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ABSTRACT

Small rural schools with fewer than 15 pupils per grade at the elementary level, fewer than 200 pupils in high schools, and fewer than 300 pupils in all grades at K-12 (or 1-12) schools or districts were profiled in 1980 by the National Institute of Education. Nearly 6,000 small schools were scattered throughout the country with the following distributions: Northeast, 5.7%; Southeast, 5.9%; North Central, 6.1%; West, 22.5%; and Plains, 59.8%. From each region and each school type, 60 randomly selected schools were sent 3 different questionnaires, directed to: teachers, who returned 41.6%; administrators, who returned 41.6%; and school board members, who returned 29.6%; total response rate was 38%. Communities surveyed reported their schools were meeting their objectives for: training in basic academic skills; preparation for work, parenthood, and citizenship; and service as a community institution. The profile provides statistical information concerning characteristics and attitudes of teachers, school board members, administrators, schools, and communities; and a report on the sample check which randomly sampled 62 non-responding principals by telephone to ascertain whether there were any significant differences between responding and non-responding schools. (AW)

Small Rural Schools in the United States: A Statistical Profile

The Small Schools Project
The National Rural Center

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A Statistical Profile

[1981]

The Small Schools Project

The National Rural Center

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For further information on the Small Schools Project, please write to the principal investigator. This report does not reflect the views of the Board of Directors of the National Rural Center, nor those of the National Institute of Education.

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I. A Description of the Small Schools Project

In spite of a century of consolidation efforts, very small schools are still the primary mode of education for rural children, especially in the Midwest and Far West. Nearly 6000 small schools serve the country children of the United States. But remarkably little is known about these very small schools. Researchers have tended to focus on larger settings; teachers and administrators are trained to think in terms of urban/suburban models of education. In the meantime, small schools struggle along, trying (or not trying) to work out unique methods of operation to meet their unique needs. They have had little help.

In 1979, the National Institute of Education funded a project intended to shed some light on the particular problems and needs of small rural schools. Called the Small Schools Project, this research effort was intended to gather some basic information about small rural schools and to back up statistical data with some in-depth case studies which would illuminate the particular characteristics of small rural schools in different parts of the country. The National Rural Center, which ran the project, had access to the existing statistics and studies of small rural schools. These were so meagre, however, that the Center designed its own survey to gather more data from a random sample of small rural schools.

The Survey

The project was designed to investigate very small rural schools, small enough that some organizational and pedagogical accomodation had to be made to meet the constraints of smallness. For this reason, we restricted the survey pool to public schools in rural areas whose enrollments fell within the following limits:

1) Elementary schools with fewer than 15 pupils per grade
2) High schools with fewer than 200 pupils .
3) K-12 (or 1-12) schools or districts with fewer than 300 pupils in all grades

Schools in this size range are not evenly distributed across the United States. Table 1 gives the national distribution of schools which fit our criteria and Table 2 breaks down these data by school type. As these tables make clear, the Midwestern states account for most of the very small rural schools, and the Eastern states account for the fewest.

TABLE 1

National Distribution of Small Schools

Region	% of all schools
Northeast	5.7
Southeast	5.9
North Central	6.1
West	22.5
Plains	59.8

TABLE 2

Distribution of Small Schools by Region and School Type

Region	Number of Schools		
	Elementary	High School	K-12
Northeast	179	9	153
Southeast	181	101	73
North Central	179	110	73
West	745	334	263
Plains	1598	1094	877

To draw the survey sample, we randomly selected sixty schools from each of the cells in Table 2 (with the exception of Northeastern high schools, where we selected all nine). To each school we sent three different types of questionnaires: one or two Teacher Questionnaires (two to the small K-12 schools, with a request that one be given to a teacher of primarily secondary-age students), an Administrator Questionnaire, and a School Board Member Questionnaire. All questionnaires were mailed to the building principal, with instructions to complete and return the Administrator Questionnaire, and give the others to that teacher and board member whom he or she believed would most conscientiously complete and return the survey.

The three questionnaires, intended to gather basic statistics, general information and attitudinal data, were designed by a research group composed of rural education specialists, a survey researcher, and an advisory group consisting of rural people from several parts of the country who had differing interests in rural education (e.g.

a principal, a superintendent, a staff development coordinator, a leader of a parent group, a rural schools lobbyist, a school board member, etc). The questionnaire was pilot-tested, revised, and then sent out in final form in February, 1980.

Characteristics of the survey instruments are outlined in Table 3. Copies are available on request from the principal investigator.

TABLE 3

Survey Instrument Characteristics

Survey	Number of Items	Pages	Approx. Time to Complete
Teacher	164	13	30 min.
Administrator	237	20	1 hr.
School Board	182	14	30 min.

The response rates were low, but consistent across the five regions. The final response rate, after a minimum of two follow-up calls to each non-responding school or district, was 38%. Table 4 indicates the pattern of response.

TABLE 4

Response Rates

Group	No. Surveys Mailed	No. Returned	No. Discarded	Adjusted Response Rate
Teachers	1149	485	7	41.6%
Administrators	849	358	5	41.6%
School Board	849	253	2	29.6%
Total	2847	1096	14	38.0%

Because the response rate was low, we conducted a final telephone survey of the non-responding administrators, who were asked to answer selected questions orally. We found no consistent pattern of difference between the responding and non-responding administrators, and thus feel that our data are reasonably characteristic of small rural schools in general. (See Chapter 8, "Report on Sample Check.")

A first-order analysis of the data gathered from the survey (including a detailed report on the final sample check) has been incorporated in a series of profiles, included here. There are six reports in the Profile Package: the Teacher Profile, the School Board Profile, the Administrator Profile, the School Profile, the Community Profile and the Report on the Sample Check.

The Case Studies

The survey data provided us with a broad view of the small rural school. For a deeper investigation of the strengths, problems, and concerns of small-scale education, we chose eight sites for case study examination. These sites were not selected randomly. Instead, the principal investigator, in conjunction with the case study writer, called rural experts in different regions of the country to request assistance in generating a list of small rural schools with certain specific characteristics:

1) an enrollment within the limits of the survey pool
2) a budget which does not include any major federal grants or other extraordinary funding sources
3) a conscious grappling with some of the problems or issues of concern to small schools, e.g. consolidation pressures, multi-age grouping, vocational education in a small setting, organizing multiple course offerings from small student populations.

Once the list was generated, the principal investigator and the case study writer called each school on the list, to gather more detail on the issues of concern in that district. The final selection of schools in each region was based on the following criteria: accessibility (in terms of the willingness of the administrator to cooperate with the Project and to provide us with access to people in the school and community); contribution to the variety

of social, economic and geographic settings we wanted to encompass in the case studies; and the characteristic quality of the problem or issue with which the district was attempting to deal. These decisions were made quite subjectively, with an eye to representing a range of small rural schools (as this range was reflected in the survey results and in the experience of the principal investigator, the case writers and the advisory committee).

Ultimately, eight case study sites were chosen. Table 5 indicates some characteristics represented by these eight sites.

Once the case study schools were selected, site visits were planned and executed. Two investigators visited each site; the writer spent a full school week in the school and its client community, while the second investigator, who served as "check," stayed for two or three days on site. The principal investigator visited each site, either as case writer or as "check." In each case, the investigators conferred extensively before the case study draft was completed.

The case studies, once drafted, will be checked for factual accuracy with the site administrators, critiqued by members of the Advisory Group, redrafted, and edited. At that point, they will be ready for circulation and for incorporation into a full-length book manuscript which will include complex analysis of the survey data, the case studies, and an interpretive overview of the project results. This manuscript should be completed by January 1, 1982, and should be published by the end of the year.

TABLE 5

Case Study Sites' Characteristics

Name of School	Region	Type of School	Economic Base	Other Characteristics
Amana, Iowa	Plains	K-12	Tourism Manufacturing Farming	White/Affluent Formerly a Religious Communal Society
Arkansas City, Ark.	South	K-12	Paper Company Commuting Farming	Black/White Mixed Economic Status (mostly poor) Integrated School
Arnold, Neb.	Plains	K-12	Ranching Farming	White/Affluent
Clinch Valley, Tenn.	South	K-12	Farming Commuting	White Relatively poor Isolated mountain community
Custer County, Montana	West	1-8	Ranching	White/Affluent Isolated ranch communities Without central village One-room schools
Encino, N. M.	South-west	K-12	Ranching Extraction industry	Predominantly "Hispanic" Mixed Economic Status
Potter Valley, Ca.	West	K-12	Commuting Farming	White Relatively Affluent Many recent immigrants
Temple, N. H.	North-east	1-6	Commuting	White Mixed Economic Status Many recent immigrants

II. About the Profiles

Table 2 illustrated that most of the nation's small schools are concentrated in the Western and Midwestern states. To ensure that we obtained valid summary data for each of the five geographical regions, therefore, we systematically oversampled the other three regions.

In analyzing and compiling the data for these profiles, however, we were interested in national statistics, so we weighted the sample to reflect the national distribution of small schools. Sample weighting and data analysis were done using the SPSS statistical package (Nie, et al., 1975).

Because the samples were weighted, summary tables in the profiles give relative percentages of respondents in various categories (e.g. "13.5% of the teachers have never married; 80.3% are presently married"), but not absolute numbers. Absolute numbers would yield little additional information; they are simply calculated automatically by the computer to fit the percentages given in the tables. Table 4 gives response rates; questionnaires from 478 teachers, 353 administrators, and 251 school board members provided the data for these profiles. Response rates did not vary by geographical region.

In the profiles, we have given nonresponse rates for individual questions when these rates exceeded 5%.

III. Teacher Profile

1. Their Personal Backgrounds

36.1% of the teachers in our weighted sample are male; 63.8% are female. The majority are 40 or younger.

TABLE 6

Age Distribution of Teachers

	Age (Years)			
	To 30	31-40	41-50	50+
Percent	30.5	36.7	16.6	16.2

More than 80% of the teachers are presently married (Table 7).

TABLE 7

Marital Status of Teachers

Marital Status	%
Never married	13.5
Married	80.3
Divorced, other	6.3

The racial composition of this study sample is almost exclusively Caucasian. 98% of the teachers who gave their race said "white;" 2% listed some other race.

Table 8 presents details on where these teachers grew up. 79.8% grew up in the country, in small towns, and in cities of less than 10,000 people.

TABLE 8

Where the Teachers Grew Up

Where grew up	%
Open country or farm	43.8
Village	19.4
Small town (2.5K to 10K)	16.6
Small city (10K to 50K)	7.2
Medium city (50K to 250K)	5.4
Suburb near large city	2.9
Large city (250K+)	4.6

The majority of small-school teachers live in the communities in which they teach (Table 9), but a large number (39.1%) do not.

TABLE 9

Where the Teachers Live

Where live	%
In community	60.3
Outside community	39.1

2. Their Professional Backgrounds

Most teachers (71.4%) in this sample do not have a master's degree.

When asked if they had any training appropriate to teaching in small schools, prior to beginning their present job, 64% answered "no." Of those that said "yes," most described rural "experiences," or teaching (and student teaching) in other small schools.

The sample includes teachers with a wide range of teaching experience. Tables 10 and 11 present statistics for the questions, "How long have you been a teacher here?," and "How much of your teaching experience has been in a school the size of this one?" A large number of teachers have taught in their present school for 3-9 years.

TABLE 10

How Long Teachers Have Been at Their Schools

How long teacher here	%
Less than 2 years	22.1
3 to 9 years	45.0
10 or more years	32.8

TABLE 11

Teaching Experience in Schools This Size

How long teacher in school this size	%
2 years or less	48.6
3 to 9 years	27.4
10 or more years	24.0

3. What They Do

Table 12 outlines our findings relative to how many grade levels teachers in small schools are responsible for. We broke the sample down into four groups: 1) Teachers in small K-12 schools (< 300 students) who teach junior high and high school grades. 2) Teachers in small high schools (< 200 students). 3) Teachers in small K-12 schools who teach elementary grades. 4) Teachers in small elementary schools (< 15 students per grade).

In summary: 1) Very few high school teachers in small K-12 schools deal with only one or two grade levels at a time. 2) In small high schools, most teachers work with three to five grades. 3) Most elementary teachers in small K-12 schools work with only one or two grade levels. 4) Teachers in small elementary schools may deal with any number of grades.

