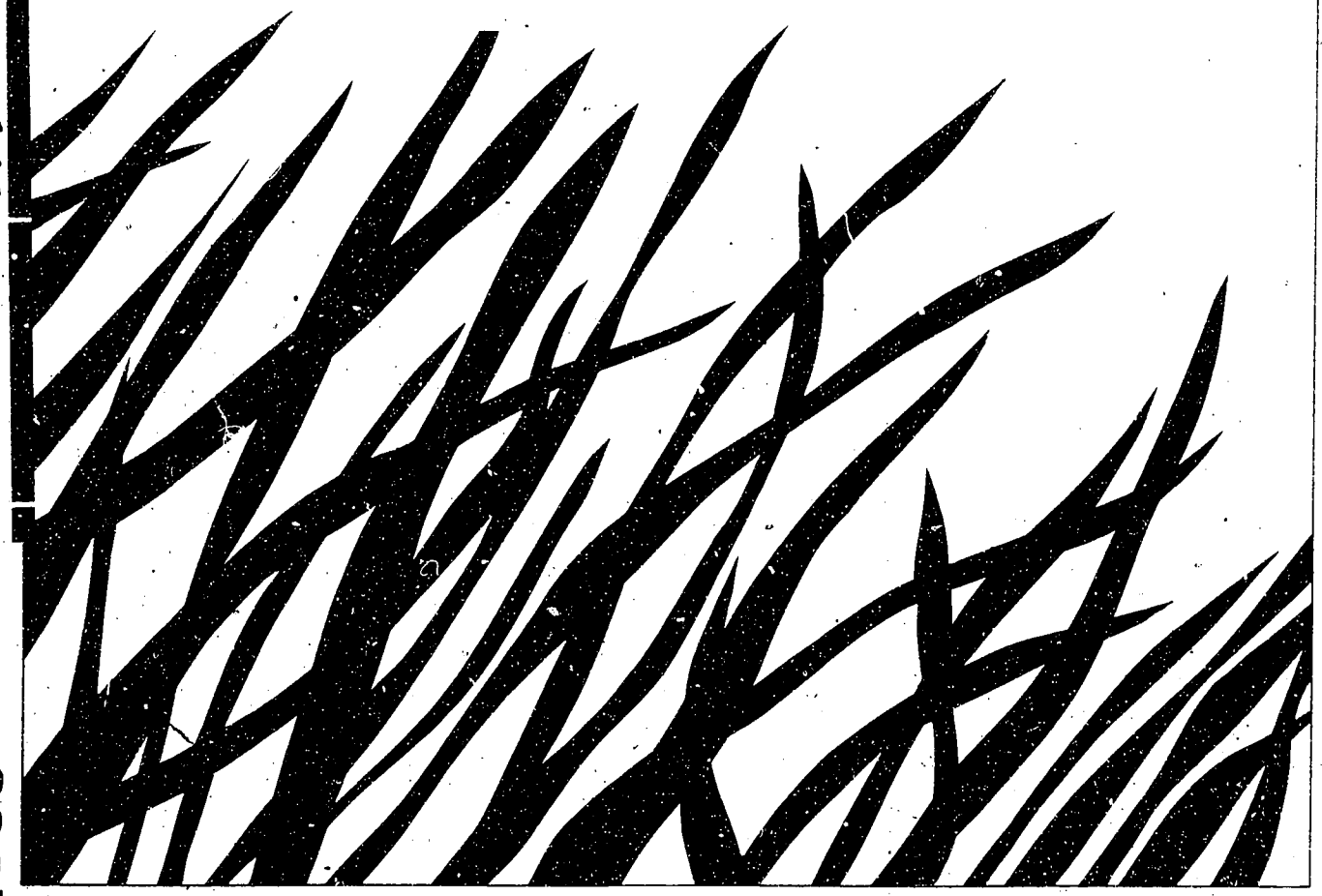
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Consolidated Schools; Delivery Systems; Educational Finance; Educational Legislation; *Educational Quality; *Legislators; Needs Assessment; Rural Areas; *Rural Schools; Rural Urban Differences; Rural Youth; School Community Relationship; *School District Autonomy; School District Spending; School Personnel; School Size; State Aid; State Legislation; *State School District Relationship; Teacher Education; Teacher Salaries

ABSTRACT

Rural education trends and issues confronting state legislatures are examined in this handbook of narrative as well as statistical tables. Designed to provide state legislators with information they need to better understand rural implications of statewide education reforms, the handbook presents a range of legislative alternatives in key areas. Chapters embody five basic guidelines for rural school reform: respect for primacy of local circumstance; expansion and strengthening of bonds between school and community; more equitable balance between outside regulation and local control; treatment of structural and substantive reforms as separate and distinct issues; capitalizing on strengths of rural schools as well as correcting deficiences. This report to state legislators contains the following chapter focuses: (1) overview of rural America and its schools in terms of demographic, economic, and educational factors; (2) school/school district organization in sparsely populated areas, with emphasis on the consolidation movement; (3) school finance issues with special relevance for U.S. rural areas: (4) background information on personnel issues in rural education (teacher salaries, training programs); (5) delivery of educational services and development of educational programs appropriate for rural communities. Specific legislative alternatives are presented in chapters two to five. (RS)

REVITALIZING RURAL EDUCATION

A Legislator's Handbook



National Conference of State Legislatures
In cooperation with the National Rural Center

Legislators' Education Action Project
National Conference of State Legislatures
Hall of the States
444 North Capitol Street
Washington, D.C. 20001

REVITALIZING RURAL EDUCATION:
A Legislator's Handbook

by Jonathan P. Sher
Education Director
National Rural Center
Washington, D.C.

September 1978

Legislators' Education Action Project
National Conference of State Legislatures

This handbook was developed, in part, under a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The opinions and other content do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the agency, or of the National Conference of State Legislatures, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 78-70491
Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have made valuable contributions to the development of this handbook. First and foremost, Denis Doyle and David Mandel of the School Finance and Organization Division, National Institute of Education, deserve thanks for their advice, their commitment to ending the neglect of rural education by federal agencies, and their willingness to provide the resources necessary to produce this document.

Stuart A. Rosenfeld, National Institute of Education, made valuable contributions to chapters 3 and 5, as did Faith Dunne, Dartmouth College, to chapter 4. Their assistance and support is gratefully acknowledged. The overall supervision provided by John J. Callahan, National Conference of State Legislatures, and the editorial assistance of Gail Parks, National Rural Center, proved to be most valuable and is genuinely appreciated. Special thanks are also due to Mollie Zahn, Rebecca Parker, and Susan Williamson for their outstanding secretarial services.

Last, but by no means least, the help and information provided by state legislators and legislative staff members from more than a dozen states was essential in creating this handbook. Despite all this help, responsibility for the content of this volume, including any errors of fact or judgment, must remain with the author.

INTRODUCTION. Thinking Rural: Guidelines for State Legislative Action

This handbook examines trends and issues in rural education which are confronting state legislatures throughout the nation. The inescapable fact that the responsibility for resolving rural education problems rests upon the states prompted the writing of this legislator's guide.

In part, this growing state involvement in rural education is a natural consequence of a constitutional system which designates education as a state, rather than a federal or local, responsibility. Yet, it is also an outgrowth of the realization that local communities often *cannot* and the federal government apparently *will not* marshal the resources necessary to correct past problems or fulfill existing potentials in rural school systems.

There are four additional factors which have spurred the reemergence of rural education as a significant legislative concern in many states:

- First, the recent enactment of major education reforms, especially regarding school finance and organization, by many state legislatures;
- Second, the increase in efforts by disadvantaged populations (which are often disproportionately rural) to seek legislative redress to existing discriminatory and/or inequitable educational policies and practices;
- Third, the growing awareness on the part of both local citizens and state legislators that past legislative initiatives in rural education (for example, mandatory school consolidation and district reorganization laws) often have not had the beneficial effects intended; and
- Fourth, the knowledge that in many states the rural population is growing as fast or faster than the urban population, thus ensuring that rural schools and districts will continue to be a major education constituency.

In response to this heightened legislative interest, the Legislators' Education Action Project of the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Education Division of the National Rural Center have produced a handbook on rural education which is geared to the research needs of state legislators and their staffs. The fundamental purpose of this NCSL-NRC handbook is to provide state legislators with the information they need both to better understand the rural implications of statewide education reforms and to consider new legislation designed to solve rural education problems.

Subsequent chapters discuss the current status of America's rural schools and present a range of legislative alternatives in several key areas. Yet, while the enactment of these specific reforms can help resolve many of the problems facing rural educational systems, state legislatures must also make a broader continuing commitment both to consider the rural impacts of statewide legislation and to enact new legislation aimed at revitalizing rural education.

Each of the following chapters implicitly embodies some guidelines for state legislative reforms. No guidelines (or policy standards) are absolute and unvarying. Still, proposed reforms which run directly counter to these guidelines are unlikely to produce lasting and significant benefits for rural schools, whereas reforms consistent with them (while not assured of success) will at least not be crippled from the start.

The five basic guidelines regarding rural school reform are as follows:

1. The primacy of local circumstance must be respected. Rural America may well represent the single most diverse and heterogeneous group of individuals and communities in our society. Thus, the notion of an educational panacea—that is, "one best" reform strategy which is applicable and effective throughout rural America—is ludicrous. Any reform strategy which seeks to circumvent local traditions, values, beliefs and capabilities, rather than building upon them, is bound to fail.

This guideline is particularly relevant to the establishment or reassessment of state educational standards. Instead of creating highly detailed and rigid standards which are equally applicable to huge city schools and tiny rural ones, this guideline suggests that it would be far more sensible to promote more general standards which encourage flexible and diverse strategies for their achievement.

2. The linkages between school and community must be expanded and the bonds between them strengthened. Schools have been (and continue to be) absolutely vital as community institutions, as well as educational ones, in rural areas. Reforms which, intentionally or unwittingly, restrict the linkages or weaken the bonds between the school and the community are highly counterproductive. In rural areas, schools need the community to supplement and extend their efforts, while the community needs the school both as a source of community identity and as a reinforcement of the community's child-rearing practices. This active interdependence between community and school is one of the key attributes of rural education. Reforms which sacrifice this relationship have a markedly detrimental effect on all parties concerned.

3. The balance between outside regulation and local control must become more equitable. Rural school systems have been, are and doubtless will continue to be both dependent upon outside assistance and subject to outside regulation. Yet, the fact remains that state and federal assistance to rural schools has been somewhat scarce and tight-fisted, while mandates and regulations have often been both abundant and heavy-handed. As a consequence of having only subsistence-level sources, coupled with a plethora of detailed state and federal requirements, the whole meaning of local control in rural America has become trivialized. Reforms which do not redress this existing imbalance, or which serve to atrophy local control, or which expand outside dominance, or which treat rural districts like welfare cases rather than equal partners in the educational enterprise, are of no help in the quest for rural school improvement.

4. Structural reforms and substantive reforms must be treated as separate and distinct issues. For too long, education officials and rural school reformers have artifically linked needed substantive improvements with their own agendas for rural structural reform. By arguing that increased student achievement, better teachers, or an improved curriculum were entirely contingent upon school consolidation, district reorganization or some other desired organizational alteration, these policy makers unnecessarily confused the relevant issues, encouraged false expectations, and most importantly, diverted critically important attention, assistance and resources away from the continuing need to upgrade the quality of existing rural schools. Structural issues and substantive issues are each important in their own right. Reforms which attempt to manufacture relationships between these two sets of issues, or which hold one set of improvements in abeyance until the other set has been accomplished, do a real disservice to rural schools and school children.

5. Reform efforts must capitalize upon the strengths, as well as correct the deficiencies, of rural schools. Historically, reformers have either disparaged the advantages inherent in small rural community schools or have taken them for granted. As a result, these advantages have often remained undeveloped potentials rather than fully utilized components of the school program. Reformers' analyses of rural schools generally have been so harsh and disapproving that they have triggered a self-fulfilling negative prophecy in many rural communities. Trying to make rural people feel defensive and demoralized about their schools has not proven to be a very productive strategy for inducing beneficent educational changes. Thus, reforms which do not explicitly acknowledge both the potential for and the fact of excellence in existing rural schools (in addition to seeking remedies to current problems) will serve only to alienate and discourage the community, and thereby, reduce their own chances for success.

At present, there is a firm basis for believing that successful and beneficial rural school reforms can be achieved. Most rural schools have the capacity to become excellent and effective community institutions. Realizing this potential is by no means impossible. It requires only the combination of local initiative, external assistance, creativity, and the will to provide rural children with the best education possible.

• • •

State legislatures have a key role to play in the revitalization of America's rural schools. In fact, it can be argued that state legislatures are the last and best hope for improving rural education in the United States. Thus, the opportunity to aid rural schools and school districts is one which legislators can, and should, embrace.

Accepting this opportunity requires legislators to undertake a more detailed investigation of their state's problems and potential than has been common in the past. Although this state-by-state analysis is unavailable, there are some general trends and strategies in rural education today which have some degree of applicability across the country. Addressing this set of key national issues in rural education is the purpose of this NCSL-NRC handbook.

More specifically, this report is divided into the following five chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of rural America and its schools in terms of a variety of demographic, economic and educational factors;

Chapter 2 examines the issue of school and school district organization in sparsely populated areas, with an emphasis on the consolidation movement;

Chapter 3 explores several school-finance issues which have particular relevance for rural areas of the United States;

Chapter 4 presents background information on personnel issues in rural education, such as teacher salaries and training programs; and

Chapter 5 examines the issues surrounding the delivery of educational services and the development of educational programs which are appropriate in rural communities.

1. IF YOU'VE SEEN ONE RURAL COMMUNITY . . . YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THEM ALL

What do an island village off the coast of Maine, a coal-mining town in West Virginia, a ranching area in Wyoming, a college town in Minnesota, an impoverished community in the Mississippi delta region, a ski-resort section in Vermont, a migrant-worker settlement in Texas, an Alaskan native village near the Arctic Circle, and a prosperous grain-farming area in Iowa all have in common? Not much, except that they are all classified as *rural* areas of the United States.

Indeed, diversity is the cornerstone of rural America. There are often substantial differences among rural communities (in terms of economic base, socioeconomic characteristics, political traditions, community values, etc.) within the same state or region. This, in turn, makes simplistic stereotypes and uniform policies seem all the more inappropriate.[1]

Given the enormous range of communities, people and circumstances which together comprise rural America, the meaning of "ruralness" can be rather elusive. Beyond the fact of diversity, defining rural America is further complicated by attitudinal differences. In a town of 400 residents, the "rural people" are the ones living some distance outside the town. Yet, in the county seat having 4,000 residents, the people in the small town are considered rural. Similarly, the citizens in the county seat are thought of as rural by people in the state capital. And finally, by the standards of people living in New York City, Los Angeles or other large cities, the residents of many state capitals would be thought of as rural. The point here is simply that "ruralness," like beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder.

These inherent difficulties have not discouraged repeated efforts by sociologists, demographers, policy makers, and other interested parties to forge a sensible definition of "rural." We know, of course, that rural communities are characterized by a small population and a low population density. However, since "rural" is a relative term, all population- and density-based definitions are suggestive rather than absolute.

The two most popular definitions of rural America reflect this arbitrariness. Both are population-based and both define rural America in terms of what it is *not* rather than what it is. Thus, the Census Bureau carefully defines urban (essentially all places having a population of 2,500 or more) and then classifies all that remains as rural.[2] Similarly, demographers and statisticians have established complex criteria for identifying Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) and then designate everyone and everyplace not meeting the criteria as nonmetropolitan (see figure 1).[3]

Although these two categories are the only ones commonly used to collect data on rural America, it must be understood that neither is consistent with prevailing impressions of rural life. For example, the census definition of rural includes more than 16 million people living within SMSAs while excluding more than 26 million people living outside the boundaries of any metropolitan area.[4] Thus, a residential enclave with a population of 2,000 located 15 miles away from a city is "rural" in census calculations, while a community of 2,600 people located hundreds of miles from any metropolitan area is considered to be "urban." On the other hand, the basic problem with the "nonmetropolitan" definition is that it includes some places having up to 50,000 residents—a population concentration far higher than one normally thinks of as rural.

As figure 2 reveals, this concern about definitions is more than academic. Depending upon the definition used, America's 1970 rural population ranged from 37.5 million to 65.1 million. This represented from 18.5 percent to 32 percent of the total United States population in 1970.