TABLE 12

Number of Grades Taught by One Teacher

	High School Grades		Elementary Grades	
Number of Grades	K-12 School	Other	K-12 School	Other
1-2	4.1%	11.8%	84.3%	46.6%
3-5	50.0	73.5	13.1	26.5
6+	45.0	16.9	2.5	26.8

Respondents were asked, "What subjects do you teach?" We coded and entered as many as three subjects by broad category (e.g., "Science: biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, etc.;" "Math: algebra, trigonometry, geometry, calculus, etc."), 99% gave one subject. 47% listed subjects in two or more different categories (for example, music and social studies); 15% listed three or more areas.

Junior high and high school teachers who do not stay with the same group of students all day were asked how many different preparations they needed each day and what the average number of pupils is in their classes. Table 13 shows no significant differences in the responses of teachers in high schools and K-12 schools relative to number of preparations. Table 14 presents statistics dealing with class size.

TABLE 13

Number of Preparations Per Day

Number of Preparations	School Type: K-12 High School	Other High School
0-5	62.2%	69.4%
6-10	35.6	26.1
11+	3.0	3.6

TABLE 14

Class Sizes

Class Size (Number of Students)	School Type	
	K-12 High School	Other High School
1-15	66.9%	60.4%
16-20	27.8	20.7
21+	6.0	18.5

Table 15 shows how small-school teachers spend their work week. A median 25 hours per week is spent teaching in their major area. Note that although zero hours per week (median) are spent teaching outside the major area, the table reports a mean of 4 hours per week: indication that some teachers spend a considerable amount of time teaching outside their major area. This does not necessarily support the notion that many small-school teachers are forced to teach in areas for which they are not prepared: recall that 47% listed at least two areas of certification.

As one might expect, there is a great deal of variation. A high school football coach in Nebraska may spend twenty hours each week coaching student athletes; elementary teachers in rural Oregon, on the other hand, may do no coaching whatsoever. The first two columns in Table 15 give average number of hours per week spent by teachers in each activity. Teachers in small schools spend a mean of 20.4 working hours per week engaged in activities other than teaching.

4. How They Keep in Touch

When asked "Have you had any in-service training while at this school which you think was particularly appropriate for teaching in small schools like yours?," 65.8% said "yes." Most of the programs described were workshops. There were, however, occasional descriptions of curriculum projects and other programs.

Many small-school teachers work in areas physically distant from colleges offering courses for teachers. 36.2% are 31-60 miles from such a college, and 31.2% work more than 60 miles away. In some parts of the country, these distances effectively remove teachers from access to advanced educational opportunities; in

TABLE 15

Teacher Time Budget: Hours Per Week in Various Activities

Activity	Median Time (Hours)	Mean Time (Hours)	% of Teachers Spending ½ Hour or More Per Week
Teaching in major area	25	21.71	96.4
Preparing/correcting student work	10	11.23	99.0
Supervising playground, halls, etc.	2	3.04	84.8
Advising student activities	1	1.81	50.1
Advising students - personal matters	1	1.65	65.9
Attending community events	1	1.65	57.5
Informal staff meetings	1	1.34	71.8
Handling administrative paperwork	1	1.05	51.2
Formal staff meetings	1	0.58	51.3
Teaching outside major area	0	4.07	41.0
Coaching athletes	0	1.80	19.1
Other activities	0	1.08	15.3
Chaperoning student events	0	1.06	43.1
Maintaining school facilities	0	0.81	32.0
Meeting parents in school	0	0.63	46.3
Driving school bus	0	0.51	9.9
Teaching association activities	0	0.50	32.7
Inservice education	0	0.44	21.5
	Total =	53.31	hours (not including out-of-school community events.)

other places (especially the Plains and the non-mountain West and Southwest), teachers are well-accustomed to traveling sixty miles and more for many kinds of goods and services. Most (60.5%) teachers see colleagues from other schools at least several times a year. 20.9% said they saw teachers from elsewhere yearly. 18.7% said they did this even less frequently than that.

40.7% of the teachers feel that their school does a poor job offering staff development programs. Less than 30% feel that their school does a good job in this area. (6.1% did not respond.)

Furthermore, when asked how satisfied they were with their opportunities to interact with other education professionals, 31% expressed dissatisfaction. 37% said that they were satisfied.

About the same percentage of teachers (35.6%) feel that most teachers in their school feel professionally isolated. (4.0% did not respond.)

5. Their Perceptions of Their Jobs

We begin this section with a brief look at the teaching philosophies of teachers in small schools. We asked teachers to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements about the nature of in-school learning and socialization. The results are presented in Figure 1.

In general, small-school teachers believe that children who fill a variety of roles in school develop more self-esteem than those who do not. They feel that children who go to school in their own communities learn to be better citizens than those who go to school elsewhere. And they believe that teachers can make better educational decisions when they know the family backgrounds of their students.

There is also evidence suggesting that they believe that children who face considerable competition from their peers learn more than those who don't; and that, in a good peer-teaching program, children can learn just as much from one another as they can from a teacher. Subscription to these somewhat contradictory themes of competition and cooperation indicate that these teachers feel that the active presence of peers is important in the learning process, in more than one way.

However, we received a very lukewarm response to the statement "Children who go to school with the same group of students year after year learn to cooperate better than those who have different children in their classes each year." We also received a relatively neutral response to the statement that students learn considerably more in multiple-age groupings than in single-age classrooms.

Finally, we found a spectrum of opinions on the statement, "Children who go to school in small communities tend to learn little about people different from them." Most people were either in agreement or disagreement (i.e., did not check the middle of the scale), but they were about equally divided.

In addition to questions about the classroom philosophies of teachers, we were interested in their more global views on the purpose of schooling. We asked teachers to indicate (from a choice of five) what they felt was the most important future for which their school should prepare its average male and female students. The results are shown in Table 16.

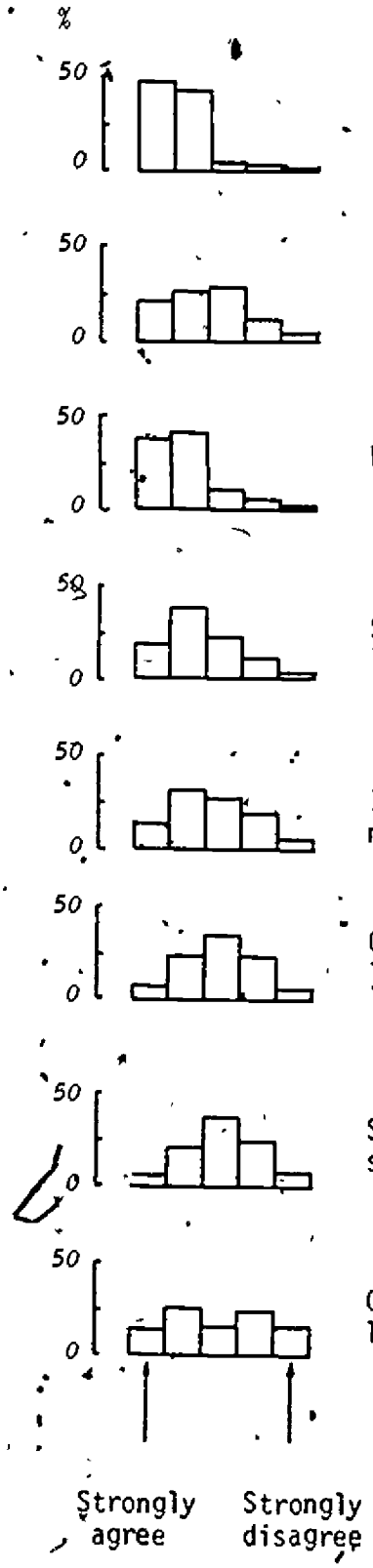


Figure 1. Teaching philosophies.

TABLE 16

Most Important Male and Female Futures

Females	Males	Future
38.2%	39.6%	No Response
21.2	12.0	Marriage and family life
4.6	7.3	Work in the community
17.6	21.7	Work outside the community
10.9	5.8	Liberal arts college
7.5	13.5	Vocational college

It should be noted that a very large number of teachers were dissatisfied with this question; nearly 40% either did not answer it or checked more than one of the choices. For that reason, the responses should be taken with a heaping teaspoon of salt. Additionally, we noted that many of the invalid (i.e., more than one choice checked) responses made the same choices for both males and females, a factor which, if coded, would tend to smooth out male-female differences.

We asked teachers to indicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a number of aspects of their jobs. These results are summarized in Figure 2.

These measures indicate that these teachers are, in general, satisfied with a number of aspects of their jobs. Nearly all teachers are quite satisfied with the degree of autonomy they have in deciding curricular matters, with the opportunities they have to develop close personal relationships with students (and the quality of student-teacher relationships in general), with student discipline, and with the length of their commute to work.

Not as strong, but still noticeable, are general feelings of satisfaction regarding the time they spend at school and school functions, and regarding the school facilities.

With the exception of the earlier-discussed issue of opportunities to interact with other education professionals, the only one of these areas in which satisfaction was not predominant was "Pay relative to cost of living."

One of our questions was open-ended, and asked teachers to name the two things in their schools that make it especially easy to be an effective teacher, and the two things that make it especially difficult to be an effective teacher.

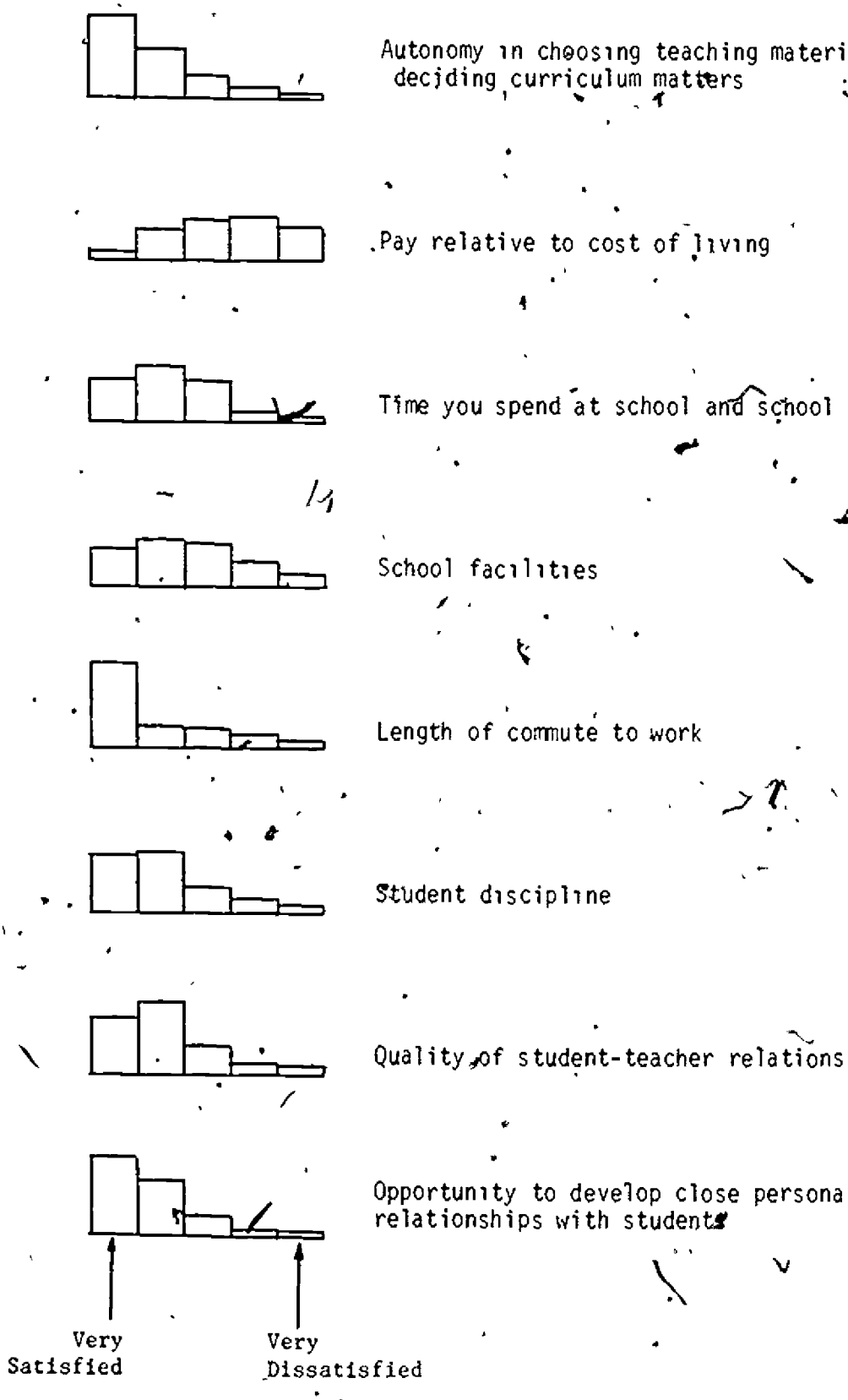


Figure 2. Job satisfaction.