One final note on definitions. Although they are equally arbitrary, density-based definitions of "rural" may be appropriate and useful to legislators and policy makers in some states. Certainly, they illustrate some striking differences in settlement patterns (see figures 3 and 4). According to census data, urban population density averaged 2,760 people per square mile (including a figure of 67,808 per square mile in Manhattan), while rural population density averaged 15 people per square mile.[5]

Still, aggregate national statistics do not adequately reflect the enormous variance in the size and

Figure 1

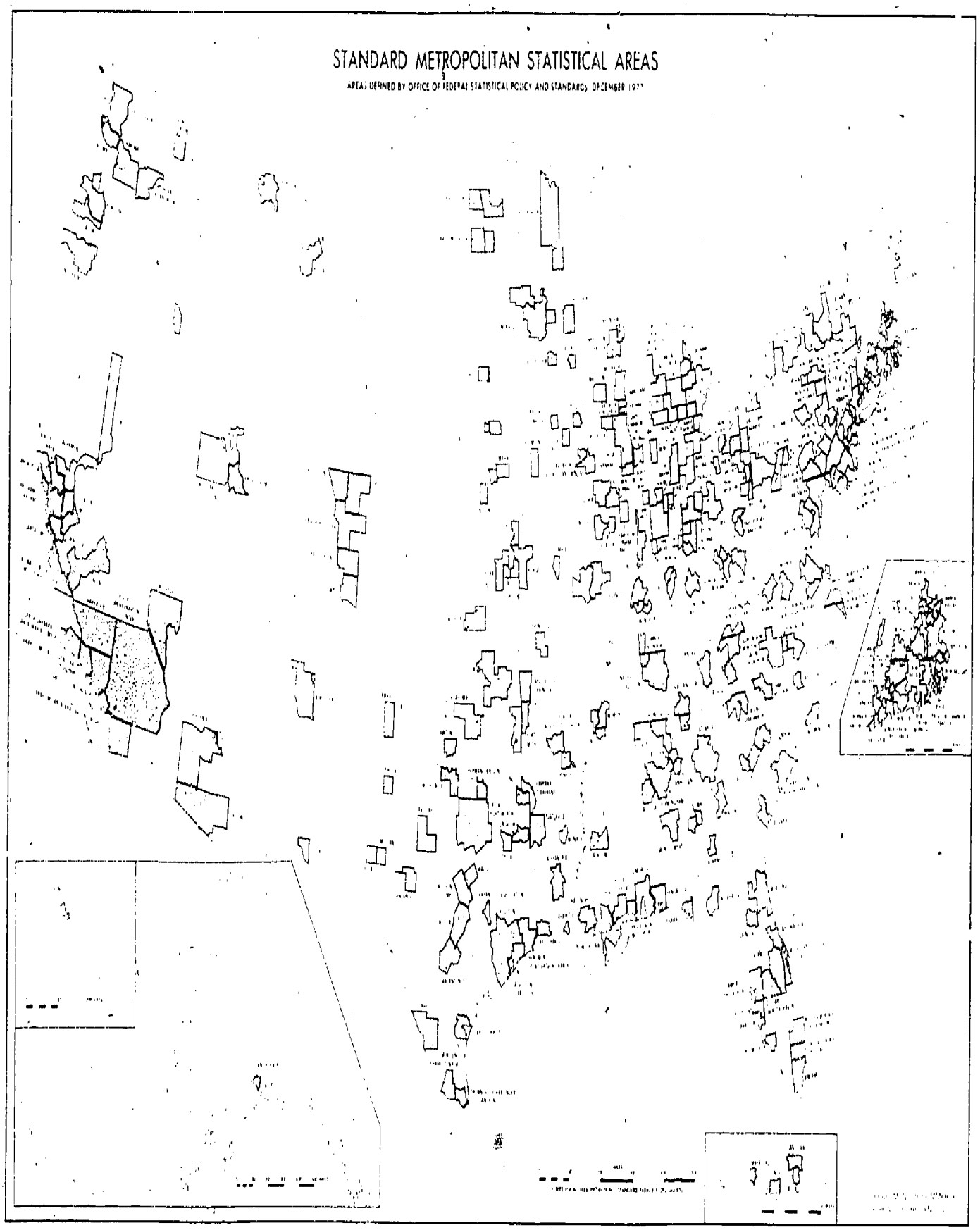
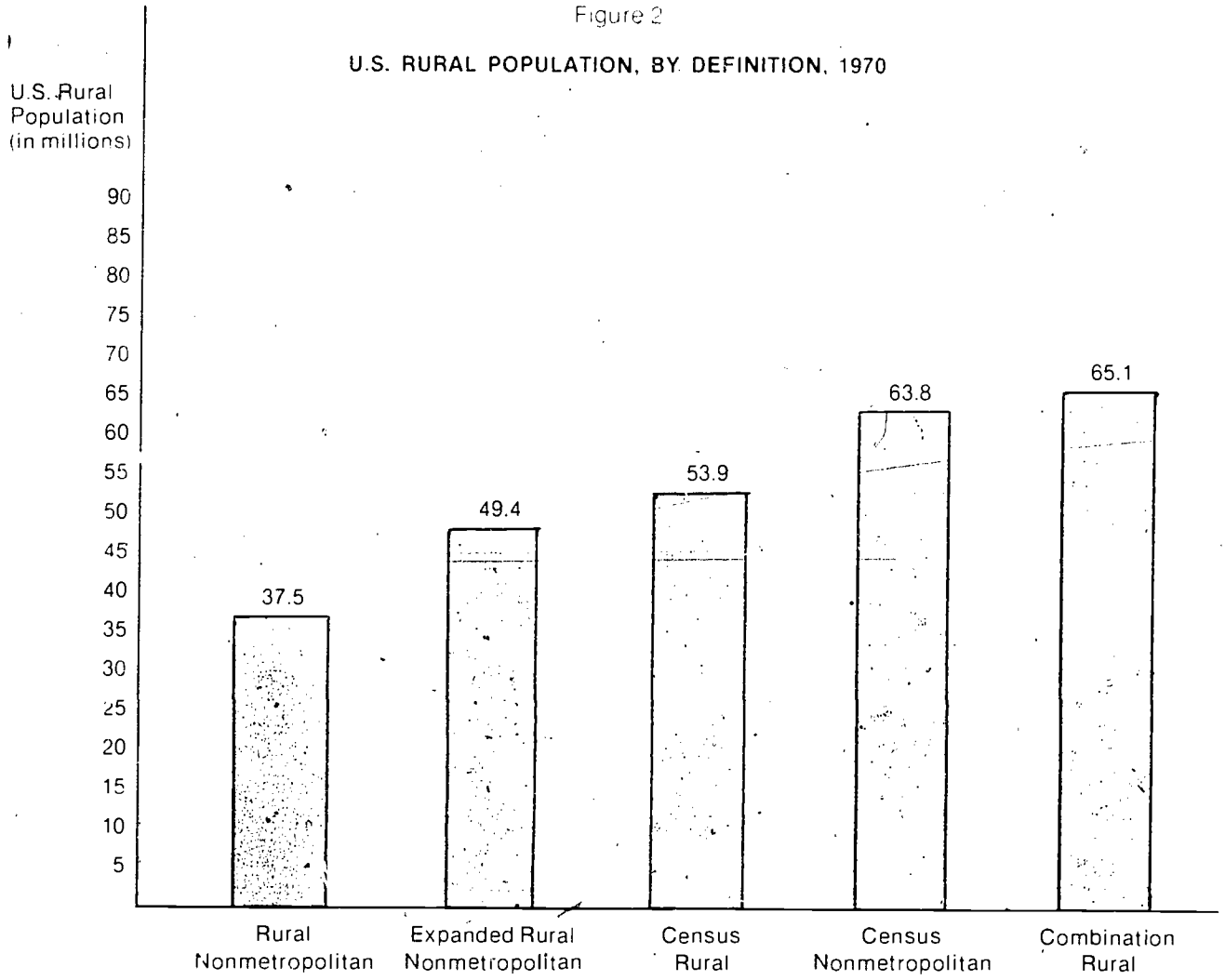

STANDARD METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS
AREAS DEFINED BY OFFICE OF FEDERAL STATISTICAL POLICY AND STANDARDS DECEMBER 1971

Figure 2

U.S. RURAL POPULATION, BY DEFINITION, 1970



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population*: Vol. 1, *Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, May, 1972) and *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July, 1976), Section 1.

NOTE: **Rural Nonmetropolitan.** "All farms, open countryside and places of less than 2,500 residents outside SMSAs." This is the most restrictive definition (18.5 percent of total U.S. population in 1970).

Expanded Rural Nonmetropolitan. "All farms, open countryside and places of less than 10,000 residents outside SMSAs." This definition is used occasionally in congressional legislation (24.9 percent of total U.S. population in 1970).

Census Rural. "All farms, open countryside and places of less than 2,500 residents, both within and outside of SMSAs." This, in simplified terms, is the U.S. Census Bureau's definition (26.5 percent of total U.S. population in 1970).

Census Nonmetropolitan. "All farms, open countryside and places of less than 50,000 residents outside SMSAs." This distinction (rather than urban-rural) is increasingly used for analytic purposes (31.4 percent of total U.S. population in 1970).

Combination Rural. "Census rural definition plus all nonmetropolitan places between 2,500 and 10,000." Though rarely used now, this definition is both the most permissive and in many respects the most reasonable (30 percent of total U.S. population in 1970).

significance of the rural population at the state level. For example, Pennsylvania has more than three million rural residents, while Nevada has fewer than 100,000. Although 67.8 percent of Vermont's population live[illegible], only 12.9 percent of Rhode[illegible] rural. Two states (W[illegible] no SMSAs at all, and in 20[illegible] the population lives in no[illegible]et, there are 12 states in which [illegible] residents constitute less than 20 percent of the total population. California is an interesting case in that it has more rural residents (nearly two million) than 40 other states, yet they comprise less than 10 percent of its total population (making California the least rural of the 50 states).

Statistics on population density also demonstrate the tremendous disparities among states. At the extremes, Alaska averages one citizen per square mile, while New Jersey has 953. As figures 3 and 4 reveal, the western states have the lowest population-density ratios, but there are 33 states which average fewer than 100 people per square mile. Table 1 presents a detailed state-by-state comparison of these rural population statistics.

More important than these broad population figures is the fact that since 1970 rural America's population base has experienced a significant resurgence. As one of the nation's leading demographers, Calvin Beale, concluded in 1975:

> The vast rural-to-urban migration of people that was the common pattern of U.S. population movement in the decades after World War II has been halted and, on balance, even reversed. During 1970-73, nonmetropolitan areas gained 4.2 percent in population compared to only 2.9 percent for metro areas.[6]

Beale went on to state:

> As might be expected [counties adjacent to metropolitan areas] have had the highest population growth since 1970 (4.7 percent) and have acquired about five-eighths of the total net in-movement into all nonmetro counties. However, the more significant point is that nonadjacent counties have also increased more rapidly than metro counties (3.7 percent vs. 2.9 percent). Thus, the decentralization trend is not confined to metro sprawl. It affects nonmetro counties well removed from metro influence. Indeed, the trend can be said especially to affect them.[7]

Thus, for the foreseeable future, rural America's existence as both a significant segment of the U.S. population and a vital sector of the nation's economy seems assured.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Rural America

In 1967, the President's National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty issued a powerful report entitled *The People Left Behind*, which revealed the extent to which rural people were deprived of their fair share of America's wealth and public services and were excluded from the standard of living enjoyed in metropolitan areas of the United States.[8] The committee's report documents that rural America has the nation's highest rates of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, infant mortality, underemployment, substandard housing, inadequate public services, and below average per [illegible]d family incomes.[9]

[illegible] this harsh profile did not (and does not [illegible]ll rural communities or all rural residents. [illegible]d earlier, rural America includes everything from prosperous farming areas, stable college towns, and growing recreation and retirement communities to decaying company towns, stagnant communities and wholly depressed areas. And, while the adverse conditions described in the committee's report exist throughout the nation's rural areas, they are more prevalent in the South as a region, and among Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and other minority groups.

Some absolute gains have been made on each of the indices during the decade since the issuance of *The People Left Behind*. However, the gap between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas has only slightly narrowed, and the relative position of rural America remains substantially unchanged. There remains a disproportionately high number of low-income rural citizens whose access to adequate housing, transportation, health services and other critical resources is severely constrained. And, despite all the progress made thus far, these problems continue to beset minority populations to an extent far greater than is true for their nonminority counterparts.

The economy of rural America has not undergone any radical changes in recent years. Rather, the trends and forces which have shaped the rural economy for the past 30 years continue to predominate. Thus, although farming, fishing, mining, lumbering, ranching and other natural resource-based and/or extractive enterprises still comprise the core of the rural economy, there is both a gradual trend toward industrialization and a more marked trend toward service industries, in general, and tourism and recreation enterprises, in particular, within rural areas of the United States.

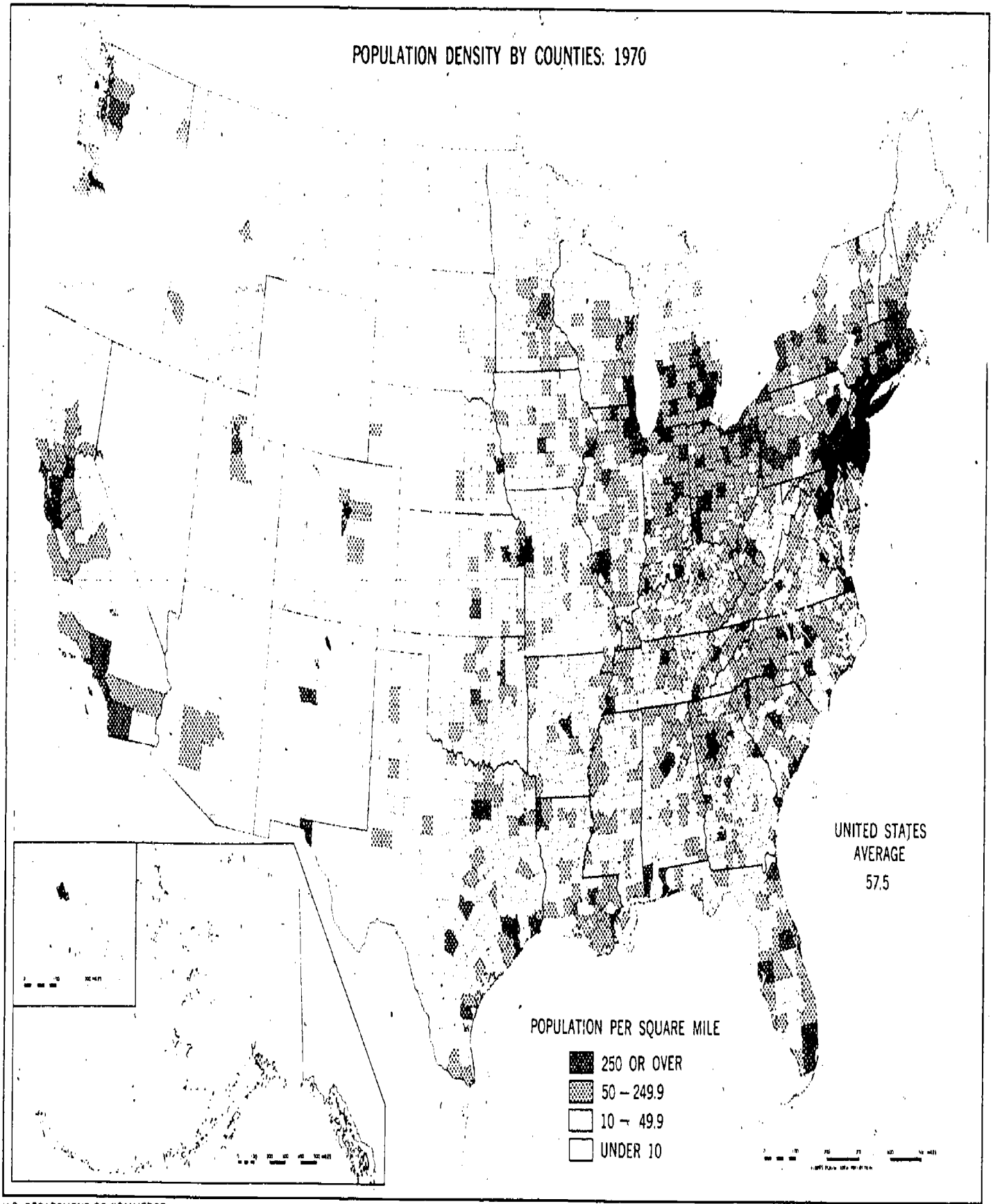
Table 2 presents several indicators of rural America's current socioeconomic status.

Current Status of Education

Like rural America as a whole, rural schools and school districts are distinguished by their diversity. Despite increasing standardization, rural schools still tend to reflect the pluralism found among the rural communities they serve.

Perhaps the most surprising fact about rural schools is the number of students who attend them. In 1975, there were more than 15 million children (ages 5 through 17) enrolled in nonmetropolitan schools (including 13.6 million white children and 1.8 million black or other minority group children).[10] In other words, 32 percent of all children enrolled in public schools in the United States are enrolled in nonmetro-