A great many teachers offered responses to the first part of the question which could be classified under three general headings (for a more complete listing, see Tables 17 and 18.) They are: 1) Close interaction among parents, teachers, and students. Also classified here were responses having to do with knowing students personally, and knowing their backgrounds. 2) Small class size and opportunities for individualized instruction. 3) Cooperation among education professionals (administrators, teachers, etc.); team spirit. Also often mentioned were: 4) Flexibility/freedom, and 5) Lack of discipline problems/effective management of discipline problems.

We did not find such general agreement among the teachers about what made it difficult to be effective. For one thing, there was a lower rate of response for this question: 14.5% gave no answer whatsoever, and 18.2% gave only one response. (The corresponding rates for the "what makes it easy" question were 5.0% and 12.4%.) Many teachers, it appears, simply could not think of anything that made it especially difficult to be an effective teacher, or did not care to say so.

We broke responses down into ten categories, but only two specific categories accounted for more than 10% of the responses. Complaints of inadequate facilities/supplies made up 13.1% of the responses. 10.4% complained of too many preparations or the difficulties of dealing with more than one grade level at a time. All other specific categories accounted for less than 6%. The general heading, "Other," holds almost 30% of the responses, an extremely varied collection of complaints ranging from lack of parental support, and the lack of field trips (due to distances), to "no duty-free lunch."

In summary, small-school teachers share opinions on what makes their job easy, but the factors making them difficult appear to be diverse.

6. Their Perceptions of Their Students

We have already seen, via issues like student-teacher relationships and school discipline, a little evidence of how small-school teachers view their students. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate teacher perceptions of one characteristic of students: their problems.

Because we predicted that responses would vary by school type (one shocked elementary teacher queried, "Sex problems? In second grade?!"), we have broken the responses down by level into elementary, high schools, and K-12 schools.

TABLE 17

Why Easy to be an Effective Teacher Here

Reason	%
Close interaction	28.8
Small classes, individual instruction, peer teaching	17.5
Team spirit; cooperation, administration support	15.9
Few discipline problems	6.5
Freedom, flexibility	6.5
Adequate materials, facilities	3.4
Reduced bureaucracy	1.2
Assistance (aides, community help)	0.8
Other	8.3
Gave only one reason	12.4
Gave no reason	5.0

TABLE 18

Why Difficult to be an Effective Teacher Here

Reason	%
Inadequate facilities/supplies	13.1
Multi-class subjects, too many preparations	10.4
Lack of student motivation	5.9
Small budget	5.8
Excessive interaction (gossip, parental pressure)	4.9
Professional isolation	4.1
Lack of support personnel	2.5
Teacher, administration turnover	0.3
Other	29.6
Gave only one reason	18.2
Gave no reason	14.5

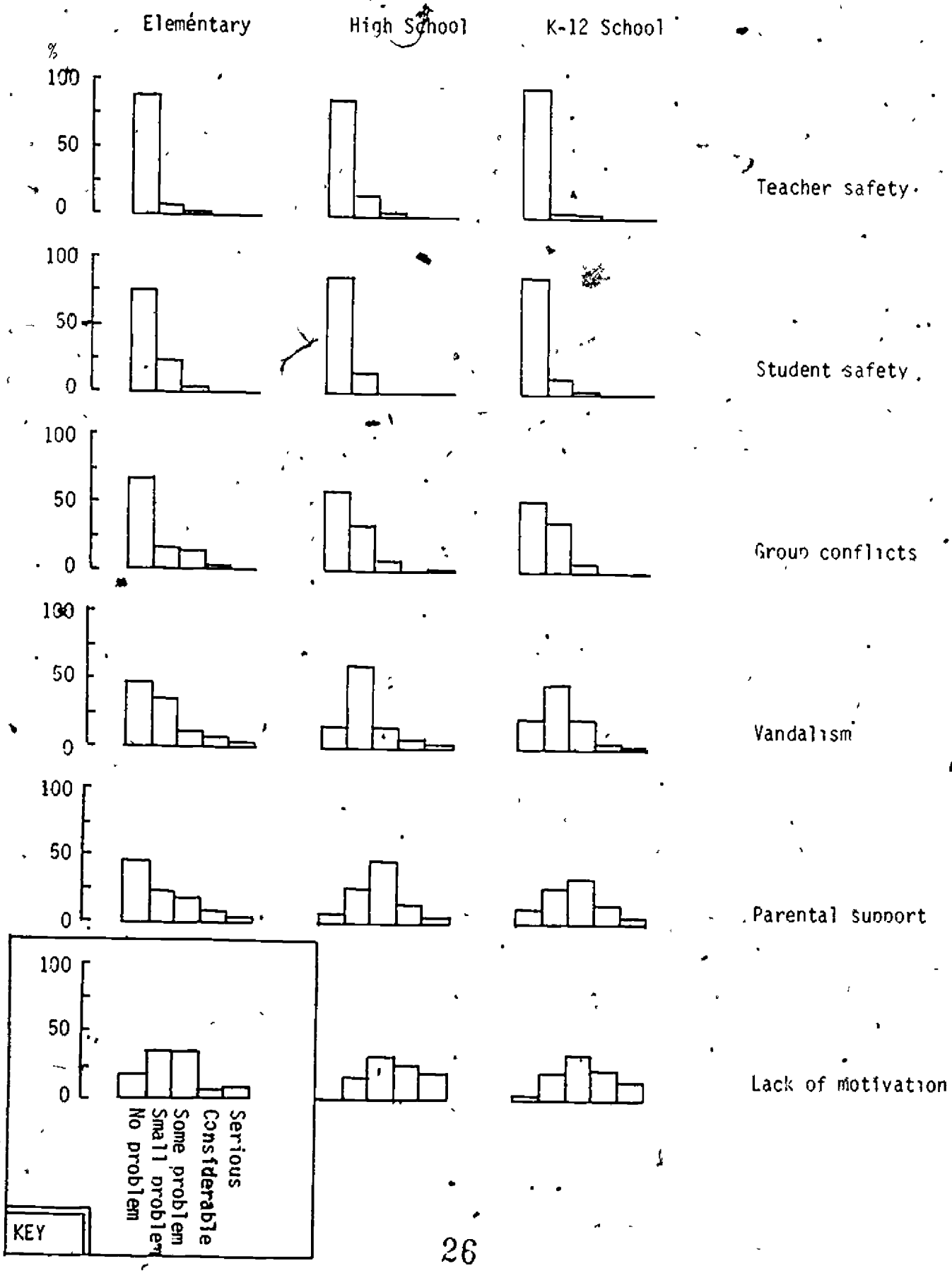


Figure 3. Teacher perceptions of student problems.

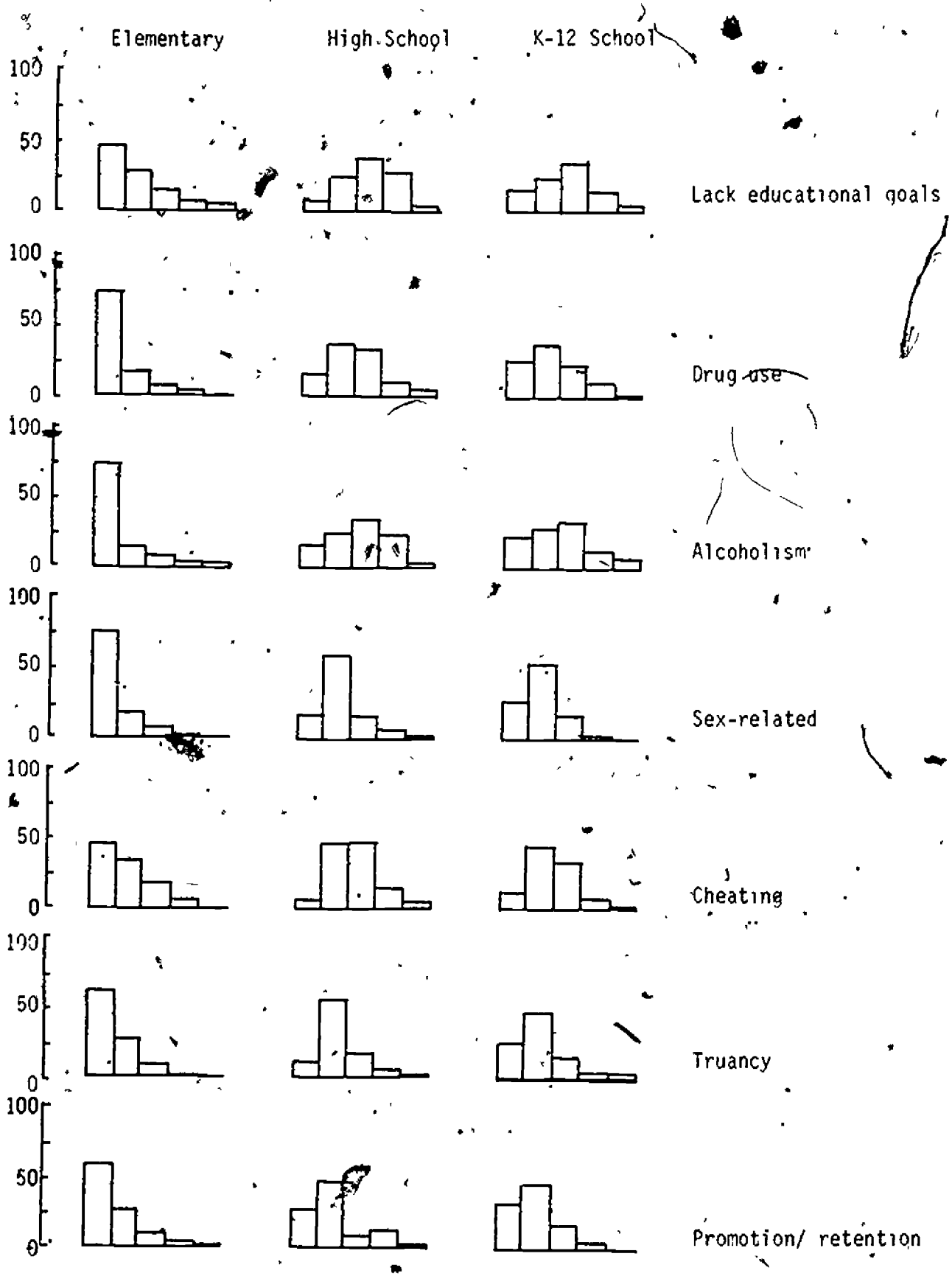


Figure 4. Teacher perceptions of student problems.

Before looking at specific problems, it is worth comparing the distributions. Note that for many of the questions, the distributions are very similar among the three school types. What differences do occur (note especially "alcoholism," "sex-related," and "lack of educational goals"), the K-12 responses tend to resemble responses from the high schools more than the elementary schools, probably because the answers reflect whole-school conditions.

Most teachers in small schools perceive no problems regarding teacher safety, student safety, or group conflicts. Issues of parental support, motivation, and educational goals are perceived as more troublesome; "lack of motivation" was listed as a serious problem more frequently than any of the other twelve areas.

Generally, drug use, alcoholism, and sex-related problems are considered nonexistent or minimal in small elementary schools.

7. Their Perceptions of Their Schools

What do small-school teachers think of their schools? As a first step in addressing this complex question, it is instructive to look at the teaching resources that they have at their disposal. We asked teachers to indicate the availability and use of a number of teaching resources in their schools; the results are summarized in Table 19.

Over 75% of the teachers said that their schools have and use reference books, a library, teacher-made materials, non-textual printed materials, and films; 50-75% of the teachers said that their schools have and use guidance services, the out-of-doors, field trips, programmed learning materials, and support teachers/aides; 25-50% use mobile libraries, activity centers, television broadcasts, videotapes, professionals shared among schools, and community resources. Less than one-fourth of the schools reported use of internships/community work experiences, team teaching, radio broadcasts, community studies programs, computer terminals, and interactive television.

We asked each teacher to rate his or her school on the job it does in a number of areas. The results are summarized in Table 20. In general, most teachers feel that their school does a good job teaching the basic skills and maintaining good discipline. About 60% of the teachers believe that their school does a good job: fostering good communication between teachers, students, and parents; keeping the curriculum up-to-date; and controlling drug and alcohol abuse.