Figure 3

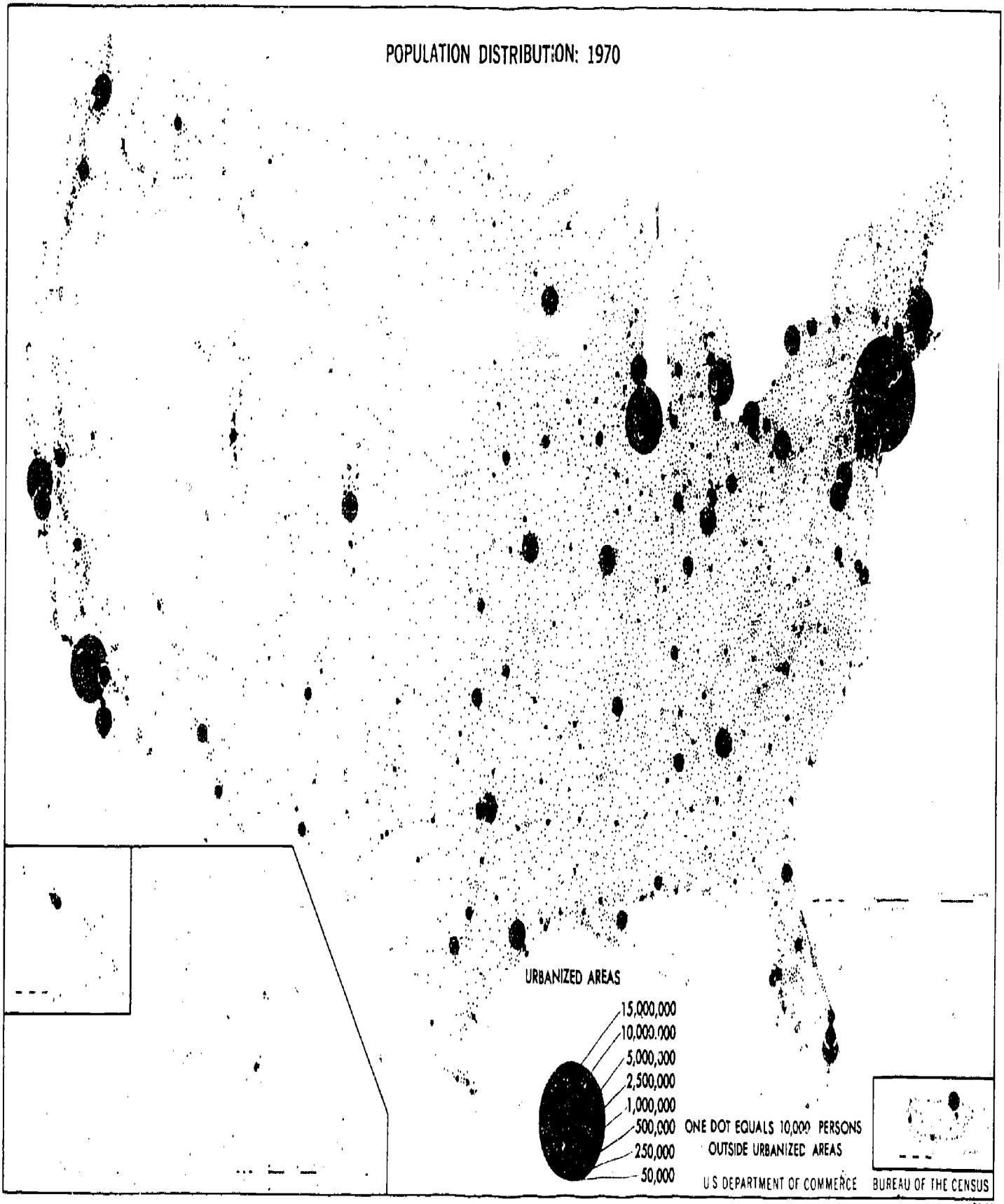


U S DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

71-16

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Figure 4



71-11

Table 1

RANK ORDER OF STATES, BY RURAL AND NONMETROPOLITAN POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS, 1970

State	Total Population	Rank	Rural Population	Rank	% Rural	Rank	Nonmetropolitan Population	Rank	Percent Nonmetropolitan	Rank	Population Density (Per Square Mile)	Rank
Alabama	3,444,165	21	1,432,224	15	41.6	16	1,525,201	19	44.3	23	68	26
Alaska	300,382	50	154,870	45	51.6	8	199,127	46	66.3	12	1	50
Arizona	1,770,900	33	362,036	37	20.4	39	452,328	42	25.5	34	16	41
Arkansas	1,923,295	32	962,430	24	50.0	9	1,328,265	21	69.1	10	37	34
California	19,953,134	1	1,817,089	10	9.1	50	1,322,470	22	6.6	50	128	13
Colorado	2,207,259	30	473,948	35	21.5	38	625,520	33	28.3	32	21	39
Connecticut	3,031,709	24	686,657	32	22.6	37	527,109	40	17.4	44	624	4
Delaware	548,104	46	152,535	46	27.8	32	162,248	47	29.6	31	277	7
Florida	6,789,443	9	1,321,306	18	19.5	42	1,279,631	24	18.9	42	126	14
Georgia	4,589,575	15	1,821,501	9	39.7	18	2,309,296	5	50.3	21	79	24
Hawaii	768,561	40	129,878	48	16.9	45	139,385	49	18.1	43	120	
Idaho	712,567	42	327,133	39	45.9	13	600,778	36	84.3	5	9	43
Illinois	11,113,976	5	1,844,155	7	17.0	44	2,211,102	6	19.9	39	199	10
Indiana	5,193,669	11	1,821,609	8	35.1	22	1,978,780	9	38.1	29	144	12
Iowa	2,824,375	25	1,207,971	22	42.8	15	1,819,443	14	64.4	13	51	28
Kansas	2,246,578	28	761,708	30	33.9	24	1,297,479	23	57.8	17	28	37
Kentucky	3,218,706	23	1,534,653	13	47.7	11	1,931,084	10	60.0	15	81	21
Louisiana	3,641,306	20	1,235,156	20	33.9	24	1,527,031	18	41.9	26	81	21
Maine	992,048	38	487,891	34	49.2	10	779,564	31	78.6	7	32	36
Maryland	3,922,399	18	918,464	26	23.4	36	612,657	34	15.6	45	397	5
Massachusetts	5,689,170	10	878,721	27	15.4	46	871,255	28	15.3	46	727	3
Michigan	8,875,083	7	2,321,310	5	26.2	34	1,922,060	11	21.7	38	156	11
Minnesota	3,804,971	19	1,277,663	19	33.6	26	1,639,883	17	43.1	24	48	30
Mississippi	2,216,912	29	1,230,270	21	55.5	4	1,823,424	13	82.3	6	47	32
Missouri	4,676,501	13	1,398,818	16	29.9	30	1,679,554	16	35.9	30	68	26
Montana	694,676	43	323,733	40	46.6	12	525,238	41	75.6	8	5	47
Nebraska	1,483,493	35	570,733	33	38.5	20	847,027	29	57.1	18	19	40
Nevada	488,738	47	93,402	50	19.1	43	94,382	50	19.3	41	4	48
New Hampshire	737,681	41	321,641	41	43.6	14	535,988	39	72.7	9	82	20
New Jersey	7,168,164	8	794,759	29	11.1	49	609,642	35	8.5	49	953	1
New Mexico	1,016,000	37	307,225	42	30.2	29	700,226	32	68.9	11	8	46
New York	18,190,740	2	2,633,254	3	14.5	47	2,142,128	7	11.8	48	381	6
North Carolina	5,082,059	12	2,796,891	2	55.0	6	3,034,850	1	59.7	16	104	17
North Dakota	617,761	45	344,319	39	55.7	3	544,108	38	88.1	3	9	43
Ohio	10,652,017	6	2,626,320	4	24.7	35	2,319,030	3	21.8	37	260	9
Oklahoma	2,559,229	27	819,092	28	32.0	28	1,278,537	25	50.0	22	37	34
Oregon	2,091,385	31	688,681	31	32.9	27	810,650	30	38.8	27	22	38
Pennsylvania	11,793,909	3	3,363,499	1	28.5	31	2,311,678	4	19.6	40	262	8
Rhode Island	946,725	39	122,422	49	12.9	48	144,649	48	15.3	46	905	2
South Carolina	2,590,516	26	1,358,321	17	52.4	7	1,399,310	20	54.0	19	86	19
South Dakota	665,507	44	368,879	36	55.4	5	571,048	37	85.8	4	9	43
Tennessee	3,923,561	17	1,618,380	12	41.3	17	2,006,320	8	51.1	20	95	18
Texas	11,196,730	4	2,275,784	6	20.3	40	2,802,148	2	25.0	35	43	33
Utah	1,059,273	36	207,801	44	19.6	41	237,584	45	22.4	36	13	42
Vermont	444,732	48	301,441	43	67.8	1	444,732	43	100.0	1	48	30
Virginia	4,648,494	14	1,713,653	11	36.9	21	1,802,460	15	38.8	27	117	16
Washington	3,409,169	22	932,701	25	27.4	33	920,688	27	27.0	33	51	28
West Virginia	1,744,237	34	1,064,746	23	61.0	2	1,112,176	26	63.8	14	72	25
Wisconsin	4,417,731	16	1,506,854	14	34.1	23	1,874,756	12	42.4	25	81	21
Wyoming	332,416	49	131,305	47	39.5	19	332,416	44	100.0	1	3	49
U.S. TOTAL	203,184,772	——	53,884,804	——	26.5	——	59,966,445	——	29.5	——	57	——

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1973); and *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1976), section 1.

Table 2

SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC INDICES, BY RESIDENCE AND RACE

	Total Population 1970 (millions)	Median Family Income, 1975 (dollars)	Percent of U.S. Median Family Income, 1975	Persons Below Poverty Level (millions)	Percent Below Poverty Level 1975	Substandard Housing, 1970 (thousands)	Percent Substandard 1970
U.S. TOTAL	203.2	13,719	100	25.9	12.3	4,741	7.4
Metropolitan Areas							
All Races	139.5	14,909	109	15.4	10.8	1,863	4.2
White	120.6	15,548	113	10.0	8.2	N/A	N/A
Black	16.8	9,494	69	4.9	27.6	N/A	N/A
Nonmetropolitan Areas							
All Races	63.8	11,600	85	10.5	[illegible]4	2,878	
White	57.2	[illegible]020			[illegible]		
[illegible]ack		[illegible]4		2.6	42.4	N/A	N/A
Farm	9.7	10,845	79	1.3	16.4	N/A	N/A

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1976* (July 1976); and *Current Population Reports — Consumer Income* (September 1976); and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1977). All three reports were published in Washington, D.C. by the U.S. Government Printing Office.

Table 3

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS TEST SCORES BY AGE, SUBJECT, AND SELECTED PARTICIPANTS, 1969-73

	9-Year-Olds Test Scores			13-Year-Olds Test Scores			17-Year-Olds Test Scores		
Subject Area	U.S. Median	High Metropolitan (difference—US Median)	Extreme Rural (difference—US Median)	U.S. Median	High Metropolitan (difference—US Median)	Extreme Rural (difference—US Median)	U.S. Median	High Metropolitan (difference—US Median)	Extreme Rural (difference—US Median)
Science	63.2	+7.2	−6.3	58.3	+6.2	−6.2	47.0	+5.1	−3.6
Writing	28.3	+4.8	−4.6	55.4	+7.5	−6.3	62.5	+6.6	−4.1
Citizenship	64.1	+3.4	−3.3	63.1	+4.3	−4.3	61.8	+5.3	−4.8
Reading	70.4	+8.4	−4.4	68.1	+5.6	−3.9	77.5	+5.6	−2.6
Literature	43.9	+7.5	−3.6	53.4	+5.5	−3.1	61.3	+5.3	−2.4
Music	58.8	+5.5	−2.7	48.9	+3.4	−1.4	49.2	+3.5	−1.3
Social Studies	72.2	+6.7	−2.8	66.2	+7.3	−2.6	73.8	+6.5	−2.1
Mathematics	36.7	+8.1	−3.6	51.3	+10.2	−2.1	57.1	+9.9	−4.1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 1975* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975).

NOTE: The terms "high metropolitan" and "extreme rural" are the creation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Because they incorporate employment and income distinctions as well as geographic ones, it is difficult to determine the extent to which achievement differences are a function of socioeconomic status or of locale. For example, children classified as "low metropolitan" score even lower than the "extreme rural" population in NAEP data.

politan schools.[11] In comparative terms, *there are more students in nonmetropolitan schools than there are in central-city schools.*[12] In fact, the total number of rural students is greater than the total population of New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago combined.[13]

"Rural education" encompasses everything from a one-room schoolhouse in an Appalachian hollow to a western school district responsible for education within a region of several hundred square miles. It includes both units having lots of students but very little money, and units with lots of money and few students. The fastest growing school districts in rural areas, but so are the ones experiencing the most rapidly declining enrollments. Some rural schools are quite self-sufficient and would be considered excellent by nearly any standard, while others are woefully inadequate and desperately in need of assistance. As a consequence, treating rural schools and school districts as if they were a unified, monolithic entity would be a serious mistake. The "primacy of local circumstance" is as applicable to the formulation of rural education policy as it is to rural communities in general.

Despite this caveat, it is clear that rural schools have historically shared several common problems. For example, reducing student nonenrollment and absenteeism, recruiting highly competent teachers and administrators, providing special education and other specialized services, securing needed capital and operating funds, and compensating for the inherent isolation and population sparsity of rural areas, are all problems which have persistently plagued rural schools and which remain largely unsolved even today.

Educational attainment has been another major problem within rural schools across the country. Adult attainment statistics reveal the long-term nature of this problem. In 1970, there were 500,000 rural adults who had had no schooling whatsoever.[14] Further, a 1974 Census Bureau survey found that more than two million rural adults had had less than five years of school and thus were considered to be functionally illiterate.[15] As always, these problems were even more pronounced among rural black and hispanic populations. In fact, 24.1 percent of all black adults and 30.7 percent of all hispanic adults in rural areas had dropped out of school by the fifth grade.[16]

This trend continues today. A recent research report indicates that at least 5.3 percent of all rural school-age children are not enrolled in any school.[17] This represents a nonenrollment rate nearly twice that of urban areas.[18]

Even when rural children are enrolled and in regular attendance, attainment problems persist. No matter what standardized testing systems or assessment programs are employed, researchers have found that rural schoolchildren consistently rank lower than their metropolitan counterparts.[19] For example, the National Assessment of Education Progress indicates that rural children score significantly lower than the U.S. average in almost every subject area (see table 3).[20]

Nevertheless, it is inaccurate to [illegible] schools which compare favorably in terms of educational quality with their larger and wealthier urban and suburban counterparts. The broad statistics mask these successes and tend to divert researchers away from studying the characteristics of outstanding small schools.

Still, attainment statistics are not particularly helpful in ascertaining the unique qualities of rural education. Since the attainment data for central-city schools are similar to those for rural schools, it may only confirm that socioeconomic factors such as parents' income and education, which tend to be markedly lower in both rural communities and central cities, are powerful determinants of student achievement everywhere.

Much of what *is* unique about rural schools and school districts defies quantitative analysis or statistical description. The slower pace and less pressured environment, the spirit of cooperation, the opportunity for leadership development, the less formal interactions among students, staff and parents, and other similar qualities which have long been associated with rural schools are not easily measured by the tools of educational research. This would be of little consequence were it not for the fact that researchers and policy makers have tended to discount that which they cannot measure. Thus, when rural communities opt for these "intangible" qualities (for example, by choosing to keep their community school instead of busing their children to a large consolidated school having a bigger library or more sophisticated equipment) they are often labeled as "deficient" or "backward" rather than merely different.

Efforts to reform education in sparsely populated areas must capitalize upon the strengths, as well as correct the deficiencies, of rural schools. Historically, reformers have either disparaged the advantages inherent in small rural community schools, or have taken them for granted. Rural schools can be as excellent and productive as schools anywhere in the nation. However, such excellence will not occur by default, but rather by deliberate actions aimed at building upon what they have, as well as providing for what they lack.

2.

IS BIGGER BETTER? An Overview of Rural School and District Organization

Schools tend to reflect the society around them. Thus, it should not be surprising to discover that the patterns of rural school and district organization which have emerged since the turn of the century mirror some of the most distinctive characteristics of rural America as a whole. The emphasis here will be on two of the most important shared characteristics: diversity and size.

Diversity is a hallmark of rural America. Whether measured on the basis of ethnicity, occupational profiles, environmental characteristics, socioeconomic status, political attitudes or overall quality of life, rural America is a model of heterogeneity. So, too, the way in which rural educational services and institutions are organized varies enormously from state to state.

In terms of school district organization, the variety seems endless. Hawaii has one school district which encompasses the entire state, while Nebraska has 1,374 districts.[1] Most of the southern and border states have school districts which are coterminous with counties, whereas most northeastern and midwestern states have districts which are organized around towns or were consolidated into multitown units. Occasionally, one will even find rural school districts which coincide with no other existing governmental units. Alaska maintains three wholly separate groups of school districts (city and borough, regional education attendance area, and Bureau of Indian Affairs), and Vermont contains seven legally distinct district types.

In terms of geographic area, there are rural school districts on tiny bits of land (such as small islands) and—as noted in chapter 1—others which cover several hundred square miles. Some rural school districts have thousands of pupils and a dozen or more schools, while others operate no schools and pay tuition for their pupils to attend school in neighboring communities. Many rural school districts are organized to provide comprehensive educational programs from kindergarten through senior high school, but a significant proportion of rural school districts operate only elementary schools or only high schools, or occasionally, only vocational or other specialized schools. Figures 5, 6 and 7 (while based on nonmetropolitan rather than exclusively rural data) illustrate the overwhelming diversity found among America's 11,963 nonmetropolitan school districts.[2]

America has more than 39,000 public schools located in nonmetropolitan communities.[3] As might be expected, these schools also exhibit highly idiosyncratic organizational patterns. For example, while there are thousands of rural schools which serve all the children of a few isolated families, there are thousands more which serve only the secondary school students drawn from several towns, and even some specialized schools which serve a multicounty region. There are one-teacher rural schools which appear to have changed little from their predecessors at the turn of the century, and there are rural schools which are indistinguishable in every outward respect from the most modern suburban facilities.

Many rural schools offer a kindergarten program, but a surprisingly large number do not. And, while it is common to find rural schools organized into traditional elementary, junior high and senior high school arrangements, it is by no means unusual to find rural schools which either offer all grade levels in a single facility or offer seemingly random sequences of three or more grades (e.g., K-3, 4-6, 1-5, 2-4).

These divergent patterns are not a function of regional differences, district size, community wealth or any other known variable. Rather, they seem to be the result of tradition, geographic circumstance, political considerations, availability of teachers and other essentially local factors.

A key attribute of rural schools is their relatively limited size and small scale of operations. Even after more than 50 years of consolidation efforts, rural schools and school districts remain far smaller than their urban and suburban counterparts (see table 4). For example, nonmetropolitan school districts in Nebraska have an average enrollment which is less than five percent of the average enrollment of metropolitan districts in that state (see table 5).

Two facts should be remembered in reading these two tables. First, since "nonmetropolitan" includes places up to a population of 50,000, the size differences between city schools and districts and

are s dere
of a la data
stingu
size. A ated
would prob high schoo
size to be somewhat larger and elementary school size somewhat smaller than the averages appearing in these two tables

One related point warrants attention. Occasionally, it is asserted that rural school arguments are just small-school arguments, and that the problems and potentials of rural education have equal applicability in small, community-controlled schools, no matter where they are located. While this statement is not completely false, there are two facts which seriously compromise its validity.

First, rural schools, unlike small schools elsewhere, must contend with unique problems of sparsity and isolation. This implies more than simply overcoming difficulties caused by geography or distance. It also refers to the fact that rural schools tend to be isolated from the educational, governmental and economic support systems found in metropolitan areas. Moreover, it means that sources of assistance to rural schools (from universities, mental health centers, teacher centers, cultural institutions and other potential resources) are notably absent in most regions.

Second, small public schools and school districts have become increasingly rare in America's metropolitan centers. Urban schools and districts have always been bigger than rural ones, but the gap is growing even greater as declining enrollments in the cities and suburbs cause remaining small schools to be shut down. Thus, in the near future, small-school issues (at least in the public domain) will be almost exclusively rural, for that will be the only place in which more than a handful of such schools will continue to exist.