TABLE 19

Resource Availability and Use

Resource	Have, Use	Have, Don't Use	Don't Have
Library	87.1%	9.2%	3.5%
Reference books	85.6	13.1	1.1
Teacher-made materials	85.3	12.2	2.5
Films	82.9	15.4	1.6
Non-text printed materials	81.9	13.3	4.8
Programmed learning materials	60.5	25.5	14.0
Support teachers/aides	59.9	11.8	28.3
Field trips	58.9	32.3	8.0
Guidance services	54.3	18.4	26.6
Out-of-doors	49.6	35.6	14.8
Community resources	49.5	27.4	22.5
Videotapes	42.6	15.8	41.4
Television broadcasts	38.8	13.6	47.6
Sharing professionals among schools	35.0	15.9	48.6
Activity centers	28.8	13.2	57.2
Mobile library	26.7	8.1	65.2
Student contracts	26.2	15.9	57.9
Internships, community work experience	20.5	12.2	67.0
Radio broadcasts	18.6	19.7	61.7
Team teaching	14.1	10.9	74.9
Community studies program	12.0	15.1	72.3
Computer terminals	10.0	4.7	85.2
Interactive television	5.8	5.8	87.7

About half the teachers feel that their schools do a good job keeping facilities up-to-date, and offering each student the program he or she needs.

Fewer than half the teachers lauded their school's assistance of students in making decisions about their personal lives, making realistic career choices, and preparing them to be capable parents. Only 40.9% of the teachers feel that their schools develop innovative curriculum materials well. But the worst grades in this area came in the area of staff development: over 40% of the teachers feel that their schools do a poor job offering staff development programs.

TABLE 20

Teacher Ratings of Their Schools

How well does this school. . .?	Well	Poorly
Teach basic skills	81.5%	3.4%
Maintain good discipline	73.2	9.1
Keep curriculum up-to-date	66.4	9.1
Control drug and alcohol abuse	62.8	13.4
Keep facilities up-to-date	59.8	19.5
Foster good communication between teachers, students, and parents	59.1	14.9
Offer each student the program he or she needs	50.4	15.3
Assist students to make constructive decisions about their personal lives	46.0	18.9
Assist students to make realistic career choices	45.8	17.3
Develop innovative curriculum materials	40.9	27.0
Prepare students to be capable parents	32.7	24.0
Offer elective staff development programs	29.7	43.3

We asked teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of their schools. Table 21 gives the percentages of teachers that felt a particular area was an outstanding strength or a considerable weakness in their schools (these categories are the extremes of a 5-choice scale).

The five greatest strengths of small schools, according to the people who teach in them are: 1) Personal attention given to students, 2) Relaxed atmosphere, 3) Teacher-student relationships, 4) The quality of teaching, and 5) School discipline.

The area most frequently listed as a weakness was "Exposure of students to a variety of people and social settings." Other areas chosen as "considerable weaknesses" more than ten percent of the time were vocational training (for jobs both in and outside the community), school facilities, parent participation, and surprisingly, flexibility of curriculum and scheduling. The last area, it is worth noting, was also frequently listed as an outstanding strength.

8. Their Perceptions of Their Fellow Teachers

In Table 21, we saw that many teachers view favorably the quality of teaching in their schools. We asked teachers other questions about their teaching colleagues:

TABLE 21

Teacher Ratings: Strengths and Weaknesses of Their Schools

Area Rated	Outstanding Strength	Considerable Weakness
Personal attention given to students	59.9%	0.7%
Relaxed atmosphere	49.3	1.0
Student-teacher relationships	47.3	0.8
Quality of teaching	34.2	1.2
School discipline	32.9	6.8
Flexibility of curriculum and scheduling	31.4	8.5
Student opportunities for leadership	28.5	5.3
School-community relationships	28.4	5.3
School facilities	26.2	12.4
Extra-curricular programs, including sports	24.0	7.7
Academic preparation for college	19.6	10.2
School curriculum	16.7	3.2
Parent participation	15.9	9.8
Vocational training for jobs in the community	10.0	17.0
Vocational training for jobs outside the community	9.3	20.7
Exposure of students to a variety of people and social settings	4.7	32.8

Are most teachers here from rural communities? 66.2% said "yes." Many, but not all, small schools are primarily staffed by teachers who grew up in rural areas.

Did most teachers here student-teach in a large town or city? 45.3% said "yes." 14.9% said "no." (Since the responses were choices on a scale, many fell in the middle.)

Are most of the classes in this school taught by teachers who are fully credentialed in that area or grade? 85.8% said "yes."

Do most teachers here feel competent to fulfill their various roles? 89.7% said "yes."

Do most teachers here feel professionally isolated? 37.1% said "yes." Even fewer, 18.2%, said that they feel personally isolated.

Are most teachers respected as professionals in this community? 68.9% said "yes."

Finally, would most teachers here prefer to teach in a larger school or district? Only 12.5% answered affirmatively; 68.0% said "no."

9. Their Perceptions of Their Communities

An important component of small-school teacher perceptions is how they view their communities. In general, teachers in small schools are satisfied with the degree to which they are accepted by their communities, with their housing, and with the presence of peers in the community; and dissatisfied with their community's shopping facilities and cultural/educational opportunities. In other areas -- privacy, parent involvement in the school, recreational opportunities -- we found no clear-cut trends. Table 22 gives the percentages.

TABLE 22

Teacher Perceptions of Their Communities

Aspects of the Community	Percent Satisfied	Percent Dissatisfied
Acceptance by the community	73.0	7.8
Housing	52.2	21.7
Presence of peers	48.2	15.0
Parent involvement in school	42.9	31.4
Recreational opportunities	30.7	40.7
Lack of privacy	32.5	30.4
Shopping facilities	18.7	58.6
Cultural/educational opportunities	16.4	58.5

IV. Administrator Profile

1. Their Personal Backgrounds

Most small-school principals are male (Table 23). Women, however, make up 40.3% of elementary school administrators.

TABLE 23

Male/Female Distribution by School Type

	School Type		
	K-12	Elementary	High School
Male	96.8%	59.7%	94.6%
Female	3.2	40.3	5.4

Most of the administrators are between the ages of 31 and 50 years old (Table 24).

TABLE 24

Age of Respondents

Age	%
Less than 30 years	7.4
31 to 40 years	47.2
41 to 50 years	29.3
51 to 60 years	12.2
Older than 60 years	4.0

The majority of these administrators are married. Only 5.7% have never married (Table 25).

TABLE 25

Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	%
Never married	5.7
Married	86.8
Divorced, other	7.4

The vast majority are white. Only 6.2% are not (Table 26).

TABLE 26

Respondents' Race

Race	%
White	93.8
Black	2.5
Native American	2.2
Other	1.5

Like the teachers, most administrators have nonurban roots (Table 27). 80.2% grew up in the country, in small towns, and in towns of less than 10,000 people.

TABLE 27

Where the Administrators Grew Up

Where grew up	%
Open country or farm	38.7
Village	21.6
Small town (2.5K to 10K)	19.9
Small city (10K to 50K)	9.9
Medium city (50K to 250K)	4.3
Suburb near large city	2.6
Large city (250K+)	3.1

It appears to be much more common for the small-school principal to live in the school community than it is for the teachers. There is also variation by school type in this statistic (Table 28).

TABLE 28

Where Respondents Live

Live in community where work?	School Type K-12	Elementary	High School
Yes	87.8%	63.0%	83.9%
No	12.2	37.0	16.1

2. Their Professional Backgrounds

Most of the principals in this study have a master's degree. It is much more likely that small elementary principals will have a bachelor's degree only. See Table 29.

TABLE 29

Educational Background

Highest Degree	School Type K-12	Elementary	High School
Normal school certificate	2.4%	3.5%	0.3%
Bachelor's degree	13.9	29.4	7.6
Master's degree	77.1	64.7	89.4
Doctorate	6.6	2.5	2.8

Many of these principals were teachers in their present schools prior to becoming administrators. While frequent in all school types, this phenomenon is most widespread in small high schools, where 44.8% of the principals were at one time solely teachers (Table 30).

TABLE 30

Teacher Prior to Becoming Principal Here

Teacher here before a principal?	School Type K-12	Elementary	High School
Yes	33.2%	31.9%	44.8%
No	66.8	68.1	55.2

Table 31 describes the length of time small-school principals have been at their present jobs.

TABLE 31

Experience in Present Job

Length of time principal here	%
Less than one year	20.5
1 to 2 years	22.7
3 to 9 years	41.5
10 years or more	15.3

Table 32 details the teaching and administrative experience these principals have had in small schools other than their present one.

TABLE 32

Professional Education Experience Prior to This School

Teaching and/or administrative experience in other small schools	%
None	18.2
Less than one year	8.0
1 to 2 years	11.9
3 to 9 years	35.2
10 or more years	26.7

The mean numbers of years the respondents were involved in teaching or administration are given in Table 33.

TABLE 33

Years of Professional Education Experience

Activity	Mean Number of Years	Standard Deviation
Teacher here	4.0	6.1
Teacher elsewhere	7.4	7.4
Administrator elsewhere	4.5	7.5

3. What They Do

We asked small-school principals how much time they spend in a number of activities. The results are presented in Table 34. Nonresponse rate for this question was 5.2%.

TABLE 34.

How Principals Spend Their Time

Activity	Mean Number of Hours/Week	Standard Deviation
Handling administrative paperwork	11.98	9.73
Teaching in major field	6.35	9.14
Supervising playground, gym, halls, etc.	4.86	6.07
Handling student discipline	4.35	4.44
Chaperoning student events	4.34	7.92
Working with teachers	4.27	4.99
Advising students (personal matters)	3.52	4.50
Attending informal staff meetings	3.27	5.54
Preparing/correcting student work	3.25	5.11
Attending out-of-school community events	2.74	6.32
Advising student activities	2.67	6.36
Other	2.46	7.02
Maintaining school facilities	2.39	5.77
Teaching outside major field	2.24	6.34
Meeting parents in school	2.17	4.13
Coaching athletes	2.04	6.37
Meeting with the school board	1.76	4.83
Attending formal staff meetings	1.71	4.08
Attending in-service education	1.60	5.40
TOTAL =	65.23 hours (excluding out-of-school community events)	

4. Their Perceptions of Their Jobs

Figure 5 graphically depicts the results of a number of administrative perceptions of how things work in their schools. We found general agreement with the statements: "We need a clear set of consistently applied rules to keep good student discipline," and "The teachers and I have a lot of personal contact with parents -- most student problems are resolved that way."

More principals agree than disagree with these two statements: "It is necessary to have clear definitions of responsibilities in order to get things done in this school," and "Discipline needs to be fairly informal here," (e.g., I make decisions depending on what I know about the child and the family).

We found no clear trends regarding the statements, "To keep this school functioning well, the principal has to be the boss," and "It is necessary to have strict policies on parent complaints to run the school well." We also found general disagreement with the statement: "In order to get my work done, I have to delegate many of my administrative responsibilities."

5. Their Perceptions of Their Students

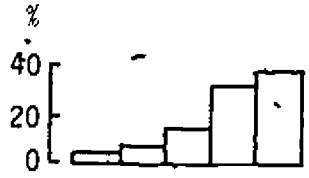
We asked the principals to indicate what their concerns are about student problems in their schools. Figure 6 presents the results. These principals considered very few of the problems we listed "considerable" or "serious." The five problems most commonly listed as "small," "some," or "considerable" problems were truancy, cheating, lack of educational goals and direction, lack of parental support, and lack of motivation.

Table 35 lists student participation in two areas: extracurricular activities (including sports), and leadership in groups.

TABLE 35

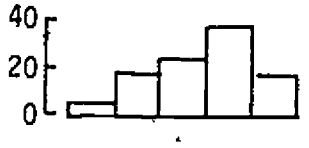
Administrator-Perceived Student Participation in Two Areas

Activity	%	Nonresponse Rate
Extracurricular activities (including sports)	67.1	4.5%
Leadership in a group	21.8	7.7

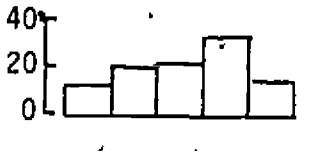


We need a clear set of consistently applied rules to keep good student discipline.

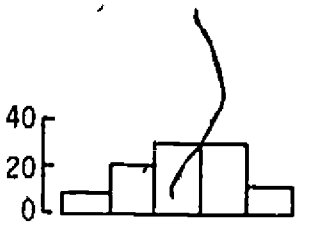
The teachers and I have a lot of personal contact with parents- most student problems are resolved that way.