Figure 5

U.S. NONMETROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS, BY ENROLLMENT SIZE, 1972

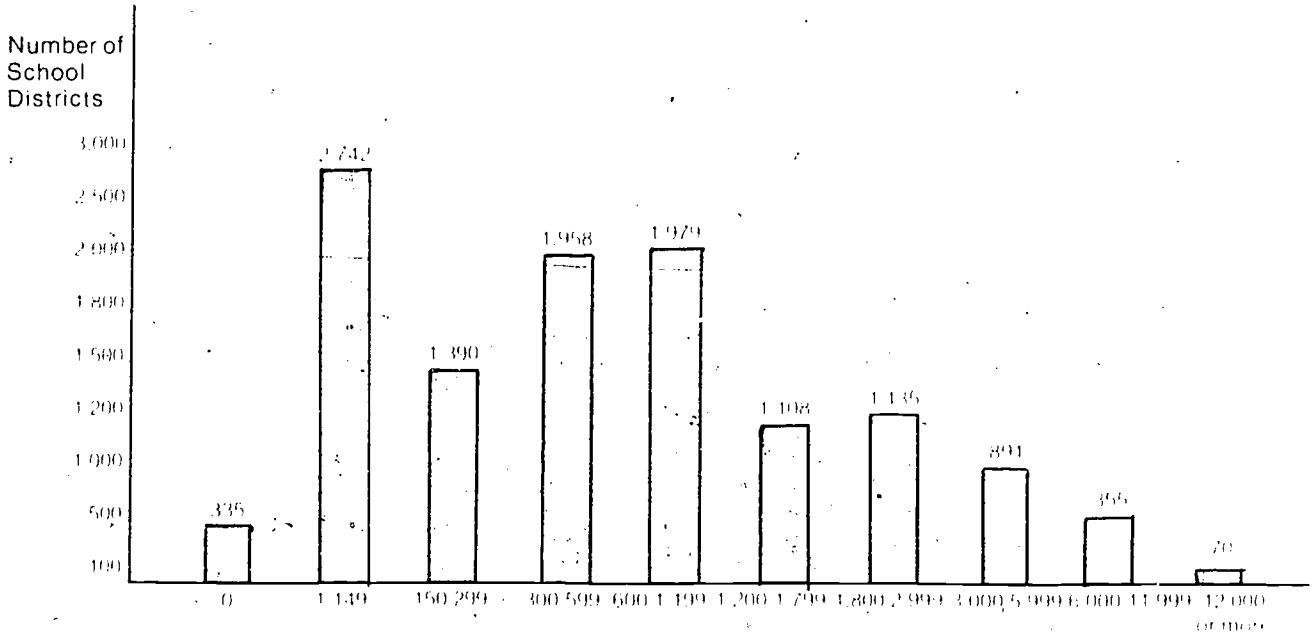
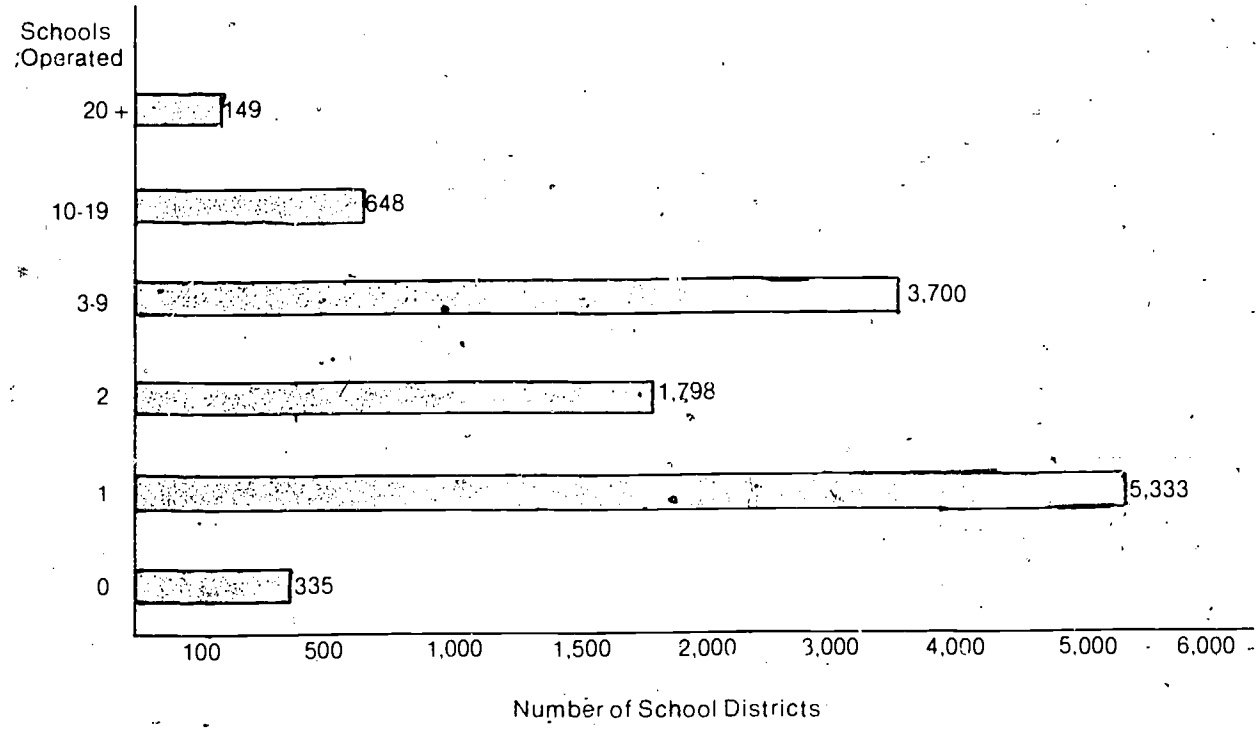


Table 2

Figure 6

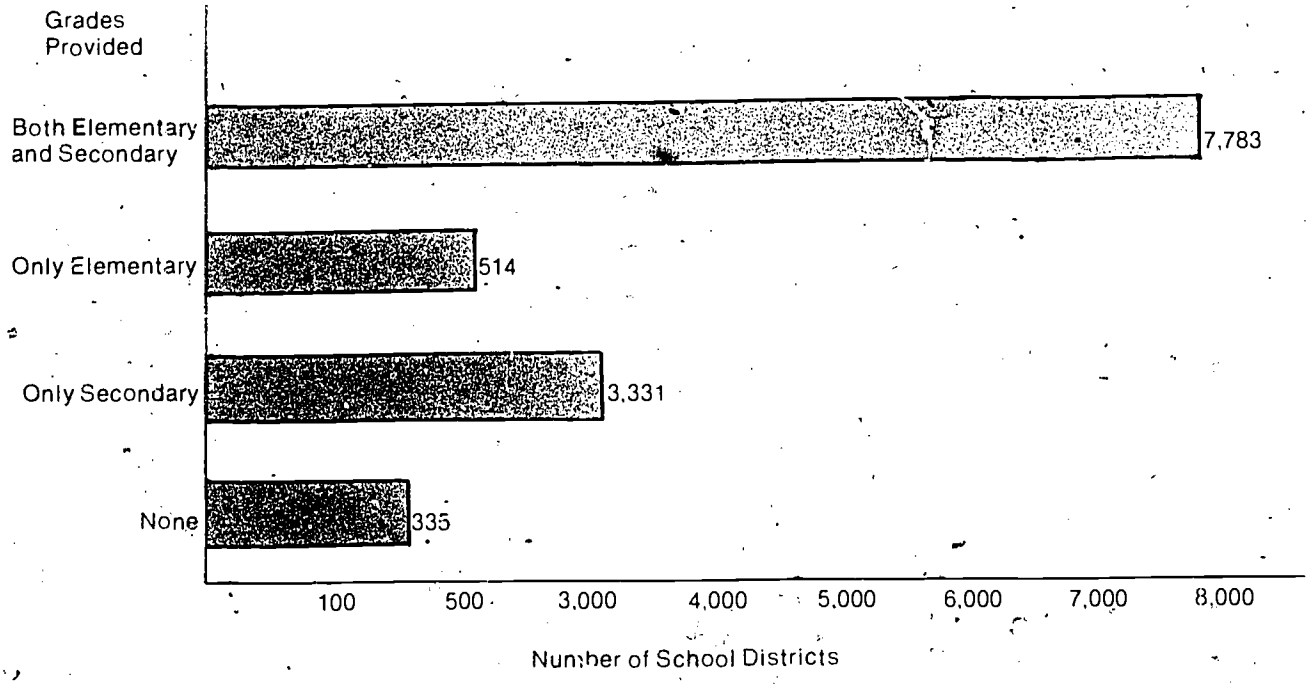
U.S. NONMETROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS, BY NUMBER OF SCHOOLS OPERATED, 1972



SOURCE U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1973), table 2.

Figure 7

U.S. NONMETROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS, BY GRADES PROVIDED, 1972



SOURCE U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1973), table 2.

Table 4

SIZE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1971-72

Area	Total Enrollment (K-12)	Percentage of Total U.S. Enrollment	Number of School Districts	Average School District Enrollment	Number of Schools	Average School Enrollment
All Metropolitan Areas of the U.S.	30,408,000	66%	4,781	6,360	47,849	635
All Nonmetropolitan Areas of the U.S.	15,615,000	34%	11,800	1,323	39,544	395
U.S. Total	46,023,000	— —	16,581	2,776	87,393	527

SOURCE U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1973), table 17, also U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *Statistics of Local Public School Systems: Pupils and Staff, Fall 1971* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), table A.

Table 5

SIZE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SELECTED AREAS OF 10 STATES, 1971-72

Area	Total Enrollment (K-12)	Number of School Districts	Average School District Enrollment	Number of Schools	Average School Enrollment
San Francisco	80,796	1	80,796	127	636
California (Metro)	4,536,458	654	6,936	6,110	654
California (Nonmetro)	344,111	411	837	976	352
Denver	94,838	1	94,838	118	803
Colorado (Metro)	402,705	35	11,505	600	671
Colorado (Nonmetro)	163,804	146	1,122	517	317
District of Columbia (All Metropolitan)	140,959	1	140,959	200	705
Hawaii (All Metropolitan)	183,083	1	183,083	211	868
Omaha (Douglas County)	85,112	16	5,320	147	579
Nebraska (Metro)	139,304	45	3,096	262	532
Nebraska (Nonmetro)	192,232	1,329	145	1,592	121
New York City	1,149,068	1	1,149,068	897	1,281
New York (Metro)	2,990,033	439	6,811	3,507	853
New York (Nonmetro)	530,280	341	1,555	940	564
Philadelphia	292,741	1	292,741	275	1,065
Pennsylvania (Metro)	1,828,691	343	5,331	3,103	589
Pennsylvania (Nonmetro)	521,529	176	2,963	1,225	425
Dallas (Dallas County)	299,234	16	18,702	358	836
Texas (Metro)	2,040,497	364	5,606	2,946	693
Texas (Nonmetro)	667,320	772	864	1,973	338
Vermont (All Nonmetro)	103,475	272	380	440	235
Wyoming (All Nonmetro)	85,977	70	1,228	375	229

SOURCE U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1973), tables 17 and 19.

Changes in Rural School and District Organization

No rural education issue has been as long-lived or volatile as the reform of school and district organization. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century with Horace Mann's advocacy of rural school consolidation and continuing unabated even today, proposed reforms of the ways in which educational services and institutions in rural areas are organized have sparked widespread controversy and dissension.[4]

As a general rule, rural school consolidation and district reorganization have been supported by influential leaders and policy makers in the education and business worlds. Informal coalitions of liberal reformers, professional education associations, state education agencies, urban-oriented business organizations and leading management experts emerged in most states to champion the cause of bigger schools and bigger districts in rural areas.

The results achieved by these proconsolidation forces is a testimony to their power and effectiveness. Nearly every state has enacted legislation which either mandates or encourages (usually through financial incentives) some degree of consolidation and reorganization in rural school systems. Local action usually (though not always swiftly) conformed to this legislative intent. In fact, rural school and district consolidation ranks as one of the most successfully implemented educational reforms of the past 50 years. Table 6 illustrates the pervasiveness of this reform movement.

Opposition to these reforms was (and continues to be) both widespread and adamant. In most states, the opponents—an eclectic collection of rural parents, taxpayers, community leaders, fiscal conservatives, libertarians, local educators and urban expatriates—were both extremely vocal in their criticisms of consolidation and fiercely dedicated to the preservation of their small community schools.

Ironically, the rural school consolidation and reorganization movement has been *opposed most vehemently by the groups on whom such reforms would have the greatest effect and supported most strongly by groups on whom the direct effects would be minimal.* In this sense, rural school consolidation in the United States is a classic example of an externally instigated and imposed reform; that is, one which is done *to* communities rather than *by* them.

At best, the anticonsolidation forces were only sporadically successful. No state rebuffed consolidation and reorganization entirely, and only a comparative handful—such as Nebraska, Vermont, Montana, Texas, Michigan, South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa—avoided uniform implementation of these reforms. Thus, the opposition nationwide appears to have only delayed or tempered the trend toward consolidation, rather than prevented it.

The case of Illinois is illustrative. In 1972, Illinois had 1,177 public school districts and ranked second among all states in the number of existing districts.[5] On the surface, it would appear that the anticonsolidation forces in this state had prevented widespread organizational reforms. However, as recently as 1945, Illinois had approximately 11,000 public school districts. By 1955 (after passage of semipermissive consolidation legislation known as the Illinois School Survey Act), the number of school districts in Illinois had been slashed to just over 2,000. While the eradication of 9,000 school districts in one state in one decade is amazing, it merely mirrored a burgeoning national trend. In Illinois, as in most other states, neither the consolidators nor their opponents entirely reached their goals. But, on balance, it seems clear that the reformers were most successful and influential.

Organization as a Technical Issue

Over the years, educational policy makers and researchers have tried to behave as if consolidation and reorganization were strictly technical issues.

Heavy emphasis was placed on demonstrating that these reforms would result in more economical and efficient schools in rural areas. Study after study

Table 6

NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 1930-1972.

Year	School Districts	Elementary Schools (Total)	Elementary Schools (1-Teacher)	High Schools (4-Year)
1930	128 000	238,000	149,000	16,500
1940	117,000	185,000	114,000	15,000
1950	84,000	128,000	60,000	10,400
1960	40,000	92,000	20,000	6,000
1970	18,000	66,000	2,000	6,500
1972	16,960	64,945	1,475	N/A

N/A = Not Available

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 1974* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974). Figures prior to 1972 have been rounded.

was undertaken to show that educational inputs (e.g., teacher credentials, course offerings, school facilities, available equipment, and specialized services) were all expanded and/or improved as a result of school and district consolidation. The inference was repeatedly made that these upgraded inputs would lead to greater success not only in college, but in the students' adult lives as well. In short, leading policy makers and academics (particularly at the state and national levels) argued that their studies and research on the technical aspects of consolidation proved that bigger schools and bigger school districts were inherently better ones.

In 1976, a critical analysis of the literature on this topic, entitled *Economy, Efficiency and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation*, was published by the National Institute of Education.[1] Basically, the report attempted to show that the technical information used to justify consolidation was severely flawed and unreliable. More specifically, it stated that:

> Given the enthusiasm with which consolidation was advocated, one would expect the empirical evidence supporting this policy to be overwhelming. It is not. The evidence on consolidation is incomplete. Most of the research not only fails to document the alleged benefits of consolidation, but also fails to acknowledge potential liabilities or problems. With rare exceptions, this body of research is methodologically unsound, with almost every study open to criticisms severe and significant enough to make the findings extremely suspect. The conclusions are, at best, inconclusive and at worst, simply incorrect. In short, there is *no* strong empirical base to support the assumptions and assertions of school and district consolidation advocates.

[illegible] consolidation has been useful and beneficial in some rural communities. As a result of the consolidation movement, many of the grossly inadequate rural schools in the United States were closed, and schools which previously had very little in terms of specialized curricular offerings or sophisticated resources were able to upgrade their programs. Occasionally, consolidation even brought some cost savings and increased efficiency.

It is also clear, however, that in at least as many situations, consolidation's benefits were illusory. Many rural communities were forced to send their children long distances to attend consolidated schools which were no better than the community schools they replaced. In addition, consolidation occurred in thousands of communities in which such a drastic reform was neither appropriate nor necessary. Often the values of smallness were lost in the process of consolidation and rural communities received little educationally or economically in return.

In the final analysis, though, local circumstance was probably the key determinant of the relative economic and educational merits, not only of one-teacher versus consolidated schools, but also of the consolidation process at all levels of implementation. In communities having four ramshackle, one-teacher schools with an ill-prepared teacher and an average enrollment of less than 10 pupils, all located within a 10-square-mile area, school consolidation was probably a propitious strategy. However, in communities having four well-maintained, one-teacher schools, each with an excellent teacher and an average enrollment of approximately 20 students, all spread out over a 100-square-mile area, school consolidation was probably devoid of any economic or educational justification.

Organization as a Political Issue

The divisive struggles and intense controversies engendered by school and district consolidation have occurred not because of transportation costs, administrative inefficiencies or curricular offerings, or any other technical concerns. Rather, it was (and still is) the battleground on which larger questions of values and control have traditionally been fought out in local areas.

Rural parents and taxpayers may be dissatisfied with their schools, but they are adamant in asserting their ability, and right, to control these schools. Similarly, many rural people have valued having a school in the community more than they have valued the resources educators associated with consolidation. Thus, consolidation is essentially a political issue rather than an educational or economic one. For it always involves a choice among values, not simply a choice among "objective" facts.

On the basis of current knowledge and understanding, five conclusions seem evident:

1. That "good" schools and "bad" schools (however defined) come in all sizes. Educational improvement and economic efficiency are the real challenges, and schools of every size could benefit from efforts in this direction. However, there is simply no basis for the belief that making a school (or district) bigger is likely to make it better.
2. After more than 30 years of experience with school and district consolidation, it is clear that consolidation has not lived up to the claims made by its supporters. By and large, the benefits have been exaggerated and the liabilities simply ignored.
3. While some schools and districts can benefit economically or educationally by consolidating, such places are a distinct minority and are becoming increasingly rare. In most cases, it is far more sensible to devise creative ways of bringing resources to children, rather than forcing children to go long distances for these resources. However, in all cases, local circumstance should be the key determinant of consolidation's merit.
4. Any decision about consolidation involves trade-offs. To some individuals, getting what big schools and districts can offer (e.g., more equipment and more specialists) is worth the costs (e.g., loss of a community institution, more transportation, and reduced participation in school and extracurricular activities). To other individuals, the

benefits are not worth what must be given up to get them

5. The decision to consolidate should not be made hastily or without careful consideration of its likely effects. Unlike most educational decisions (for example, the choice of textbooks), consolidation is almost irreversible. Once old schools have been closed, new ones built, and new buses and equipment purchased, it is very difficult to go back to the way things were, even if consolidation doesn't work out well.