It is necessary to have clear definitions of responsibilities in order to get things done around here.

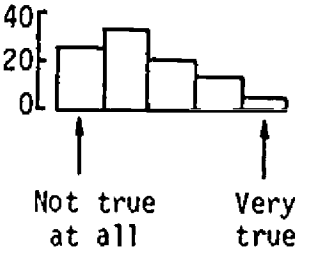


Discipline needs to be fairly informal here (i.e., I make decisions depending on what I know about the child and the family).



To keep this school functioning well, the principal has to be "the boss".

It is necessary to have strict policies on parent complaints to run the school well.



In order to get my work done, I have to delegate many of my administrative responsibilities.

Figure 5. Administrator perceptions of how things work in their schools.

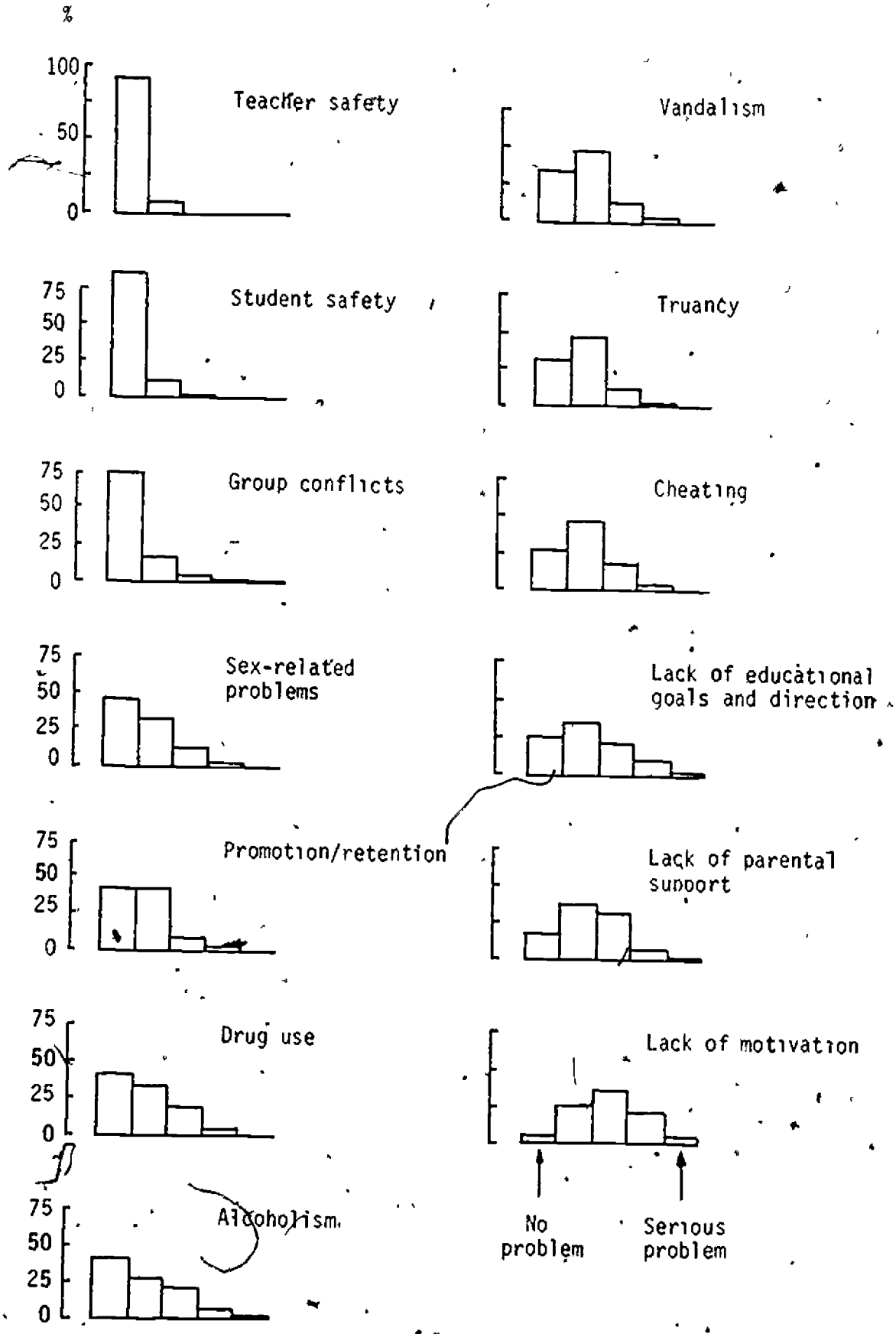


Figure 6. Administrator perceptions of student problems.

Table 36 gives the administrator-perceived destinations of the students of small K-12 schools and high schools.

TABLE 36

Student Destinations

Destination	%	Standard Deviation
Drops out of school before graduation	4.6	5.2%
Non-college post-secondary program	15.5	13.2
Goes into military	7.1	6.0
2 or 4 year college	34.3	19.6
Works in or near the community	19.9	13.5
Leaves community to work elsewhere	15.6	14.2

Figure 7 outlines administrator perceptions of several statements about why students leave their community. We found general agreement with the statements: "Young people leave because they feel there are few work opportunities here," and "They leave because they feel life and work will be better elsewhere." There were no clear response trends for the other four statements.

We asked K-12 and high school principals what percent of their graduates leave the community to settle elsewhere, and how "satisfied" they are with this number. They reported a mean 60.5% outmigration. We broke the second, write-in part of the question into three groups: "satisfied," "neutral," and "dissatisfied." The distribution of responses among those who expressed an opinion is roughly even: 29.6%, 30.4%, and 36.0% respectively.

6. Their Perceptions of Their Schools

We asked the principals in this study to tell us how being small has caused them to organize the school in desirable ways, and how it has forced them to organize in undesirable ways. Tables 37 and 38 outline the results in categories we designed after the sample. It should be noted that nonresponse for this question was high (coding two desirable and two undesirable ways, nonresponse = 45.5% and 45.9%; coding one each, the rates would be 32.5% and 29.1%).

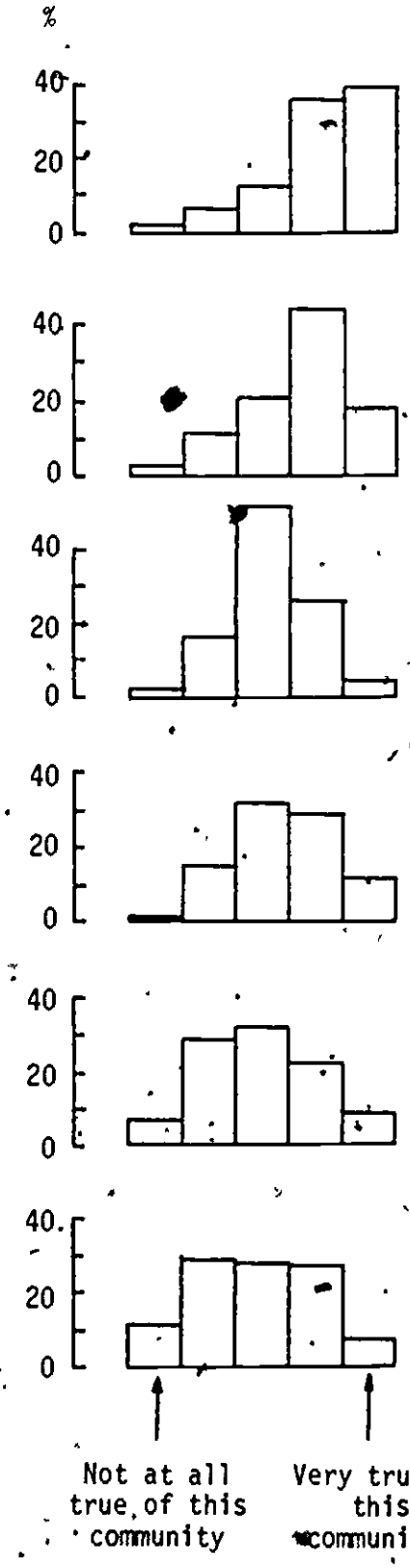


Figure 7 Administrator perceptions of why students leave their community

TABLE 37

Desirable Organization (Two Responses per Administrator)

Desirable organization	%
Individualization	18.7
Scheduling advantages, flexibility	16.1
Small classes	10.4
Ease of communication	9.6
Shared resonsibility	8.3
Cooperation, family feeling among staff	8.0
Good discipline	2.6
Increased variety of course offerings	2.1
Other	24.6

TABLE 38

Undesirable Organization (Two Responses per Administrator)

Undesirable Organization	%
Restricted course offerings	38.9
Large classes, too many grades per room	12.3
Limited funds	8.6
Limits to extracurricular/sports	6.8
Low faculty quality, no time or money for development	6.0
Time overload: overworked staff, too much paperwork	5.5
Intellectual drain: too many preparations, teaching outside major field	5.2
Forced to merge with other school(s)	2.3
Other	34.2

Table 39 details use by small schools of a number of out-of-school resources. The three most frequently utilized resources are state education department resources and personnel, media centers, and state-sponsored regional service centers. One interesting feature of this table that is worth pointing out is the relatively low utilization of the skills of community residents: only 33.6% of the principals reported that their schools take advantage of this resource.

TABLE 39

Resources Used by Schools

Resource	% Utilized
State education department	71.6
Media centers	51.8
Regional service centers	50.7
Regional educational cooperatives	47.3
State university	44.0
Traveling teachers	41.9
Centralized buying	39.3
Area vocational schools	38.9
Skills and in-kind contributions of community residents	33.6
Regional program sharing	26.1
Teacher centers	16.4
Student exchange programs	12.3
Other	6.6

We asked principals to list the three most important innovations that have been introduced in their schools in the last five years. Table 40 lists the results. Nonresponse for this question ran 28.5% (no innovations given), 39.8% (only one given), and 57.1% (only two given).

TABLE 40

Innovations Reported

Innovation	%
School organization and policy	15.5
Vocational programs, on-the-job training	7.1
Individualized instruction, mini-courses, skill center	5.7
Discipline, student handbook	5.2
Special education programs	4.7
Physical education, athletics	4.4
Curriculum development	4.2
Community participation	2.6
Cooperative programs, inter-school programs	1.8
Counseling, guidance	1.6
Extracurricular programs	1.6
Technological innovations	1.1
Other curricular developments	29.4
Other noncurricular developments	14.4

Table 41 details who introduced these innovations. (nonresponse = 33.1%, 44.9%, and 59.9%.)

TABLE 41

Who Introduced the Innovations

Who introduced innovation	%
Administration	37.5
Staff[1] (teacher and someone else)	20.4
School board	14.5
A teacher	13.6
Outside governmental agency	9.6
Parents	0.9
A university or college	0.5
Counselor	0.2
Other	4.4

Administrators reported that 60.9% of their students participate in vocational training programs. Table 42 indicates what type of programs the schools use.

TABLE 42

Types of Vocational Programs Used

Vocational program	% of students participating
In-school programs	28.9
Area vocational center	12.6
Cooperative programs with local business	10.3
Exchange programs with other school	5.1
Other	3.8

These percentages are very low due to a low rate of response to these questions; the five questions (one for each type of program) asked for a check (if only one program were used) or percent participation. Apparently the complexity of the questions discouraged many people from answering it.

[1] This category includes combinations of teachers and others, such as counselors or students.

We asked the administrators to rate the effectiveness of their vocational programs on a 5-point scale ranging from "very ineffective" to "very effective." 17.1% of the responses fell on the "ineffective" half of the scale; 50.1% said "effective."

Administrators were given a list of six barriers which might inhibit participation by students in vocational training programs, and asked to check those that applied to their schools. The responses are reported in Table 43.

TABLE 43

Barriers to Vocational Participation

Vocational training "barrier"	% of administrators who checked this
There is no program within reasonable travel distance	35.7
The cost of a particular kind of training cannot be justified to taxpayers, therefore it is not offered	20.9
Students feel "out of place" at the training programs (they don't want to be out of a regular school)	16.9
Too few openings exist in the available programs	12.1
The training which is offered is inappropriate for careers in our community	11.9
Barriers are minimal. As many students who want training can get it	45.1

We asked several questions relative to special education. Small schools report a mean 34.2 students per school receive remedial or special education services. A mean 88.3% of these students remain in their school (nonresponse = 11.5%). Principals reported a mean 8.2% "go to a center outside (their) school."

Table 44 details what percentages of small schools deal with special education needs.