Legislative Alternatives

In every region of the country, state legislatures are once again having to confront issues of rural school and district organization. In some states, declining enrollments are sparking this renewed interest. In others, school finance reforms, a dissatisfaction with current organizational patterns, or attempts to increase state control of education provide the impetus.

However, there are two new trends in this latest round of legislative debates which are likely to affect the eventual outcome.

First, all of the pressure is not in favor of consolidation (as it has largely been in the past). Many rural communities are unhappy with the results of past consolidations and are actively seeking either greater decentralization or, at least, readjustments in the patterns of consolidation.

Second, the education profession is becoming increasingly divided on the merits of consolidation. This is particularly important because the profession's enthusiastic and nearly monolithic support for this reform was a powerful influence on many state legislators. Today, a significant group of educators are expressing their disenchantment with consolidation as a strategy for rural educational improvement, as well as recognizing that there are some genuine advantages to smallness which have been ignored too long.

Thus, with rare exceptions, the prospects for passing new legislation which mandates rural school and district consolidation are rather dim. At the other end of the spectrum, legislation designed to dissolve past consolidations, or to make all decisions about school and district organization a local, rather than a state, responsibility is even less likely to be enacted.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that nothing can, or should, be done in this area. There are several more moderate legislative alternatives available which warrant serious consideration. These legislative alternatives are:

1. **Abolish or prevent the passage of all mandatory consolidation or reorganization legislation.** Given current information, there is no compelling economic or educational justification for requiring all schools or districts of a certain type or size to consolidate. While it is conceivable that consolidation would be beneficial in some cases, it is even more likely that any blanket consolidation would end up including communities for which such a reform is unnecessary, inappropriate or even harmful. Permissive legislation in this area is a far more sensible alternative.

2. **Eliminate all direct and indirect incentives to consolidate or reorganize.** Many states offer substantial financial rewards to large schools and districts and/or financial inducements to communities willing to consolidate. For example, some states reimburse local districts for a high percentage of the costs of building a large school, but only offer a low percentage reimbursement for smaller schools. Similarly, some states pay all the additional transportation costs for districts which agree to consolidate their schools. There are two basic problems with these types of incentives: they discriminate against small schools and districts which have decided that remaining small is the best option for their community, and they force rural communities which are relatively poor to consolidate whether or not it is educationally advantageous to do so. School systems which determine that consolidation would be educationally beneficial but can't manage it on existing resources should have access to limited transition funds from the state. Beyond that, states should ensure that consolidation becomes a fiscally neutral alternative for local communities.

3. **Establish a program of appropriate technical assistance to small rural schools and school districts.** Small schools deserve more attention. The emphasis on bigness has largely preempted serious discussion and research on methods of maintaining and improving existing small schools and districts. This neglect should be corrected not only because most small schools have the potential to achieve excellence, but also because ignoring such schools has not made them go away, nor has it helped the children attending such schools receive the best education possible. Legislation could be enacted which directs the state education agency, state institutions of higher education or other appropriate groups to offer a full range of technical assistance services to small rural communities. However, it is imperative that this assistance be appropriate—that is, directed toward creating better rural schools rather than replacing them with second-hand imitations of urban/suburban schools.

4. **Create a special classification system for very small or isolated rural schools and school districts.** In most states, there are some rural schools and districts which are so isolated that any kind of consolidation either imposes unreasonable hardships or is a logistical impossibility. Legislation which identifies such situations has already been enacted in several states, including Texas, Washington and Maine. The purpose in developing this classification is, first, to ensure the eligibility of these schools and districts for certain kinds of special attention and assistance and, second, to create a mechanism under which they can be exempted from inappropriate and irrelevant state standards. Alternative standards for schools and districts receiving this classification

should be developed cooperatively by the state legislatures, state boards of education, state education agencies and local school systems in remote rural areas.

5. Ensure that consolidated schools and districts are accountable to their small rural members. An emerging problem in many states is that small rural communities which, either by mandate or voluntarily, have consolidated their schools are now finding that they have little influence on or control over the consolidated unit. When several small rural units are merged with a larger town unit, the town nearly always dominates the new consolidated unit. Similarly, communities which "tuition out" their children to neighboring districts find that they have no voice in the operation of their children's schools. Legislation is needed which redresses this imbalance and ends rural exclusion. This can be accomplished by altering the makeup of consolidated-unit school boards, by creating school-site governing councils, or by instituting other accountability mechanisms.

6. Alternatives to consolidation and reorganization should be encouraged and developed. Regionalizing such expensive programs as vocational education and special education is one alternative to consolidating entire schools and districts. A range of helpful support services can be provided by regional units to schools and districts that want to remain small. Other alternatives include the establishment of an itinerant (i.e., circuit rider) teacher corps system using special-subject teachers, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants and tutors to compensate for instructional weakness in rural schools, or the establishment of voluntary collaboratives for special-interest activities. Once again, the underlying premise is that resources can be brought to children, rather than forcing children to go long distances to get to the resources. The benefits of smallness can be coupled with the benefits of specialization. Legislatures should do all they can to foster innovative developments such as these in their state's rural areas.

Conclusions

While the policy of rural school and district consolidation is not totally devoid of worth, its strengths have been greatly exaggerated, its weaknesses often ignored, and its overall merits as a strategy for educational reform and improvement overstated and oversold.

Despite the massive human and financial investments made on its behalf, consolidation has not dramatically alleviated the educational problems endemic to rural areas. More importantly, consolidated units have not proven more successful than existing small schools and small districts—which have had to make do with relatively meager resources and professional attention.

State legislatures have a unique opportunity—and obligation—to learn from the excesses of the consolidation movement, correct present inequities and assume a leadership role in developing patterns of rural school and district organization which are sensible, appropriate and beneficial to all concerned.

3.
FINANCING AMERICA'S RURAL SCHOOLS: The Agony and the Equity

For state legislatures, school finance has become *the* educational issue of the 1970s. In state after state, the collection and distribution of funds for public education have inspired controversies which are as politically volatile as they are technically complex. Thus, it is not surprising that current debates about rural education focus on tax rates, funding formulas and other financial considerations as often as they focus on more purely educational concerns.

This new emphasis on educational revenues and resources is by no means a random occurrence. Rather, it is the predictable consequence of the clash among three major trends in education.

The first trend is one of *expansion*. The educational innovations of the 1960s created a momentum for expanding both the range of services that schools provide and the constituencies to be served. Career education, arts and humanities education, consumer education, early childhood education, community education, nutrition education, population education, education for all handicapped, education for the gifted and talented, lifelong learning—these are examples of program areas in the public schools which have either been created or significantly enlarged in this decade. Needless to say, the provision of appropriate and useful programs in all these areas comes with a substantial price tag attached. Coupling these new costs with mounting inflation (especially in fixed-cost areas such as fuel) inevitably results in strong pressure for increased revenues.

However, in the past few years, this expansionary trend has come into direct conflict with the second major U.S. education trend—that is, the trend toward *retrenchment*. The hallmark of this second trend is decline—more specifically, declining enrollments, declining confidence in the schools, and a declining willingness to pay more taxes. Taken together, this trend (as expressed through California's passage of Proposition 13,[1] the "back to basics" and "accountability" movements and the widespread defeat of school bond issues) constitutes a powerful force against any expansion efforts. There is broad-based support for the notion that governmental services of all kinds (including education) can, and should, be made more economical and more efficient.

The third trend legislators must take into account today involves the push for *equity* in educational finance. Court decisions (as in the *Serrano*, *Rodriguez* and *Robinson* cases) make it clear that whether educational revenues are rising or declining, they must be equitably collected and equitably distributed. Consequently, school finance reform has had to go beyond simply providing a minimal "foundation" of education funds to every school and move toward the loftier goal of creating genuine equality among taxpayers, schools, districts, and students. Whether the standard employed involves fiscal neutrality, equalized expenditures or compensatory inputs, the fact remains that this movement toward equity has had, and will continue to have, a profound effect on the educational initiatives of state legislatures.

The effects of all three of these trends have certainly been felt by rural schools and school districts across the country. Yet, many state legislatures have not been responsive to the unique financial problems and needs of their state's rural communities.

For example, few statewide studies have been conducted which accurately assess the effects of various school finance reforms on rural schools and districts. In most cases, state legislators and policy makers simply do not have access to reliable research which suggests either how or to what extent rural schools are helped or hindered by pending school finance reforms. Similarly, there are currently no national or regional studies that systematically compare the effects of divergent state and federal school finance mechanisms on America's rural school systems. Far too often, these effects are expressed (and simultaneously obscured) by "averages" or "standard deviations." Thus, there is presently a critical need for statewide research efforts which directly confront the vexing problems of financing public education in sparsely settled areas.

In the absence of a set of reliable and rigorous analyses of rural school finance issues, it is difficult (and inappropriate) to make sweeping generalizations about what the problems are and how they can best be solved. Nevertheless, the three issues which must be dealt with in virtually all rural districts (wealthy as well as poor) are sources of revenue, the inherent

Table 7

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL SHARES OF EDUCATIONAL REVENUE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1919-1976

(in percentages)

Year	Local Share	State Share	Federal Share
1919-20	83.2	16.5	0.3
1929-30	82.7	16.9	0.4
1939-40	68.0	30.3	1.8
1949-50	57.3	39.8	2.9
1959-60	56.5	39.1	4.4
1969-70	52.1	39.9	8.0
1976-77	48.4	43.4	8.2

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1977-78* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1978), p. 67, and *Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary Day Schools, Fall 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 1978), p. 44.

costs of rural schools, and the distribution of educational revenues. Each will now be briefly considered.

Sources of Revenue

Since the financing of American schools traditionally has been the responsibility of individual communities, the majority of the costs have been borne by the local school district. Only in recent years has the combined state and federal contribution to school expenditures risen to equal the local share (see table 7). In 1976, about 49 percent of school funds was raised locally (usually via a locally established tax rate on assessed property value), 42 percent was contributed by the state, and 9 percent was paid by the federal government.[2]

Once again though, diversity is the rule. For example, the level of financial support for education coming from local sources varies from practically zero in the centralized educational system of Hawaii to nearly 90 percent in New Hampshire with its strong New England tradition of local autonomy.[3] Federal support varies from 23 percent in Mississippi, with its high concentration of rural poverty, to less than four percent in New Hampshire, Michigan and Connecticut.[4] The tendency in all states is toward increased state support. Yet, the costs of education have sometimes risen more rapidly than the available aid. Vermont's state aid, for example, has increased in actual dollars, but decreased in relative terms from 38 percent of the budget in 1968 to 22 percent in 1976.[5]

Given the importance of the local property tax in financing rural school systems, it is inevitable that controversy surrounds this particular source of revenue. Economists are split as to whether the net effect of the tax is regressive, progressive or proportional. Some observers argue that the property tax is an accurate measure of wealth, while others believe it only reflects artificially inflated land values. This debate is further complicated by the fact that, in most states, the property tax is the only tax which local residents can directly vote to raise or lower. As the passage of Proposition 13 in California has demonstrated, the property tax serves as a lightning rod for antitaxation sentiments as much as it serves as a mechanism for financing schools.

Despite these complications, there is one central fact about the use of local property taxes to finance rural schools which must be remembered. Put simply, *property taxes pose a particular hardship for rural citizens who tend to be "property rich" but "income poor."*[6] Whether or not this tax accurately reflects wealth is an open question. However, it is clear that it does a poor job of reflecting "ability to pay."[7] A recent simulation by the Education Commission of the States showed that rural districts tended to have high assessed property values per pupil but low income per pupil as compared to urban and suburban districts.[8] For example, in Colorado, central-city districts had a 25 percent lower property value per pupil than their rural counterparts, yet these same city districts registered a 27 percent higher median family income.[9] In practical terms, this means that rural residents (particularly commercial farmers, ranchers and other individuals having sizable land holdings) pay a disproportionately high level of property taxes. A 1977 study of taxes in Vermont made this clear when it noted that the average farmer pays $200 in property taxes for every $1000 of income, while the average nonfarmer pays $29.[10]

When one also remembers that rural areas rarely have an industrial property base to offset the burden on personal property and that many rural communities (particularly in Appalachia and the South) are genuinely impoverished by any standard, it becomes obvious that relying upon local property taxes as a major revenue source for rural schools is neither equitable nor economically sound.

In recent years, various states have introduced reforms to offset the unfair burden of property tax on low-income landowners and to resolve discrepancies between potential value and use value of nonresi-

dential land. The most common solution to the problem of regressivity is a property tax rebate for specified categories of residents—in most cases the elderly, the poor and the disabled. Twenty-eight states offer some form of property tax relief. Another modification to handle the second form of inequity is a differential assessment rate. Land that is sparsely settled and that produces little income, such as forest land and some agricultural land, is assessed at a reduced percentage of market value. Minnesota and South Carolina, for example, assess agricultural property at lower rates than residential property. Presently there are bills pending before other state legislatures to do the same.''

In a system full of complications and inequities, problems are made even more difficult by the fact that persons responsible for assessing rural land are often untrained townspeople, chosen or elected out of patronage or friendship rather than because they possess specific skills. The position of town or county listor or assessor is a highly political position affecting the wealth of the entire area. Listors sometimes attempt to correct for inequities by undervaluing property, and statewide standards are difficult to maintain in decentralized states with hundreds of independent school districts.

Inherent Costs of Rural Education

The frugality and financial conservatism of farmers and other rural residents is legendary throughout the United States. Yet, ironically, the schools run by these same economy-minded rural citizens are routinely assailed outside the rural community as inefficient and uneconomical.

Are rural taxpayers spendthrifts when it comes to public education, or do their critics share some basic misunderstandings about the economic realities of rural schools and districts? Available evidence would indicate the latter. In fact, a strong case can be made that rural schools and districts use the financial resources available to them in as wise and effective a manner as any of their urban and suburban counterparts.

The most important and unique feature of rural school finance lies in the higher costs associated with sparsity of population. A relatively sparse population base is, of course, a defining characteristic of any rural area. Thus, higher costs which arise as a consequence of this sparsity must be regarded as one of the economic facts of rural life rather than as evidence of wastefulness or as costs which can be erased by stricter expenditure controls.

A prominent example of these higher inherent costs involves transportation. In urban and suburban communities, the catchment area of most schools is small enough to allow a sizable percentage of the students to walk to school, while others are able to utilize public transportation. Those urban/suburban students riding school buses go on good roads for a distance which rarely exceeds a few miles (except in the case of busing for desegregation purposes).

By contrast, the catchment areas of rural schools, particularly in the wake of widespread consolidation, are typically several times larger than in metropolitan places. In some regions of the country, it is common for a single rural school to draw its student body from an area of more than 50 square miles. Since relatively few rural students live within walking distance of their school and public transportation is all but nonexistent, many more rural students ride school buses (e.g., 75 percent in predominantly rural West Virginia versus 46 percent in mostly urban New Jersey) for longer distances over poorer roads. The cost implications are obvious. Thus, it is not surprising to discover that in 1974, a rural state like North Dakota spent $172 per pupil on transportation, whereas an urban state like Rhode Island spent only $85. Any further moves toward the consolidation of rural schools will only exacerbate the inherent economic disadvantages these schools face in areas such as transportation.

The cost of specialized programs and services also is higher in rural schools due to sparsity. Rural school districts usually have such a low incidence of students with a particular handicap or special need that it is impossible to provide appropriate programs economically. There is simply no cost-effective way to offer appropriate educational opportunities in a rural school district having one blind child, two deaf children, three mentally retarded children, and four children having various physical handicaps. The economies of providing specialized vocational or academic offerings are equally bleak for rural schools.

Population sparsity also ensures that rural districts will have relatively high per-pupil costs for energy, administrative overhead, equipment and materials, and the maintenance and construction of school facilities. There are certain minimum fixed costs which schools must bear regardless of their enrollment. Having fewer students over which to spread these costs inevitably means that the per-pupil costs will be higher in rural schools.

These higher inherent costs have not gone unnoticed. In fact, consolidation advocates used these facts to justify the creation of bigger schools and districts in rural areas. They reasoned that "economies of scale" would be achieved through consolidation at both the school and district levels.

However, in making these arguments, they either forgot or ignored two essential economic considerations. The first is that rural citizens had already made numerous concessions to frugality over the years. By paying salaries well below the standards of metropolitan districts, they relinquished the opportunity to effectively compete for highly credentialed teachers and administrators, but were able to retain lower pupil-teacher ratios. By utilizing extensive volunteer assistance and in-kind contributions from the community, by hiring generalists who could perform multiple roles in the schools, and by promoting individualized instruction instead of extensive formal course offerings, rural schools were able to ease the financial burdens confronting them.

But, most of all, rural residents offset the inherent

costs of sparsity by simply "doing without." By and large, rural schools opted to stick to their conception of the "basics" and resisted the temptation to buy lots of fancy equipment, construct expensive facilities, and adopt very sophisticated and specialized curricular areas and offerings. Whatever the educational merits of these decisions (and a reasonable case can be made both for and against the decisions on educational grounds), it is clear that they enabled rural districts to keep their overall per-pupil expenditures in line with metropolitan ones.

The second mistake made by consolidators was their refusal to take seriously the diseconomies of bigger, more sophisticated schools. Transportation has already been cited as a key cost which rose dramatically with consolidation. Yet, there were several other expenses which grew as the size of rural schools and districts grew.[13] For example, personnel costs tended to rise substantially after a consolidation. To make the merger politically palatable, administrators (and often teachers as well) were assured that no one would lose their job. So, instead of replacing the three former superintendents with one (a move that would save some money), it was far more common for the new district to pick one of the three to be the new superintendent and then hire the remaining two as assistant superintendents (with no resultant savings). Similarly, when old districts merged, the common practice was to "level up" everyone's salary to meet the schedule of the highest-paying district. And, finally, in order to keep their promises, consolidated districts recruited more specialized and highly credentialed staff members, even though the salaries they commanded were often significantly higher than those of the generalists they replaced. Far from saving money, consolidated rural schools had to greatly increase pupil-teacher ratios in order to even approximate former spending levels.