On five-point scales, 63.4% of the respondents feel that their special education services are "effective" in meeting the needs of handicapped students (nonresponse = 12.1%; many of these schools report no handicapped students). 24.4% feel that they are "ineffective."

TABLE 44

How Small Schools Deal with Special Education

Special education service	% of schools
Mainstreaming with assistance	76.7
Special education consultants	62.7
Special education resource room	53.6
Special cooperative programs	42.3
Special classes	36.6
Mainstreaming without assistance	23.3
Other	7.0

On a similar scale, 69.5% of the respondents feel that their Title I program is "effective" in meeting the needs of low achievers. 11.9% feel that they are "ineffective." (nonresponse = 20.4%)

Figure 8 outlines administrator responses to a number of statements relative to the problems of running small schools. In general, administrators did not agree with the statements made.

7. Their Perceptions of Their Teachers

Tables 45-48 present statistics provided by administrators on the teachers in small schools.

TABLE 45

Faculty Size

Faculty group	Number of teachers	Standard deviation	Nonresponse
Full-time teachers	14.7	9.2	1.9%
Part-time teachers	2.2	4.8	5.3

TABLE 46

Five Year Changes in Faculty

Faculty group	Number of teachers replaced	Standard deviation	Nonresponse
Full-time teachers	8.0	7.9	11.4%
Part-time teachers	1.2	2.6	17.3

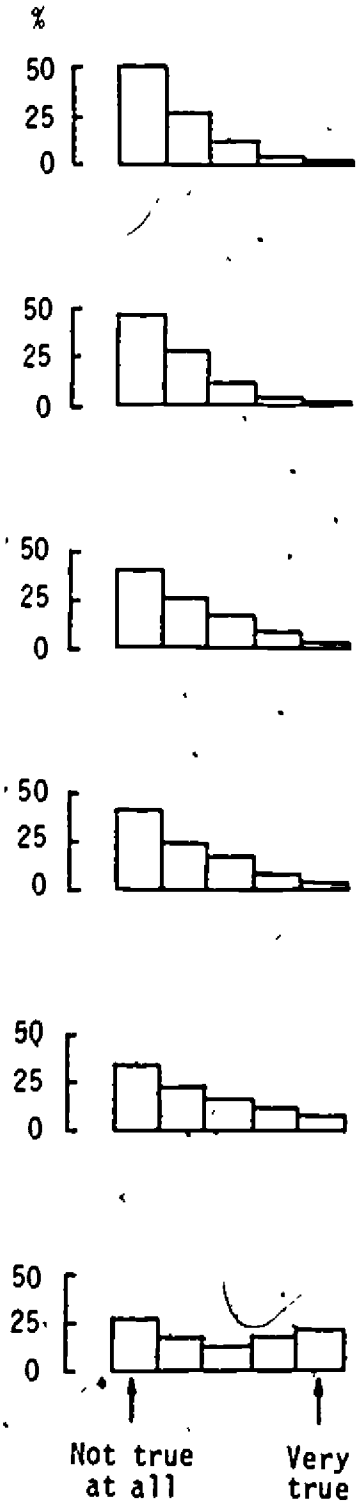


Figure 8. Administrator perceptions of the problems of running a small school.

TABLE 47

Educational Background of Teachers

Highest educational level	Mean number teachers	Standard deviation
Normal school certificate	0.3	1.8
Bachelor's degree	9.9	7.4
Master's in progress	2.2	2.9
Master's degree	2.7	2.8
Master's degree + additional credits	2.5	6.6

TABLE 48

Teaching Experience of Faculties

Number of years experience	Mean number teachers	Standard deviation
Less than 3 years	5.1	8.4
3 to 5 years	4.2	4.1
6 to 10 years	4.9	8.1
Over 10 years	4.3	6.8

Not all of the teachers' experience was in their present schools (Table 48). Administrators report an average of 4.3 teachers per school had prior experience in other schools. (Nonresponse = 7.2%.)

8. Their Perceptions of Their Communities

Table 49 portrays administrator agreement with several statements we made on the questionnaire about school community interactions.

TABLE 49

School-Community Interaction

Statement	% Agreeing
People from the community take an interest in what their children are learning, but they do not take an active part in curricular decisions	84.0
People from the community talk to school board members about curriculum and depend on the school board and administrators to implement the community's will	63.4
People from the community talk to teachers and administration directly to recommend subjects which they think should be taught	56.1
People from the community design and teach mini-courses (or run educational clubs after school)	13.8
People from the community do not seem to care about what is taught in the school	9.3
People from the community form groups to keep certain curricula out of the school	5.7

Figure 9 outlines other aspects of community involvement with the schools. In general, principals were more likely than not to report little or no involvement by the community in maintaining or building the physical plant, classroom instruction, vocational training, designing/evaluating curriculum, and school discipline. Figure 9 points out that small schools with a great deal of direct community involvement are the exception rather than the norm, but most schools have some direct assistance by the community in all these areas.

Figure 10 continues by graphically depicting the results to six more statements. We found disagreement with the statement, "People in this community complain frequently about the school." Administrators tended to agree with statements that community members volunteer services and/or offer materials at cost (or below) to the school, that people in the community know what is going on in the school, and that people in the community are active in school-sponsored activities.

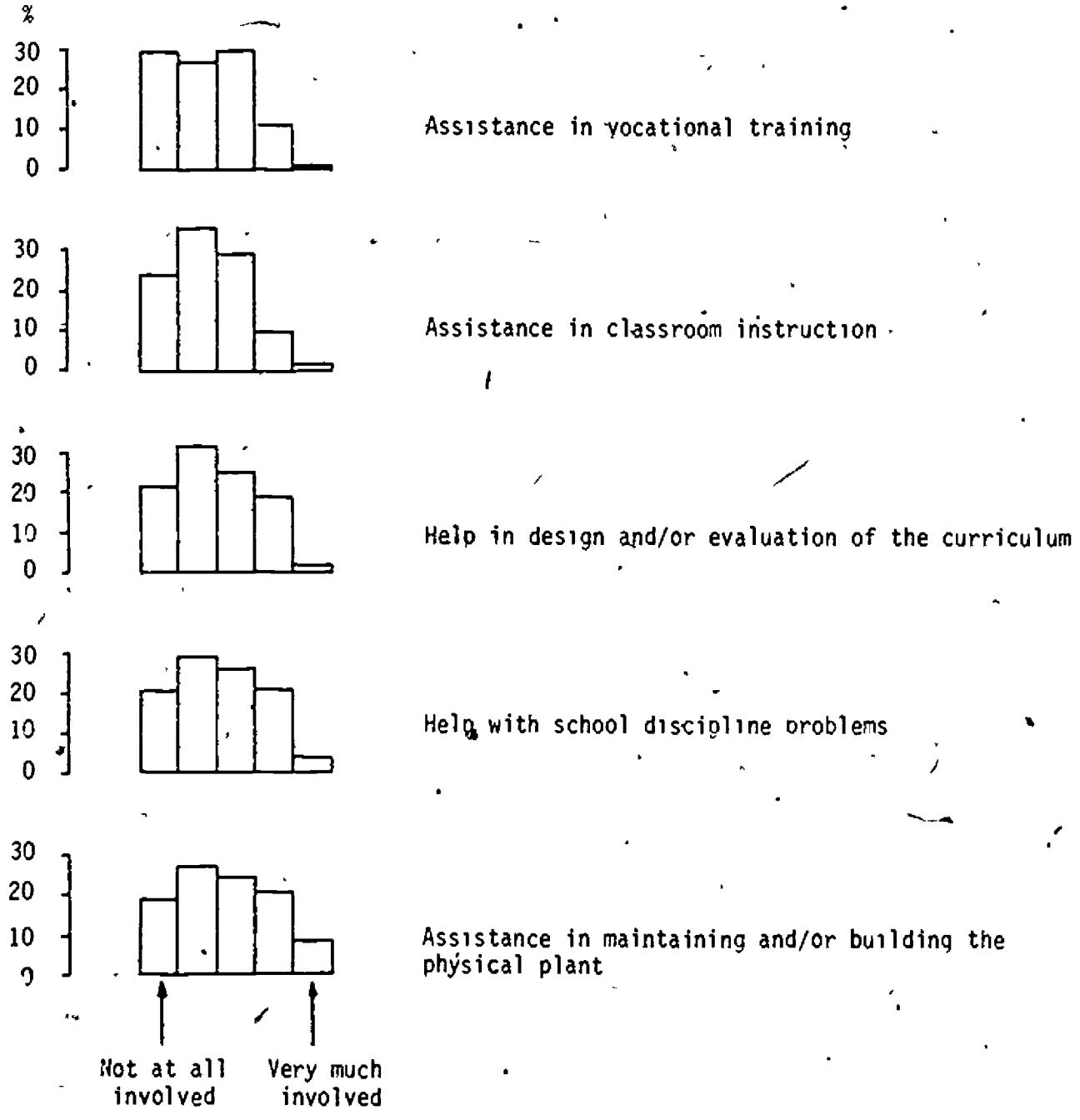
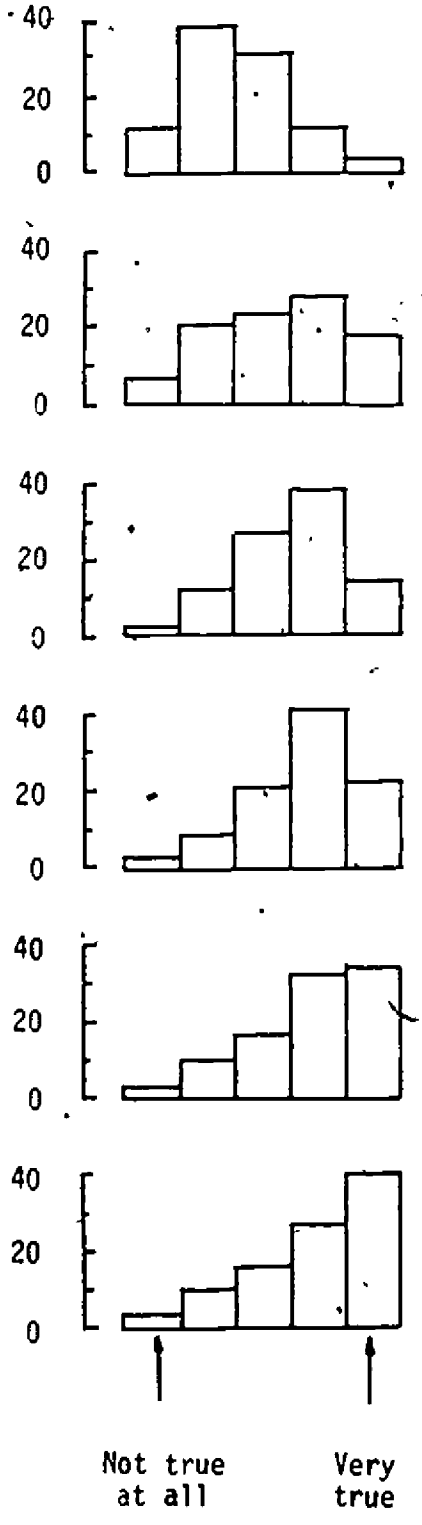


Figure 9. Administrator perceptions of how the community assists the school.



People in this community complain frequently about the school.

People in this community volunteer services and/or offer materials at cost or below in order to assist the school.

People in this community know what is going on in the school.

People in this community are active in school-sponsored activities (i.e., they support teams, they come to sports events, school plays, and similar events).

People in this community are very concerned about the values being imparted to their children through the school.

People in this community use the school building as a center for community events.

Figure 10. Administrator opinion on several statements dealing with the community.

More universal agreement by administrators was found for statements that "People in this community are very concerned about the values being imparted to their children through the school," and that "People in this community use the school building as a center for community events."

Figure 11 completes this profile by illustrating levels of community satisfaction in a number of areas, as perceived by small-school principals. The trend throughout is that the communities are satisfied with their schools. We point out, however, that satisfaction with "accessibility of principals and teachers," "level of preparation (training) of teachers," and "student participation in extracurricular activites" was more enthusiastic than satisfaction with "variety of academic offerings," "number of community-oriented activities," "academic achievement of students," and the "proportion of students who attend college."