In addition to these straightforward diseconomies of consolidation, some hidden costs of bigness are beginning to come to light. For example, researchers are finally beginning to document that the alienation which tends to be a by-product of schools becoming bigger has a startlingly high price tag attached to it. A recent study released by the National Institute of Education not only estimates that the U.S. school vandalism and property damage bill runs into hundreds of millions of dollars each year, but also that the incidence of vandalism *increases* as school and community size increase.[14] Beyond the direct costs of vandalism, big schools have rising insurance costs, growing security budgets, and other protection-related costs. Similarly, some observers have speculated that the ever-increasing defeat of school bond issues is, at least in part, a result of a declining sense of ownership among parents and taxpayers as schools and districts get bigger and more remote.

The conclusions to be drawn here are:

- That rural schools are burdened by some unique, and largely unavoidable, financial burdens;
- That rural schools (particularly small schools in remote areas) have already made major efforts to economize and that any further economy push is likely to be punitive rather than helpful, and
- That school consolidation and district reorganization are not likely to solve the financial problems facing rural schools and districts.

As a 16-state review of school finance concluded, in part:

> States with fewer districts exhibit as much disparity in expenditures as those with many districts . . . states with a small number of districts appear to have as much variation in per-student valuation as states with a large number of districts.[15]

Distribution of State Education Funds

After decades of stability, state school finance systems are experiencing a period of major upheaval. Today legislators are being pressured from all sides—by professional and special-interest groups seeking an expansion of school-based services, by taxpayer groups seeking major reductions in the financial burden of public services, by court decisions which establish constraints on the collection and distribution of state revenues, by congressionally established priorities and programs, and by any other group perceiving itself as having a vested interest in the outcome of the school finance debate.

The specific ways in which state-level school finance reform will alter rural schools and districts remains largely unknown. Given the diversity of America's rural communities and the variance among state finance systems, it is unlikely that the effects will be uniform. In most states, ruralness, *per se*, has not been an explicit factor shaping the distribution of state aid to education. Thus, how well rural schools and districts will fare in these reforms largely depends on their own characteristics.

To date, it appears that rural districts characterized by low property wealth and low income have been significantly aided by recent school finance reforms.[16] Other kinds of rural districts, such as those found in prosperous farming areas of the Midwest, do not seem to have reaped many appreciable benefits through these reforms. However, the effects of declining enrollments (and subsequent adjustments in state aid formulas) have confounded one's ability to project long-term impacts.

Another factor complicating the net effect of state aid to rural schools lies in the fact that several states continue to provide conflicting financial incentives. In other words, by offering both compensation for sparsity and incentives to consolidate, states like New York, Arkansas and Montana present rural districts with contradictory signals as to where their financial well-being lies. It would appear, however, that these are temporary problems arising as states shift from their historic preference for consolidation to their emerging preference for sparsity adjustments in the distribution of state aid to education.

In 25 of the 50 states, density of population and/or scale are now perceived as special needs, and

some effort has been made to correct for the inherent differences in rural school costs. Some of the policies adopted to deal with sparsity in our rural states are described below.

- IDAHO combines both sparsity and scale factors. If an elementary school is more than 10 miles from another elementary school, or if a secondary school is more than 15 miles from another secondary school, the average daily attendance (the basis for the state aid) is increased inversely with size. For example, for state aid purposes, an elementary school with between 200 and 299 pupils would be increased by 10 percent while the enrollment of a school with 50 to 100 students would be given a multiplier of 25 percent.
- MONTANA establishes a per-pupil expenditure that varies with school size (e.g., for an elementary school of 50 students, the guaranteed amount would be $836 per pupil, and for a school of 350, it would be $639 per pupil). The state provides what the statewide property tax does not raise.
- NEBRASKA increases the per-pupil support according to population density, as follows:

Density	Percent State Aid Added
3-4 per square mile	10%
2-3 per square mile	20%
1-2 per square mile	30%
Less than 1	40%

- NEW MEXICO employs linear formulae both for schools with fewer than 200 students and for districts with fewer than 4,000 students. The add-on is used to increase the attendance figure that is used to calculate state aid. For example, the enrollment multiplier for an elementary school is (1-enrollment/200) and the corresponding multiplier for a district is (1-enrollment/4,000) x .15.
- UTAH uses a table to choose the weight given for school size. Assuming that the schools are considered to be necessarily small, assistance is given to compensate for diseconomies of scale.
- COLORADO assigns "bonus pupils" to small attendance centers according to tables established by the state. These centers must be a specified number of miles from other schools to qualify.
- MAINE uses geographic isolation grants to adjust the per-pupil allocation.[16]

Legislative Alternatives

Ensuring equity for rural schools and districts requires that legislators be senstive to the unique financial constraints under which these units operate. As Rachel Tompkins has noted:

> The general policy framework for state school finance should be governed by the goals of *adequacy, stability, equity, and flexibility*. Each child should be provided with adequate resources to learn, regardless of the child's place of residence. The finance system should provide school districts with predictable and stable levels of resources. Equity requires that differences in the level of dollars per pupil among districts should be based on differences in the educational needs of children and not on the accidents of property wealth and income level. Finally, finance plans should allow local districts the flexibility to develop educational programs most suitable to community needs.[17]

The nine rural school finance alternatives which state legislators should consider are as follows.

1. Assume an increased proportion of total educational costs. Currently, the average state share of educational expenditures is below 50 percent, with some predominantly rural states such as New Hampshire and Nebraska providing less than 20 percent of total education dollars. In order to achieve even a semblance of district equalization, a significant increase in the amount and proportion of state funding of education is necessary. In all but a few states (e.g. ones with very productive agricultural land and/or considerable rural wealth) increased state aid will benefit both rural taxpayers and rural school systems.

2. Distribute state aid on the basis of need rather than equal dollars per pupil. Flat grants to school districts should either be eliminated or reduced to an absolute minimum. State aid should provide proportionately greater assistance to districts having *high per-pupil costs* (because of isolation, children with special needs, or other problems) and/or *low property wealth* and/or *low income*. A variety of mechanisms can be employed to achieve this kind of distribution, many of which are described in a 1976 publication of the National Conference of State Legislatures entitled *School Finance Reform — A Legislators' Handbook*.[18]

3. Pay extraordinary energy costs, transportation costs and capital expenditures with state funds. Two categories of costs that fall heavily on rural areas are capital outlay and transportation. It would be extremely beneficial to rural districts if those costs could be assumed by state funds. Substantial benefits would also accrue to urban districts; therefore, state assumption may be politically feasible.

Florida and Maryland have fully assumed the costs of construction. Careful analysis of the outcomes of full state funding there should provide guidance to other states. Even if paying total capital outlay bills is politically impossible, other more limited reforms of capital expenditure would benefit rural areas. First, information systems should be developed at the state level which describe the existing stock of school buildings. Only a few states have such systems. Second, the 25 states that contribute little or nothing toward capital costs should provide some assistance. Third, states should allow their higher credit ratings to be used by local districts when borrowing for capital expenditures. These three short-range steps would benefit children in rural districts and would not preclude possible full assumption of capital costs in the future.[19]

Transportation costs vary with geography. Rural districts are saddled with higher proportional costs

because children are scattered over a large territory. This is a particular problem given rising fuel costs. There seems to be little sense in limiting instructional dollars in poor rural districts by requiring local districts to pay for transportation. Similarly, in those states where desegregation plans involving transportation are a reality, urban districts may well join with rural ones to urge state legislative support for greater transportation subsidies.

Energy costs are also rising at an alarming rate. Few rural schools have the financial capacity to absorb these costs without making programmatic cuts. States should aid schools by direct subsidies and/or grants to renovate rural facilities so that they become more energy-efficient.

4. Establish state sparsity payments for isolated rural school districts. In every region of the country, there are school districts which, because of climate, terrain or distance, are genuinely isolated. Usually, such schools bear abnormally high, but unavoidable, costs per pupil. States should provide extra resources (financial, human and material) to such schools in order to ensure, first, that their students have adequate educational opportunities and, second, that rural taxpayers are not unfairly burdened. Linking sparsity payments to the "remote but necessary" school classification system described in the previous chapter is one way of ensuring that only those schools which deserve such payments will actually receive them.

5. Inaugurate a system of differential assessments of property for tax purposes. Ideally, taxes for education should be collected on the basis of both property and income and should factor in one's "ability to pay." However, since property taxes are currently the major source of education revenue, it is important to inject a measure of equity into this tax through a system of differential assessments. Basically, this means that property would be classified according to type (for example, industrial, commercial, residential and agricultural) and taxed at differing rates. It is particularly important to ensure that agricultural land and other open spaces are taxed according to their *actual use* and productivity rather than their potential (or speculative) value. This system would be particularly helpful to rural areas and would help stem the general decline of the rural economy. States interested in this idea must be prepared to finance rigorous training programs for assessors and other relevant personnel and to expand their state tax departments.

6. Prevent the passage of legislation which mandates or encourages school district reorganization. This alternative was discussed in detail in the previous chapter. The evidence shows that reorganizing rural school districts to create larger units is an ineffective and counterproductive method of school finance reform. If further tax-base equalization is deemed desirable, there are many proposals to develop regional tax collection areas which leave the governance and operation of schools in existing districts.

7. Enact legislation which requires new state mandates for education to be accompanied by the state funds necessary to implement them. Few things make state officials angrier than federally mandated programs which arrive unaccompanied by the necessary funds. State legislators must resist the temptation to adopt this practice themselves when enacting legislation mandating local programs.

8. Require the state education agency to distribute the federal funds it controls in an equitable manner. There is a widespread suspicion among rural educators and community leaders that rural school districts receive a disproportionately low percentage of the federal education funds which are channeled through the states. Legislators should act to ensure that all school districts, regardless of size or geographic location, receive their fair share of state-administered federal funds.

9. Establish a system of school-site budgeting. This alternative is particularly applicable to states having countywide or other multischool districts. Rural schools are likely to be prime beneficiaries of a decentralization of budget and expenditure decisions to the school level. In simple terms, each principal would be given an annual allocation of money for a school. The budget for the year would be developed in cooperation with teachers, noncertified staff, and an advisory council of parents, citizens and students. Decisions about program, staffing patterns and special services can be made as budgets are developed. Such a process allows for maximum community flexibility in the use of resources.

4.
AMERICA'S RURAL TEACHERS: They're Not In It for the Money

Teachers are the key to educational excellence in the schooling process. Indeed, the importance of high teacher quality elicits nearly universal agreement throughout the United States.

Still, a compelling case can be made that the need for excellent teachers is most acute in the nation's sparsely settled areas. Two major factors contribute to this heightened importance. First, rural school districts normally employ far fewer specialized support staff members (e.g., curriculum coordinators, career counselors, media specialists and school psychologists) than do their metropolitan counterparts. And second, most rural communities lack a variety of educational and cultural institutions outside the school system. Together, these circumstances imply that rural classroom teachers are unusually important and influential in the development of their students.

Nevertheless, existing policies and programs in the United States do not reflect either the importance of rural teachers or their unique problems. There is a paucity of training programs designed especially for teachers who will serve in rural schools. Rural salary schedules for education personnel tend to be markedly lower than in urban areas. In-service and other professional development activities for teachers are severely constrained in sparsely populated regions. All in all, there appears to be a notable absence of commitment in the United States to training or retaining excellent rural teachers.

This chapter will document these problems and discuss some potential remedies.

Current Status

In 1976, slightly more than two million elementary and secondary classroom teachers were employed in United States public schools.[1] Interestingly, the absolute number of teachers has risen since 1974, in spite of declining student enrollments.[2] Classroom teachers still constitute the largest category of public employees in the United States.[3] In fact, approximately 30 percent of all United States public employees (federal, state and local) work for local school systems.[4]

Historically, one should note not only the enormous increase in the number of teachers (elementary school teachers have doubled and secondary school teachers have multiplied nearly tenfold since 1920), but also that the growth of the teaching profession far outstripped the growth in student enrollments. Thus, in 1920 there was one elementary school teacher for every 35 elementary students, while in 1974 there was one elementary teacher for every 27 elementary students. Similarly, in 1920 there was one secondary teacher for every 22 secondary students, while in 1974 the ratio of secondary students to teachers was 14:1. Table 8 reveals some of these historical trends.

In terms of teacher credentials and qualifications, two major trends have emerged over the past 15 years.

First, teachers today tend to be more educated. In 1964, 17 percent of all public school teachers either had no degree or only a two-year associate degree. By 1975, only one percent of all public school teachers were lacking at least a bachelor's degree. Similarly, in 1964, 16.6 percent of the public elementary staff had a master's degree, whereas the total had grown to 25.9 percent by 1975.

Second, teachers today tend to be less experienced. Whereas nearly one out of every three teachers in 1964 had 20 years or more of teaching experience, fewer than one in five teachers active in 1975 had a similar degree of experience. Table 9 illustrates these points.

During the 1960s, as a result of the so-called "baby boom," there was a distinct teacher shortage in the United States. In response, America's post-secondary education institutions undertook a major teacher training effort. By the early 1970s, this effort had become, in some sense, almost too successful. In 1975, there were approximately 1,300 post-secondary institutions offering programs in teacher education.[5] And, instead of a shortage, there was now a marked surplus of teachers. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics noted that in 1974, there was an effective *demand* for about 150,000 beginning teachers.[6] However, the actual *supply* of beginning teachers that year exceeded 300,000.[7] NCES projections indicate that, although supply and demand of

beginning teachers are both dropping, there will still be a major surplus of new teachers in the near future.

Rural Teacher Statistics

One clear measure of the disregard accorded to rural teachers in the United States lies in the fact that no one even bothers to collect and analyze data on rural teachers. Neither the federal government nor the national teachers' organizations (i.e., the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers) has issued a major report on rural teachers in nearly two decades. Thus, the data used in this section is suggestive rather than definitive. Further, it must be remembered that, like most aspects of rural education, there is enormous variance both within and among the 50 states.

Desite these data limitations, one thing is apparent—rural teachers constitute a significant body of professional educators. In 1972, there were approximately 790,000 public school teachers employed in nonmetropolitan communities.[1] In other words, about *one out of every three* public school teachers was employed outside a designated metropolitan area.[2]

The problem mentioned most often in regard to rural teachers involves the low salaries they command. The argument is frequently heard that rural schools will never get their fair share of excellent teachers until they pay wages comparable to those paid in metropolitan communities. The basic assumption which we will examine here is that rural teachers are paid less than urban teachers having comparable credentials.

The aggregate national statistics do reveal some rather startling salary differences for teachers, depending on their location. For example, in 1972, the average salary for the month of October was $1,023 for all public metropolitan teachers, and $785 for all public nonmetropolitan teachers.[3] On an annual basis, this translates into $12,276 for metropolitan teachers and $9,420 for their nonmetropolitan counterparts. In other words, the average nonmetropolitan teacher earns approximately 24 percent less money than the average metropolitan teacher.

Although it is an inexact measure, the teacher salary data on county units corroborates the national indices. In counties having a population of more than 250,000 (and thus likely to be heavily urban), the average monthly earnings of a public school teacher in October 1972 were $1,081 (which is an annual salary of $12,972).[4] By comparison, in counties having a population below 10,000 (and thus likely to be predominantly rural), the average monthly earnings of a public school teacher in October 1972 were $703 (which is an annual salary of $8,436).[5] Once again, the average rural teacher earned approximately 35 percent less money than the average urban teacher.

There is one more inexact, but useful, national breakdown of teacher salaries—that is, by school district size. In school districts enrolling 3,000 or more pupils, the average monthly earnings of a teacher in October 1972 were $987 (or $11,844 annually).[6] However, in school districts having fewer than 50 pupils (and there were 2,053 such districts in 1972), the average monthly earnings of a teacher in October 1972 were $521 (or $6,252 annually).[7] Teachers in these very small districts, found primarily in sparsely populated areas, had an average salary which was *47 percent lower* than teachers in larger and more urban school systems.

Confronted with these dramatic differences, some educators argue that the figures fail to account for two factors—differentials in the cost-of-living and in the credentials and experience of teachers. If the

Table 8

NUMBER OF U.S. PUBLIC STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, 1920-1974

	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1974
TOTAL STUDENTS							
(thousands)	21,578	25,678	25,434	25,112	36,087	45,619	45,409
Elementary	19,378	21,279	18,833	19,387	27,602	32,597	31,333
Secondary	2,200	4,399	6,601	5,725	8,485	13,022	14,076
TOTAL TEACHERS							
(thousands)	657	842	875	914	1,355	2,023	2,156
Elementary	557	632	575	590	834	1,126	1,176
Secondary	100	210	300	324	521	897	980
TOTAL PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO	33:1	30:1	29:1	27:1	27:1	23:1	21:1
Elementary	35:1	34:1	33:1	33:1	33:1	29:1	27:1
Secondary	22:1	21:1	22:1	18:1	16:1	15:1	14:1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

NOTE: Elementary refers to kindergarten and grades one through eight. Secondary refers to grades nine through 12.

cost-of-living really were substantially different in urban and rural communities, and if rural schools were mainly hiring teachers with bachelor's degrees and little experience, while urban schools were hiring teachers with master's degrees and lots of experience, this rationalization would have a degree of validity. However, even if correct, it is unlikely that these factors would end up equalling the 24-percent, 35-percent and 47-percent urban-rural teacher salary differentials discovered.