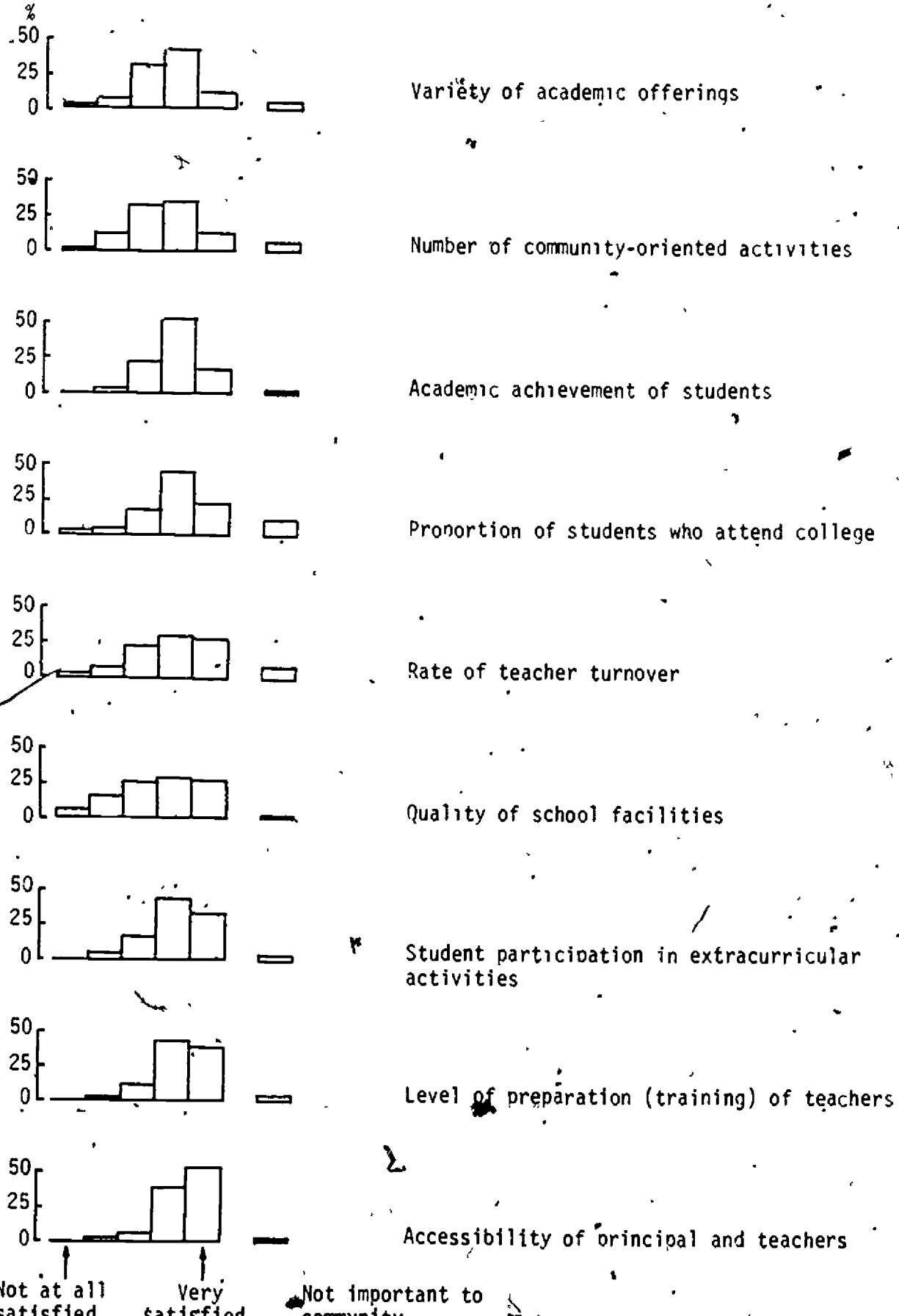


Figure 11. Levels of community satisfaction

V. School Board Profile

1. Their Personal Backgrounds

We begin this profile with a look at the personal characteristics of small-school board members. Table 50 points out that, like the administrators, most board members of small schools are between the ages of 31 and 50.

TABLE 50

Age of Respondents

Age	%
Less than 30 years old	3.6
31 to 40 years old	41.3
41 to 50 years old	39.4
51 to 60 years old	13.5
Older than 60	2.2

69.5% of the board members in our weighted sample are male; 30.5% are female. The overwhelming majority are presently married (Table 51).

TABLE 51

Marital Status of Respondents.

Marital Status	%
Never married	1.0
Married	97.4
Divorced, other	1.6

89.1% of the respondents have children who either now attend school in that district, or who will in the next few years. 0.8% reported that they have no children.

The vast majority of these members are white. Only 4.2% are not (Table 52).

TABLE 52

Respondents' Race

Race	%
White	95.9
Native American	3.0
Hispanic	0.4
Black	0.2
Other	0.6

Like the other two groups we surveyed, most small-school board members grew up in nonurban areas (Table 53). 87.5% grew up in the country, in small towns, and in towns of fewer than 10,000 people.

TABLE 53

Where the Board Members Grew Up

Where grew up	%
Open country or farm	57.7
Village	21.1
Small town (2500-10,000)	8.7
Small city (10,000-50,000)	3.2
Medium city (50,000-250,000)	1.5
Suburb near large city	2.4
Large city (250,000+)	5.4

We feel that it is worth emphasizing the high percentage who grew up in open country or on farms: 57.7%. The corresponding percentages for the teachers and administrators are 43.8% and 38.7%.

Table 54 outlines the educational backgrounds of small-school board members. The majority (57.7%) have no educational degrees beyond a high school diploma. 10.3% have professional degrees beyond a bachelor's degree.

TABLE 54

Educational Background

Highest degree	%
Did not complete high school	2.9
High School diploma	54.8
Associate/junior college degree	12.0
Bachelor's degree	20.0
Master's degree	8.5
Doctorate	1.8

Table 55 indicates that most board members are long-time residents of their communities. Only 5.6% have lived in their communities for five years or less.

TABLE 55

Length of Residence in This Community

Length of residence	%
Two years or less	0.4
3 to 5 years	5.2
6 to 10 years	12.3
More than 10 years	81.9

2. The Organization of School Boards

The mean size of small-school boards of education is between 5 and 6 members (5.43, standard deviation = 2.6). Most of these boards meet regularly once each month, but many respondents indicated that additional meetings are held "as necessary" (Table 56).

TABLE 56

School Board Frequency of Meeting

Frequency	%
Weekly	0.0
Twice monthly	9.4
Monthly	88.3
No regular schedule	2.3

3. Their Perceptions of the School Board's Job

Figure 12 illustrates board member opinions on the extent to which school boards should be directly involved in eight different issues. (The extent to which board members, and other groups, are actually involved in decisions about budget allocations, maintenance, hiring and firing of teachers, and curriculum adoption, are reported in the school-community profile.)

Although a substantial number of respondents expressed a desire to be included in each of these decision-making areas, the group as a whole was least likely to indicate they should be involved in interviewing candidates for non-teaching positions, handling complaints of individual parents, making decisions about student discipline, and making decisions about the content of textbooks and other classroom materials.

They were more likely to feel they should be involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the principal(s), making building and bus maintenance decisions, monitoring the effectiveness of teachers, and interviewing candidates for teaching positions.

We asked board members to choose the three goals (from a choice of eight) which they feel could best be used as a standard to evaluate the quality of a school. Table 57 reports the responses.

4. Their Perceptions of Their Students

We asked board members to indicate their concerns about student problems in their school. Figure 13 presents the results. The response distributions are virtually identical to those of the administrators and teachers: few of the problems that we listed are considered serious. The five most troublesome areas are lack of motivation, lack of parental support, lack of educational goals and direction, cheating, and vandalism (it is worth emphasizing again that, in general, these problems are considered small. Vandalism, for example, is considered more than a "small problem" by only 19.6% of the respondents.)

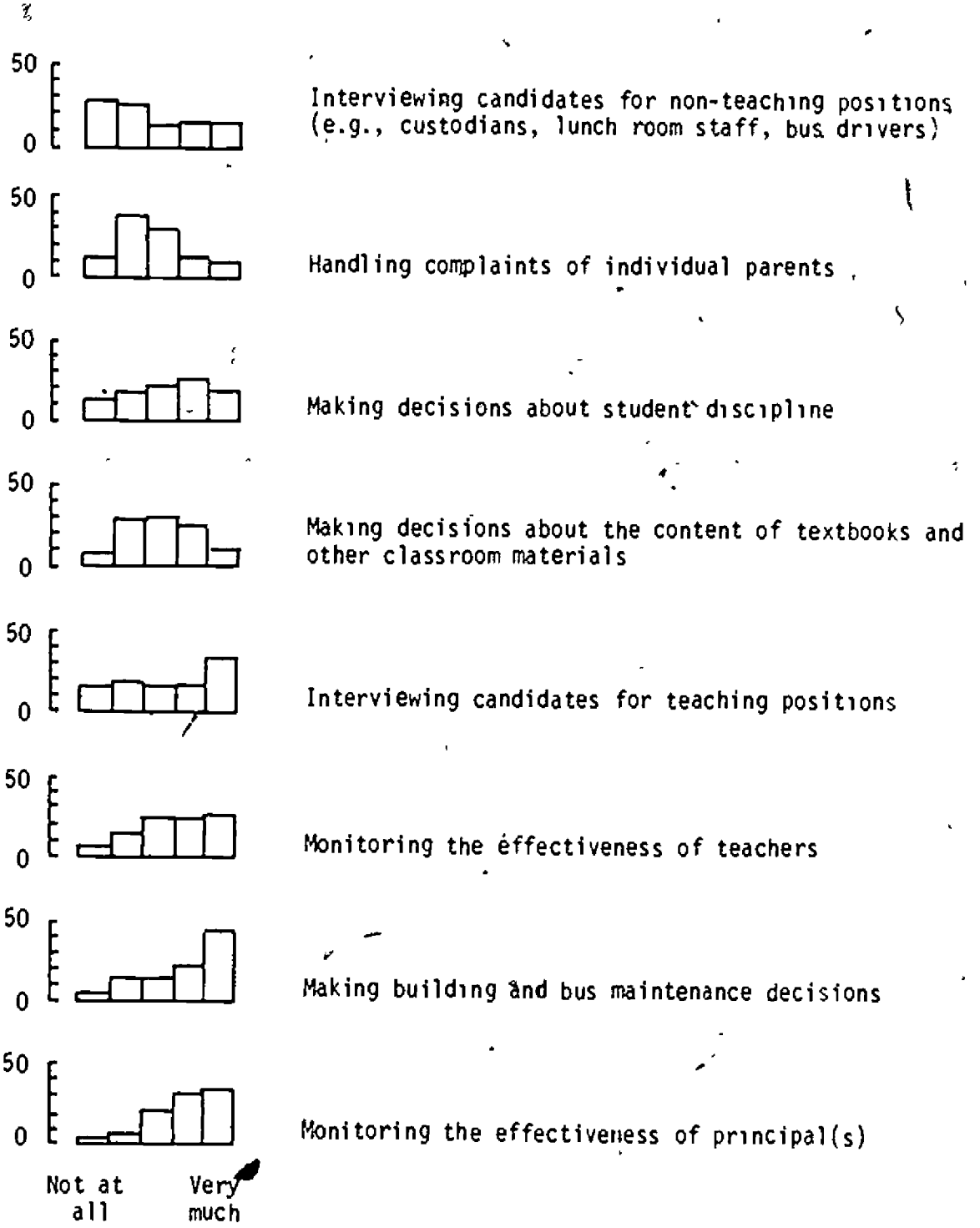


Figure 12. Board member opinions on the extent to which school boards should be directly involved in eight areas.