The state of Nebraska has compiled some interesting statistics on this topic. In 1976-77, Nebraska had 800 Class I (rural, kindergarten through eighth grade) schools, the majority of which were one-teacher institutions in the most sparsely settled areas of the state.[16] The salary range for teachers in Class I schools was $4,840 to $15,600 per annum,[17] and the average salary was $7,788.[18] In fact, the median salary for a Class I teacher with a master's degree was only $8,610 in 1976-77.[19] By comparison, in Class IV and V (urban, kindergarten through twelfth grade) school districts, the average annual teacher salaries were $12,557 and $12,018, respectively, in 1976-77. Once again, average rural teacher salaries were almost 40 percent below urban salary averages.[20]

Cost-of-living data was not available by school district in Nebraska. However, the most recent data did not substantiate the claim that rural schools hire predominantly low-credentialed, inexperienced teachers. Indeed, in the rural Class I districts, average teacher experience was 12.6 years, compared to 12 years in Class IV districts and 10 years in urban Class V districts.[21] Less than 10 percent of Class I teachers were in their first year of teaching.[22] Urban districts in Nebraska did hire more teachers with master's and other advanced degrees than Class I districts, but approximately 80 percent of the rural teachers had at least a bachelor's degree.[23] Thus, it would appear that comparably qualified teachers do receive significantly lower salaries in rural areas.

Rural Teacher Characteristics and Concerns

Although much has changed since the time when this year's rural teacher was last year's rural student, being a teacher in a rural school does carry with it some unique problems and potentials.[24]

For example, teachers in the small rural school remain accountable to the community in ways virtually unimaginable in cities and suburbs, where they tend to be viewed as specialists whose personal lives are separate from those of their students' families. Rural teachers still tend to come from the communities in which they teach (or from communities so like them as to be virtually indistinguishable).[25] And practical considerations of distance and housing availability generally compel them to live near their schools. Thus, the role of teacher remains important to the community outside the classroom as well as in it.

To find job satisfaction as a rural teacher, it is apparently necessary for a person to fit comfortably into this broadened and comparatively unspecialized role. Muse, Hoppe and Parsons found that teachers from rural backgrounds were most able to do this. They concluded that "the most dissatisfied rural teachers tend to have been raised in urban areas,"[26] and that those same teachers tend to find "social acceptance more difficult" in the country community.[27]

The Utah evidence provided by Muse, Hoppe and Parsons seems to suggest that the rural schoolteacher is still typically the rural-born-and-reared woman, returning home to teach the next generation. She is far better educated than her turn-of-the-century counterpart and is far more likely to have seen some of the world, but she has remained in touch with the basic concerns and values of the rural community. This kind of teacher will help to maintain cultural continuity between home and school, and she will feel comfortable in pursuing this end.

Teaching "the basics" and reinforcing community standards continue to be the dominant tasks of the rural school. Schooling is considered critically important; Muse, Hoppe and Parsons found more teachers than parents who felt it was important for children to be home at choretime rather than spending additional time in school. But the emphasis is still on basic academics and enforcing accepted behavior standards.

The Muse, Hoppe and Parsons study shows that "a sizable proportion of students (38 percent) and parents (30 percent) tend to support the statement that teachers hold too high expectations of the students."[28] Very few of their parent-respondents, however, agreed with the statement, "The schools are too strict." Obedience, discipline and fundamental skills continue to be central to contemporary rural education.

The close ties between school and community, while laudable in many respects, can put unpleasant pressures on teachers as well as children. The Muse, Hoppe and Parsons survey reports that teachers find "community cliques, gossip and small-town talk" one of the chief drawbacks to country teaching.[29]

The most frequent and serious rural school problem usually cited in the literature is a lack of creative and innovative teaching. The issue of innovation in rural schools is a complex one and cannot be simply laid at the feet of rural political conservatism and social tradition. In fact, there is some evidence suggesting that rural communities are far more interested in educational innovation than is commonly assumed. Paul Ford's study of small high schools found students yearning for more intellectual stimulation and more access to new resources.[30] Similarly, the Utah study found parents, administrators, teachers and students in strong agreement that their schools needed "innovative teachers with new methods more than additional 'traditional' teachers."[31]

Teacher training programs in the United States have paid little attention to the needs of teachers in small rural schools. Although the literature is full of moaning about the poor quality of rural teachers, little

Table 9

PUBLIC CLASSROOM TEACHERS, BY EXPERIENCE AND DEGREES HELD, 1964 and 1975

ITEM	1964		1975	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Percent with Teaching Experience of:				
1-3 years	16.9	22.5	19.8	19.4
4-6 years	14.3	18.1	20.0	18.7
7-9 years	10.1	11.2	13.5	14.3
10-14 years	15.3	15.8	15.6	20.3
15-19 years	11.6	11.2	12.4	11.5
20 years or more	31.8	21.1	18.7	15.8
Median Years of Teaching:	12	9	9	9
Percent, Highest Degree Held:				
No Degree	3.8	0.4		
2-Year Degree	12.1	0.6	1.1	0.6
Bachelor's Degree	66.7	62.6	70.2	54.3
Master's Degree	16.6	33.5	25.9	42.6
Professional Degree, 6 years	0.7	2.4	2.5	2.2
Doctor's Degree	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.2

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1976), table 222

systematic effort has been made to recruit the best people for rural schools, and even less effort has been made to train them properly. As Muse, Hoppe and Parsons pointed out:

> A recent study of university offerings revealed that in 1969, no more than six universities in the nation offered courses which might be of any prospective value specifically to the rural teacher.[32]

The training gap is being gradually closed as the meager efforts of universities are supplemented by regional centers and in-service training programs. But the amount of professional support given the rural teacher will not compare with that given the urban and suburban teacher for many years to come.

Most rural teachers, then, enter their classroom with little or no special preparation for meeting the needs of country children. And, unlike the urban and suburban teacher, they cannot call on professionally designed commercial materials to help them. For 15 years, curriculum developers have undertaken countless projects for urban children, ranging from Sesame Street to minority-oriented social studies curricula for the high schools. For 20 years, carefully designed suburban curriculum packages have been available. During the same period, virtually nothing has been done for the rural child. There is no profit in it for the publishing companies—there are fewer absolute numbers in rural areas, and there is less similarity among country regions than there is among cities. Unfortunately, philanthropic and governmental funding sources have not (with some notable exceptions) made up for this lack of commercial interest in rural education. As a result, the teacher looking for innovative materials for a class of impoverished urban children has a vast array to choose from; a teacher looking for similar resources for a group of poor country pupils must generally be resigned to teaching about fire hydrants, manicured lawns, skyscrapers and other accoutrements of urban/suburban life.

Even if the teacher has the resourcefulness to design rural-oriented materials alone, there are still problems to be faced. The poverty characteristic of rural areas has traditionally tightened the bond between community and school. The in-kind contributions which replaced the outlay of money brought the consumers of education nearer to its source, and added to the sense of accountability and responsibility. But today, the needs of schools are so complex and require so much money and expertise that community contributions fill less of the gap. The poor school district cannot afford to hire a science consultant to design a curriculum around its woodland. Usually, the school cannot even afford to buy teachers the time to do it themselves.

Some extraordinary teachers do it anyway. They take the time out of their personal lives, and collect materials from the community and from the natural resources of the countryside. But many teachers do not have this creative energy, and they struggle along with the outdated textbooks and inappropriate materials which are all the poor rural community can afford.

Teachers who must handle multiple grades are limited as well. For instructors who must teach every period, depth of preparation is difficult, especially in a variety of subject areas. One study of small high schools in Washington state found that:

> Teachers in small schools studied average between five and six preparations in different subject areas each day. It is unrealistic to sup-

pose that a teacher could be adequately prepared in this number of subjects and, in addition, keep up with curriculum development in all the subjects.[33]

Legislative Alternatives

Just as rural reformers sought "better" curricula, so too have they clamored for "better" teachers. Once again, though, the definition of "better" is of considerable importance. Usually, by "better" these reformers meant "more credentialed," "more highly specialized" and "urban trained."

Yet, while there is little doubt that rural schools could benefit from the presence of better teachers, it is not at all clear that the traditional meaning of "better" is appropriate or helpful in the rural context. In fact, a very persuasive case can be made that higher academic credentials, in and of themselves, have minimal validity as a measure of actual teaching competence; that rural schools require competent generalists far more than a variety of specialists; and that teachers trained to understand and work with the unique strengths and weaknesses of rural schools are much more desirable than urban-trained and urban-oriented teachers from even the most prestigious universities.

Perhaps an example from the health field can shed some light on this point. In the past few years, there has been a significant shift in the medical profession away from training large numbers of highly sophisticated specialists, and toward training "family practice" doctors (i.e., general practitioners). This trend is a particular asset to rural areas which do not need a neurosurgeon in town nearly as much as a general practitioner, who can call upon the services of a neurosurgeon when necessary.

Similarly, rural schools need teachers who are (contradictory as it may sound) specially trained to be generalists. The best rural teachers are the ones who are able to cope with sparsity, utilize community resources, invent curricular materials, and above all else, are oriented toward teaching *children* rather than *subjects*. When a corps of specialists are available to these rural teachers (for example, through a multidistrict educational services agency), the range of human resources available to aid rural schoolchildren can be quite extensive and impressive. Thus, four high-priority legislative alternatives to improve rural teacher quality should be considered.

1. Require state-supported colleges and graduate schools of education across the country to create special training programs which will explicitly prepare teachers for service in rural schools. At present, there are no more than a handful of teacher training programs in the entire nation which directly assist students interested in rural education careers. Teachers are still the backbone of any school system, and the fact that rural schools must accept teachers without specialized rural training puts them at a disadvantage they can ill afford. Therefore, this is the highest-priority alternative.

2. Expand in-service training (and other professional development activities) for rural teachers and administrators. In most rural communities, the professional growth and development of school personnel is impeded, first, by the fact that rural districts rarely provide continuing in-service programs and, second, by the fact that the kinds of external opportunities for professional development available in urban areas (e.g., teacher centers and universities) are notably absent in rural areas. It is unreasonable to expect teachers and administrators, already burdened by the heavy work loads characteristic of rural schools, to do everything on their own time and of their own initiative. Teachers need time to share ideas and problems with their counterparts, both within their own and in other school systems. They also need the time and resources to develop curricular materials, take needed courses and keep up with recent advances in their fields.

State and federal officials often lament the teacher quality found in rural schools. Yet, far more would be accomplished by their sponsorship of rural in-service training programs than by simply decrying the degree of competence of rural educators. Once again, where local colleges are either inaccessible or unresponsive to this need, multidistrict educational service agencies are a potential source of assistance.

3. Increase the voluntary sharing of teachers, both among schools in the same district and between neighboring rural districts. Since most rural schools neither need nor can afford full-time teachers in every subject area, there is great utility in the notion of sharing teachers (for example, a music/art teacher at the elementary level and an advanced math/physics teacher at the secondary level) among rural schools and districts. Some rural districts already employ this strategy extensively, but most use it only sparingly or still haven't tried it at all. Sharing teachers can help overcome the problem of scarce human resources in sparsely settled areas. Legislation should be enacted which both creates and provides an ongoing subsidy for a system of itinerant rural teachers.

4. Enact legislation which encourages the development of a "community faculty" to complement and extend the regular educational program in rural schools. Nearly every rural community has individuals with special talents or a knowledge of subjects not found among the regular faculty. For example, in coal-mining regions, community residents could (either as volunteers or as paid part-time employees) teach labor history to local students. In black, native American, or hispanic communities, local citizens could be used to develop a whole cultural heritage program in the schools. Under this program, a local cabinetmaker, mechanic, agricultural extension agent or other skilled resident could share his area of expertise with local students. In addition, retired members of the community and other older citizens often constitute an invaluable reservoir of untapped information and human resources which

could be harnessed to advance the education of young people in rural areas.

By inaugurating such a "community faculty" program, extensive educational and social benefits can accrue to all rural community members. The students will have learning experiences not otherwise available to them. The school personnel will receive an infusion of needed moral and programmatic support. And, residents of the community will have the chance both to become an integral part of their children's school experience and to feel needed and wanted by people and institutions about which they care deeply. Indeed, the small-scale life style and close-knit character of most rural communities makes the development of a community faculty both a feasible idea and a unique opportunity.

Implementing such a plan requires a modification of state teacher certification laws. However, this does not need to be an arduous undertaking. For example, some states having large Amish populations changed their certification laws to read that a teacher must be "either certified or qualified" in order to allow the continuance of the Amish schools. The same principle of equivalent qualifications could effectively be employed to allow rural schools to make the best possible use of the human resources potentially available to them.

5. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Delivering Appropriate Services and Programs in Rural Schools

For decades, there has been an obsession in America with the organizational and economic aspects of rural education. While some gains have been achieved as a result of changes in school organization and finance, they have largely come at the expense of the actual content of a rural education. In other words, the persistent focus on reforming the structure of rural education meant that serious attention and resources rarely flowed toward improving the substance of the education being provided to rural school children.

The great debates over consolidation and reorganization raged on throughout rural America for decades. In some rural communities, the consolidation advocates eventually won, while in others, the anticonsolidation forces prevailed. Unfortunately, in most rural communities, no matter who won the fight over consolidation, it was the students who ended up losing. All too often, the net effect of rural structural reform was that some students attended deplorable small schools near their homes while others were bused long distances to equally deplorable big schools.

Clearly, the time has come for big- and small-school proponents alike to put aside their quibbling about the potential advantages of various school sizes and organizational configurations and, instead, begin to concentrate their attention and energies on realizing whatever potentials may exist in America's rural schools. Form can no longer take precedence over substance if lasting rural school improvement is the desired outcome. Therefore, rural school reform efforts that do not accord a position of prominence to the design and implementation of needed substantive changes cannot be expected to produce significant benefits for rural schoolchildren.

Thus, the central question facing rural education today (and probably well into the future) remains largely unanswered—that is, what is the nature and content of a distinctively *rural* education? To some, this question will doubtless seem a bit odd. After all, young children in any setting must learn essentially the same set of language and number skills, and older children must be prepared to deal competently with the challenges they will face after their elementary and secondary schooling is completed. Assertions like these are correct but incomplete.

For example, it must be remembered that the challenges facing rural graduates are not precisely the same as those facing most urban and suburban graduates. In some sections of the country, a far lower percentage of rural graduates will pursue post-secondary education and training opportunities. Many rural students, by choice or circumstance, will remain in their own or similar small rural communities and will have to function effectively within the constraints of the rural economy. Conversely, a sizable group of rural graduates will (usually to find work) migrate to cities and will have to function effectively in a social and economic environment quite different from the one in which they were raised. Preparing rural students who have a real understanding of the options before them, who have the skills and training to take advantage of these options, and who have experience and judgment to choose wisely among a set of such divergent options—these are some of the unique challenges facing rural schools across the nation.

Often, however, the distinctiveness of a rural education lies not so much in what skills and information must eventually be acquired, but rather in the manner in which this acquisition takes place. For years, rural schools were encouraged (and occasionally forced) to give up their traditional style of educating rural children and to imitate the curricula and methods of metropolitan schools. Nearly everyone agreed that rural schools needed a better curriculum and better curricular materials. But "better" has too often meant "more like metropolitan schools" instead of "better" in meeting the educational needs of rural children. This is an attitude which must be altered if rural schools are to make lasting qualitative improvements. As Tom Gjelten observed:

> As long as rural schools emulate an urban model of education, rely on curriculum materials written for urban children, and seek to hire the same kind of teachers as urban schools seek, they probably will be second-rate. But rural schools do not need to fashion themselves after urban schools. They have their own model, with its own

wonderful strengths. What's more, an urban school curriculum is not appropriate for the needs of rural students, coming from small communities rather than from cities. Rural schools' curricula are not fated to be inferior, as long as they take advantage of the rich resources of the rural community and relate directly to the experience of rural children.'

The greatest irony here can be found in the fact that most widely praised "progressive" and "innovative" schools in the cities and suburbs earned these plaudets by adopting a variety of practices—such as individualized instruction, cross-age grouping, older students teaching younger students, using the community as a learning resource, "mainstreaming" mildly handicapped children, and emphasizing the basics—which policy makers and academics have tried to eliminate from rural schools for decades.

Clearly, there is a pressing need to build a curriculum that reflects and enhances the natural advantages of the rural communities being served. What general features would such a curriculum include? Once again, Gjelten is instructive, stating that rural schools should incorporate:

- A strong foundation in the teaching of basic skills and essential facts
- An emphasis on practical skills and learning by doing
- Training in self-directed study and the development of initiative
- A focus on the local rural community
- A commitment to familarizing students with the outside world
- An emphasis on the options available to rural youths both within and beyond the local community

Developing this kind of locally relevant core curriculum will go a long way toward enhancing the quality of rural schools and toward forging appropriate and uniquely rural educational opportunities for students in sparsely populated areas.

Nevertheless, it must be recognized and acknowledged that even the best rural schools will have great difficulty in providing some of the specialized services which certain of their students may either desire or require. In part, this is a financial problem arising from the high costs of providing special programs and services in districts having a low incidence of students with similar special needs. It is also indicative of the fact that rural schools have some built-in constraints which prevent them from being all things to all people.

The areas of vocational and special education illustrate some of the difficulties rural schools face. Considerable progress has been made in recent years as far as upgrading rural vocational education is concerned. Today, the majority of America's rural high school students do have access to some type of vocational education experience. Two basic delivery systems are common. Students in large, consolidated, comprehensive rural high schools generally receive vocational instruction right in these institutions. Students in smaller schools seeking vocational training commute full- or part-time either to a comprehensive high school or, more often, to a specifically designated regional vocational educational facility.

Still, access remains a major problem. In many remote or isolated rural areas, there are children who want and could profit from vocational education, for whom programs are not available. In communities fortunate enough to have excellent vocational programs and facilities, sexual, racial and class discrimination in admissions are by no means unknown. Ironically, at the other end of the spectrum, rural communities with substandard vocational programs and facilities tend to enroll disproportionately high numbers of poor or minority group students in the vocational track.

A more common problem is that rural voc-ed programs are often severely limited in terms of the range of available offerings. Frequently, there are only two or three existing program areas, and the course coverage even in these areas tends to be superficial. Thus, while access to "some kind" of vocational education exists, it is not necessarily access to the type or level of training needed.

And finally, it must be remembered that there is an enormous difference between access in theory and access in reality. Often, regional vocational centers will include a very large geographic area in their official description of their constituency. But the population they actually serve tends to be a much smaller group clustered in reasonably close physical proximity to the regional voc-ed center. For the most remote rural students, simply getting to and from these regional units can be arduous, expensive and enormously time-consuming. These hardships discourage all but the most tenacious rural students from completing (or even enrolling in) vocational training activities. Thus, as a rule, the more rural (i.e., geographically isolated) a student is, the less real access he or she has to meaningful vocational education programs.

Special education presents similar problems of access and quality. In isolated regions, small student populations with special needs simply cannot economically justify purchasing the necessary services and facilities. Even categorical state aid is of little value when the resource units are indivisible and the aid is insufficient to purchase an entire unit (teacher or special equipment). Special equipment, training and instruction are needed to work with children with hearing, visual, neuromuscular, emotional or other disabilities. Instead, the limited resources of rural schools are necessarily directed toward the most common needs, where their effectiveness can be maximized.

The most widely used model for the delivery of vocational and technical educational services — regional centers — is far less acceptable to parents seeking special education for their young children. The time and distance from home that may be satisfactory for a teenager could present a real hardship for a young child.

Most efforts to provide special education in rural areas have been two-pronged — utilizing state and regional consulting teachers and in-service training for classroom teachers. In some cases, cooperatives have been formed to share the costs of special education. Because of their isolation and limited resources, rural schools have tended to integrate the exceptional child into the regular classroom wherever possible. By contrast, exceptional children and problem children in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas have for years been put into special classes, regardless of the cause or degree of their handicap. Recognizing that the labeling and segregating associated with special classes are likely to stigmatize the special child, recent state and federal laws require the student to be placed in the least restrictive setting. Thus, the "mainstreaming" which rural schools have done, largely of necessity, is now the preferred practice in many cases. And in a practical sense, where there are sufficient resources to properly train classroom teachers and offer the special assistance needed, mainstreaming along with regional support may be the only way in which isolated schools can meet state and federal education guidelines for serving exceptional children.

Legislative Alternatives

In order to ensure that rural schools and districts are able to provide all their students with high quality, appropriate educational opportunities, the following legislative alternatives should be carefully considered.

1. **Revise any state education regulations and mandates which unnecessarily restrict local flexibility in the provision of education services.** It is perfectly reasonable and appropriate for state legislatures and state education agencies to require that certain programs be offered and that certain skills be taught by all schools in the state. However, regulations and mandates which establish not only *what* should be taught, but also *how* it must be taught are counterproductive and a particular hardship on small rural schools and districts. Rural schools must be allowed (and perhaps actively encouraged) to develop instructional models, procedures and curricula which are specifically designed to make maximum use of their local situation and environment.

2. **Create an office of rural education within the state education agency.** Thus far, only two states (Oregon and Texas) have created state-level offices and programs which pay special attention to solving the problems and developing the potential of their state's rural schools. Experience has shown that little of direct benefit to rural schools is likely to occur at the state level without this kind of formal effort. The purpose of this rural-oriented office must be to marshal state resources (human and financial) in support of locally determined rural school improvement programs. A state office concerned primarily with enforcing regulations rather than providing needed assistance is of little value.

3. **Enact legislation which provides funds for the development of appropriate curricular materials for rural schools.** By and large, the development of these materials should either be done by, or in close consultation with, local rural educators and community leaders. An even better alternative here is to have the state provide the funds necessary to allow rural students to create their own materials. This approach has been successfully pioneered by the Foxfire project in rural Georgia and is worthy of consideration by every state. In any case, the development of a high-quality rural studies curricula for the public schools should be a top priority.

4. **Encourage the sharing of resources among rural schools and districts.** The voluntary sharing of services, staff and ideas among rural schools and districts has enormous potential for solving many of their educational and sparsity-related problems without consolidation. Legislatures should provide either direct grants or other financial incentives which would facilitate the sharing of resources, the development of rural networks for information sharing, and the promotion of student and faculty exchange programs. Voluntary cooperatives are a tradition in other areas of rural life. Building upon this cooperative tradition and extending it to education (which only a few states have really tried yet) has great potential throughout rural America.

5. **Encourage the development and utilization of advanced technologies in the delivery of rural education services.** In a technological society like ours, this strategy should prove to be both feasible and popular.

Cable television is one of the most widely accepted means for supplementing existing educational programs and extending additional expertise to remote locations. Every state has some form of audio-visual facility. For example, a cooperative in Umatilla, Oregon (population 679), developed a television studio and cable system for 22 schools over two counties. In Hensley, Arkansas, 10 specialists give television presentations regularly to rural schools. In Gadsden, Alabama, seven rural high schools banded together to offer televised instruction. In Virginia, Project DILENOWISCO, a television cooperative, uses its system to reach isolated preschoolers (mobile units with educational equipment also circulate among central locations).

New ways are also being developed to utilize the telephone. The Western States Small Schools Project used an amplifier over the phone so that groups of students or teachers could hear lectures. A school district in the Colorado Rockies has found an innovative way to use the time spent in transporting students to and from rural schools. In their school buses, they installed seven-channel audio tape decks and headsets similar to those on airlines and programmed the channels at various achievement levels.

States should provide both grant money and technical assistance to small rural school systems interested in utilizing instructional technologies to supplement and expand their programs. In addition,

state-supported institutions of higher education should be encouraged to work with rural schools in developing relevant software and other materials which complement the acquisition of educational "hardware."

6. Encourage the creation of regional education service agencies for rural areas. In order to offer particularly expensive services and facilities and to facilitate sharing among districts, a new organizational structure has emerged in recent years—the intermediate or regional service center. Supported by a combination of local (44 percent), state (43 percent), and federal (13 percent) funds (with wide variations among states), these units allow small districts to share services and satisfy special needs that would otherwise be too costly." When control of the operation is maintained at the district level, it can become an effective alternative to the consolidation of entire schools and districts.

However, strict accountability mechanisms for these regional service agencies must not only be mandatory in the statutes, but rigorously enforced as well. For while there is a wealth of potential benefits in strategies linking substate regional units and individual small schools and districts, there are both actual and potential problems inherent in regionalization which must not be ignored. Foremost among them is the fact that reorganization done without sensitivity and imagination could become the precursor of yet another round of even larger local units, more centralized decision-making processes, and less and less direct accountability to rural parents, students and taxpayers

Notes

Chapter 1

1 This diversity is magnified by the fact that in rural areas, tradition is highly valued and one's particular ethnic, racial, occupational or regional heritage tends to be both prized and carefully cultivated

2 The official U S Census Bureau definition of urban and rural in 1970 is as follows

> The urban population comprises all persons in (a) places of 2,500 inhabitants or more incorporated as cities, villages, boroughs (except Alaska), and towns (except in New England, New York, and Wisconsin), but excluding persons living in the rural portions of extended cities, (b) unincorporated places of 2,500 inhabitants or more, and (c) other territory, incorporated or unincorporated, included in urbanized areas An urbanized area consists of a central city, or twin cities, with a total of 50,000 inhabitants or more, together with contiguous closely settled territory (urban fringe) Certain incorporated places are designated as "extended cities" because they have one or more large portions with relatively low population density These portions are classified as rural In all definitions, the population not classified as urban constitutes the rural population

3 As of 1975, there were 266 SMSAs in the United States In 1973, these SMSAs had a total population of 152,473,000 For further information see U S Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1976* (Washington, D C , U S Government Printing Office, July 1976), tables 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21

4 In 1970, there were 1[illegible]12,000 persons living in rural areas of the SMSAs In the same year, 26,318,000 were living in urban areas outside of SMSA s The figures here are from U S Bureau of the Census *Statistical Abstract, 1976*, table 16

5 *Ibid* , tables 16 and 23

6 Calvin L Beale, *The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America* (Washington, D C U S Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, June 1975), p 3

7 *Ibid* , p 5

8 Presidents' National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty, *The People Left Behind* (Washington, D C U S Government Printing Office 1967)

9 *Ibid*

10 For further information, see U S Bureau of the Census *Statistical Abstract, 1976* table 195

11 *Ibid*

12 *Ibid*

13 The total enrollment in nonmetropolitan schools is 15 4 million while the total population of New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago combined is approximately 13 5 million See *Ibid*, tables 23 and 195 Note As the following table indicates, the rural youth population (under 25 years of age) is even greater, totaling over 25 million persons

Rural Youth Under 25 Years of Age in the United States By Region and Race or Ethnic Groups, 1970[1]

Numeric Distribution and Proportions Among Groups

	Race or Ethnic Group				
	Total	White†	Black	Spanish Heritage†	Native American
North Central	7,400,329 (100 00)	7,287,110 (98 47)	63,237 (0 85)	57,314 (0 77)	43,683 (0 59)
North East	4 394 545 (100 00)	4 314 846 (98 18)	17 698 (0 40)	66 261 (1 50)	6,353 (0 14)
South	10 419,202 (100 00)	8,114,718 (77 88)	2,237,518 (21 47)	256 415 (2 46)	59,301 (0 56)
West	2,799 872 (100 00)	2 546 675 (90 95)	28,242 (1 00)	347,809 (12 42)	145,076 (5 18)
Total	25 013,948 (100 00)	22,263,349 (89 00)	2,346,695 (9 38)	727,801 (2 90)	254 413 (1 01)

Percentages are shown in parentheses.

SOURCES U S Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population Fourth Count Summary Tape processed at Texas A&M University Computer Center and U S Reports of the Census *1970 Census of Population Subject Reports Final Report PC(2) 1F* American Indians

†Most persons of Spanish heritage are counted also in the white category so there is double counting the sum of the groups will be greater than the total A smaller number of Spanish heritage persons are also counted as black

1 This table was taken from a recent publication by Luis Jimenez The Ethnic Composition of Rural Youth in the United States General Characteristics and Regional Comparison Departmental Information Report No 73-3 Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Prairie View A&M University Texas

14 U S Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population General Social and Economic Statistics*, Final Report PC(1)-C1 (Washington D C U S Government Printing Office, 1972), table 88, p 386

15 U S Bureau of the Census, *Population Characteristics* (Washington, D C U S Government Printing Office, March 1974)

16 Marian Wright Edelman, Marylee Allen, Cindy Brown, Ann Rosewater et al , *Children Out of School in America* (Cambridge, Mass Childrens' Defense Fund, 1974), p 37

17 *Ibid*

18 *Ibid* Also, the 1970 census revealed that absenteeism, permanent or chronic, varies with the income, education and occupation of the parents, as well as their race and residence Children's enrollment varies inversely with the income and education level of the parents Nonwhites are less likely to enroll than whites The percentage of children not enrolled is greatest for children of farm workers (seven percent), a figure even higher than that for children of the unemployed Additionally, the nonenrollment rate is greater for children of farmers than for those in most occupations

19 See, for example, James S Coleman et al , *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D C U S Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, OE-38001, 1966), W Vance Grant and C George Lind, *Digest of Educational Statistics, 1974* (Washington, D C U S Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, 1975), and Lewis R Tamblyn, *Inequality A Portrait of Rural America* (Washington, D C Rural Education Association, 1973)

20 National Assessment of Educational Progress, *General Information Yearbook* (Washington, D C U S Government Printing Office, December 1974) Also see George Henderson, *National Assessment and Rural Education* (Las Cruces, N Mex Educational Resources Information Center, Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools [ERIC/CRESS], December 1973)
Note NAEP invented its own definition called "extreme rural " This denotes nonmetropolitan communities with a population under 8,000 and a workforce which is primarily agricultural rather than professional or industrial

Chapter 2

1 U S Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments* Vol 1, *Governmental Organization* (Washington, D C U S Government Printing Office, July 1973) table 13

2 Source for figures 5, 6 and 7 is *Ibid* , table 2

3 *Ibid*

4 For an overview of the history of rural school reform, see Stuart A Rosenfeld and Jonathan P Sher, "The Urbanization of Rural Schools, 1940-1970," in *Education in Rural America A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*, ed Jonathan P Sher (Boulder, Colo Westview Press, 1977)

5 U S Bureau of the Census, *Governmental Organization*, table 3, p 19

6 Jonathan P Sher and Rachel B Tompkins, *Economy, Efficiency and Equality The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation* (Washington, D C National Institute of Education, July 1976) Note Copies of this report may be obtained free of charge by writing to the School Finance and Organization Division, National Institute of Education, Washington, D C 20208

7 *Ibid* , pp 45-46

Chapter 3

1 On June 6, 1978, California voters overwhelmingly approved an initiative, Proposition 13 on the ballot, to limit annual property taxes to one percent of market value, roll back assessments to 1975 levels, and confine increases in assessments to two percent a year. Approximately 6.5 million Californians voted on the proposition, nearly 65 percent approved it. At the time of the vote, it was estimated that it would cut property tax bills by an average of 57 percent and reduce local government revenues from about $12 billion per year to $5 billion.

2 U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, 1977* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

3 Esther Tron, *Public School Finance Programs, 1975-76* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

4 Joel Berke, Jay Moskowitz and Judith Sinkin, "Federal Aid and State School Finance," in *School Finance Reform: A Legislators' Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, 1976).

5 From the computer printouts by Vermont Economic Research Corporation, Woodstock, Vt.

6 Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, *Financing Schools and Property Tax Relief: A State Responsibility*, Report A-40 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 36. Also see Allan Odden and Phillip Vincent, *The Regressivity of the Property Tax*, Report No. F76-4, Education Commission of the States (Denver, December 1976), and J. Alan Thomas, *Financing Rural Schools*, ERIC/CRESS Bulletin (Austin, Tex.: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., March 1974), pp. 48-49.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.* Also see Alan Odden, *Alternative Measures of School District Wealth*, Report No. F76-6 (Denver: Education Commission of the States, December 1976).

9 *Ibid.* Also see Mary F. Williams, *Dollars and Sense: A Guide to the Data and Statistics of School Finance* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, August 1976).

10 Benjamin L. Hoff, *Property, Education and Taxes in Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Natural Resources Council, January 1977).

11 For further information on differential assessments, see Thomas F. Hady, "Differential Assessment of Farmland on the Rural-Urban Fringe," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. 52, no. 1, February 1970; Thomas F. Hady et al., *State Programs for the Differential Assessment of Farm and Open Space Land* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1974); and John C. Keene et al., *Untaxing Open Space: An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Differential Assessment of Farms and Open Space*, prepared for the Council on Environmental Quality (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

12 For further discussion, see Sher and Tompkins, *Economy, Efficiency and Equality*.

13 U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Institute of Education, *Violent Schools—Safe Schools* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

14 Clifford Hooker and Van D. Mueller, *The Relationship of School District Reorganization to State Aid Distribution Systems*, Special Study 11, National Education Finance Project, Part II (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Educational Research and Development Council of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, Inc., 1970), pp. 126-34.

15 John J. Callahan, William H. Wilken et al., *School Finance Reform: A Legislators Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, 1976).

16 *Ibid.*

17 Rachel B. Tompkins, "Coping with Sparsity: A Review of Rural School Finance," in *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*, ed. Jonathan P. Sher (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), p. 148.

18 Callahan, Wilken et al., *School Finance Reform*.

19 Tompkins, "Coping with Sparsity."

20 Roe L. Johns, "An Index of Extra Costs of Education Due to Sparsity of Population," *Journal of Education Finance* 1 (Fall 1975), p. 170.

Chapter 4

1 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract, 1976*, tables 219 and 221.

2 Telephone interview with National Center for Educational Statistics staff member. Advance statistics indicate that in the Fall of 1976, there were approximately 2,198,000 public school teachers in the United States, compared to approximately 2,156,000 in 1974. This increase in teachers occurred despite an elementary school enrollment decline of almost 5.5 million students and an overall enrollment decline of more than one million students.

3 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 3, No. 2, *Compendium of Public Employment* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), table 4.

4 *Ibid.*

5 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, *Selected Facts About Education in the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: 1977).

6 National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, 1977*, table 2.09.

7 *Ibid.*

8 National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Educational Statistics to 1984-85* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975).

9 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 3, No. 2, *Compendium of Public Employment*, table 9. The figure used refers to full-time equivalent employment (F.T.E.) for public school teachers. There were 779,485 full-time nonmetro teachers and 57,766 part-time nonmetro teachers in the United States in 1972, according to this Census Bureau report.

10 Since "nonmetropolitan" includes places not normally considered to be "rural," a more realistic estimate is that there are approximately 500,000 rural teachers. This still means that nearly one out of every four public school teachers in the United States is working in a rural school.

11 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1972 Census of Governments*, Vol. 3, No. 2, *Compendium of Public Employment*, table 9.

12 *Ibid.*, table 16.

13 *Ibid.*, table 16.

14 *Ibid.*, table 22.

15 *Ibid.*, table 22.

16 Nebraska State Department of Education, *Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools, 1976-77* (Lincoln, 1977).

17 Nebraska State Education Association, *Salary Survey of Nebraska Class One Schools (1 to 6 Teachers), 1976-1977* (Lincoln, 1977).

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

20 C. Cale Hudson, Herbert Small and Kathy Dwyer, *Ranking of Nebraska's Class II, III, IV and V School Districts by Selected Financial Data, 1975-76, 1976-77* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1977).

21 *Ibid.*

22 Nebraska State Education Association, *Salary Survey*.

23 *Ibid.*

24 This section is excerpted from Faith Dunne, "Choosing Smallness: An Examination of the Small School Experience in Rural America," in *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*, ed. Jonathan P. Sher (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977).

25 Ivan D. Muse, Robert J. Parsons and Edward M. Hoppe, A Study of Rural Teachers and the Rural Schools as Perceived by

School Administrators, Teachers, Parents, and Students," mimeographed (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University, 1975).

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Paul Ford, "Small High Schools: Myth, Reality, Potential," *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, Vol. 51, No. 317 (March 1967).

31. Muse, Parsons and Hoppe, "*A Study of Rural Teachers*."

32. *Ibid.*

33. Ford, "Small High Schools."

Chapter 5

1. Tom Gjetten, *Schooling in Isolated Communities* (Portland, Maine: North Haven Project (Box 13), 1978).

2. *Ibid.*

3. For further information, write to Foxfire Fund, Inc., Rabun Gap, Ga. 30568.

4. Martha Loustaunau, *Small Schools Can Have Adequate Curriculums* (Austin, Tex.: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., March 1975), p. 5.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. For further information, see "The Emerging Role of Regional Service Centers," proceedings of the Second National Conference of the National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education (Austin, Tex.: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, June 1974), and E. Robert Stephens, *Regional Educational Service Agencies*, pamphlet published by Educational Research Service, Inc., Arlington, Va., 1975.