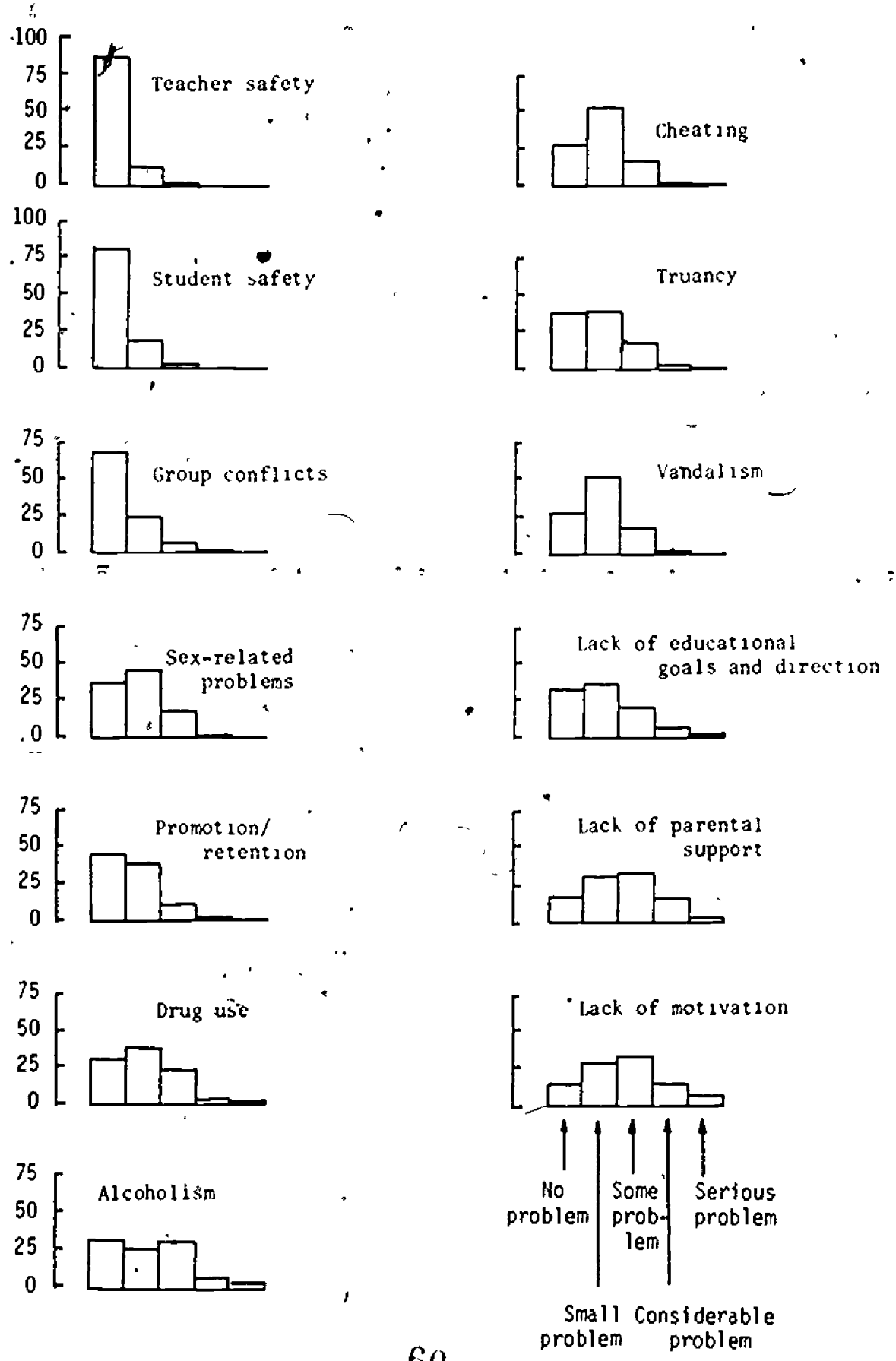


Figure 13. School board members' perceptions of student problems.

TABLE 57

Goals to Evaluate the Quality of a School

Goal	% of respondents choosing this goal (each could choose three)
1. Students are well-grounded in basic skills	82.2
2. After graduation, students are ready to be good parents and citizens	76.1
3. Students are successful in their jobs after graduation	69.7
4. Students know a great deal about the world outside their home community.	28.3
5. Students continue to hold the same values they were taught at home	24.7
6. Many students get into college	23.7
7. Discipline problems are rare	18.5
8. Students achieve high scores on standardized tests	9.6

We asked both the teachers and the board members to indicate (from a choice of five) what they felt was the most important future for which their school should prepare its average male and female students. Non-response by the teachers for this question was high; the board members liked it even less: fewer than 40% answered. Despite this high non-response rate, a comparison of Table 58 and Teacher Profile Table 16 suggests that board members may place a greater importance on going to a liberal arts college. Again, this trend is only suggested, due to the high uncertainty caused by low response to this question.

We asked board members to indicate to what extent students in their district travel outside the community to participate in several education-related activities. Figure 14 illustrates their responses: few students travel to study at colleges or vocational centers or to participate in student exchange programs. Most schools frequently transport students for competitive sports. The other activities -- outdoor education, fairs and contests, and field trips -- showed a mixed bag of responses.

We found very close agreement between board members and principals when asked what percent of their graduates leave the community to settle elsewhere. Board members reported a mean of 61.4% outmigration (standard deviation = 22.4). Administrators estimated 60.5%. When

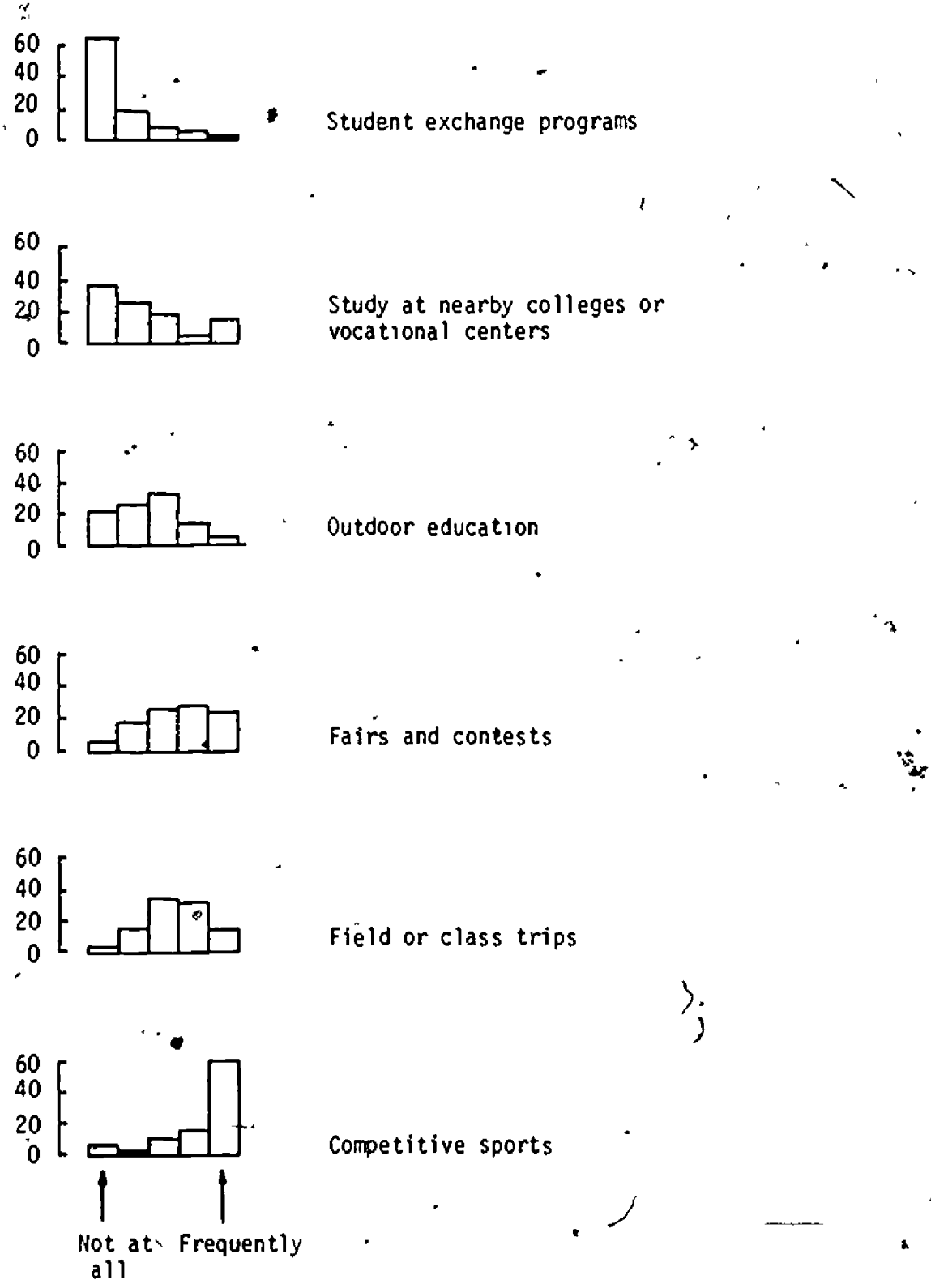


Figure 14. Extent to which students travel outside their communities in education-related activities.

TABLE 58

Most Important Male and Female Futures

Females	Males	Future
60.6%	61.6%	Did not answer
16.4	7.1	Marriage and family life
5.2	5.9	Work in the community
4.2	9.3	Work outside the community
10.2	10.1	Liberal arts college
2.3	6.2	Vocational college

asked how "satisfied" they are with this number, the percentages in the categories "satisfied," "neutral," and "dissatisfied" were 32.4%, 22.8%, and 40.1% respectively, among those who answered this question.

We gave the board members the same set of statements on outmigration that we gave the administrators, and asked them to indicate the extent to which each statement is true of their community. The response distributions (Figure 15) are almost identical to those in the administrator profile. The only evident difference is a slight tendency for board members to disagree more than the administrators with the statement, "Young people who leave frequently come back to the community to settle down."

5. Their Perceptions of Their Schools

Figure 16 illustrates responses to a number of questions relative to the problems of running small schools. Comparison to Figure 8 in the Administrator Profile shows that both groups disagree with the statements made, and that the only differences are small.

Figures 17 and 18 give the ratings of small schools in a number of areas by board members and administrators. The general shapes of the distributions in both figures are similar, but a few differences are worth noting. Compared to the administrators, board members are more likely to feel that their school does "very well" in keeping facilities up to date, and are less likely to feel that the school does "very well" in assisting students to make realistic career choices and constructive decisions about their personal lives, developing innovative curriculum materials, and offering effective staff development programs.

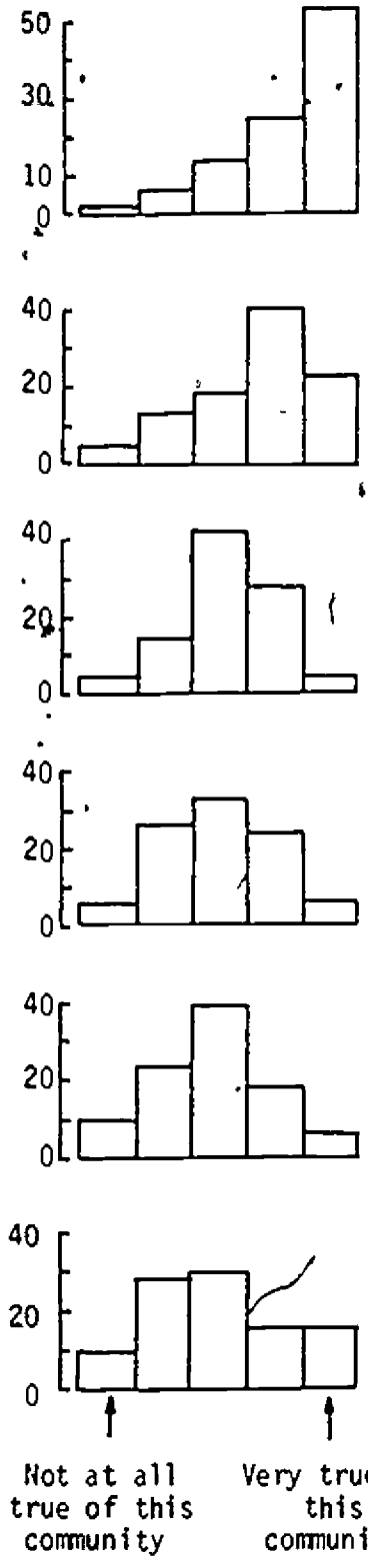
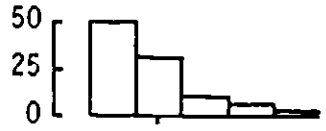


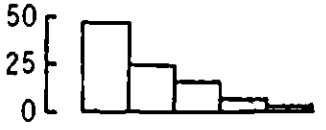
Figure 15. Board members' perceptions of why students leave their community.



State or district education officials seem to go out of their way to find problems with our program.

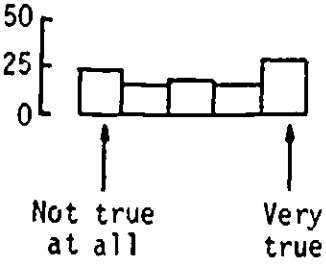
State or district education officials seem to go out of their way to find problems with our facilities.

We have great difficulty meeting state requirements.



We have great difficulty meeting federal requirements.

We have great difficulty getting enough money to stay open.



People from outside fail to understand how important our school is to community life.

Figure 16. Board members' perceptions of the problems of running a small school.

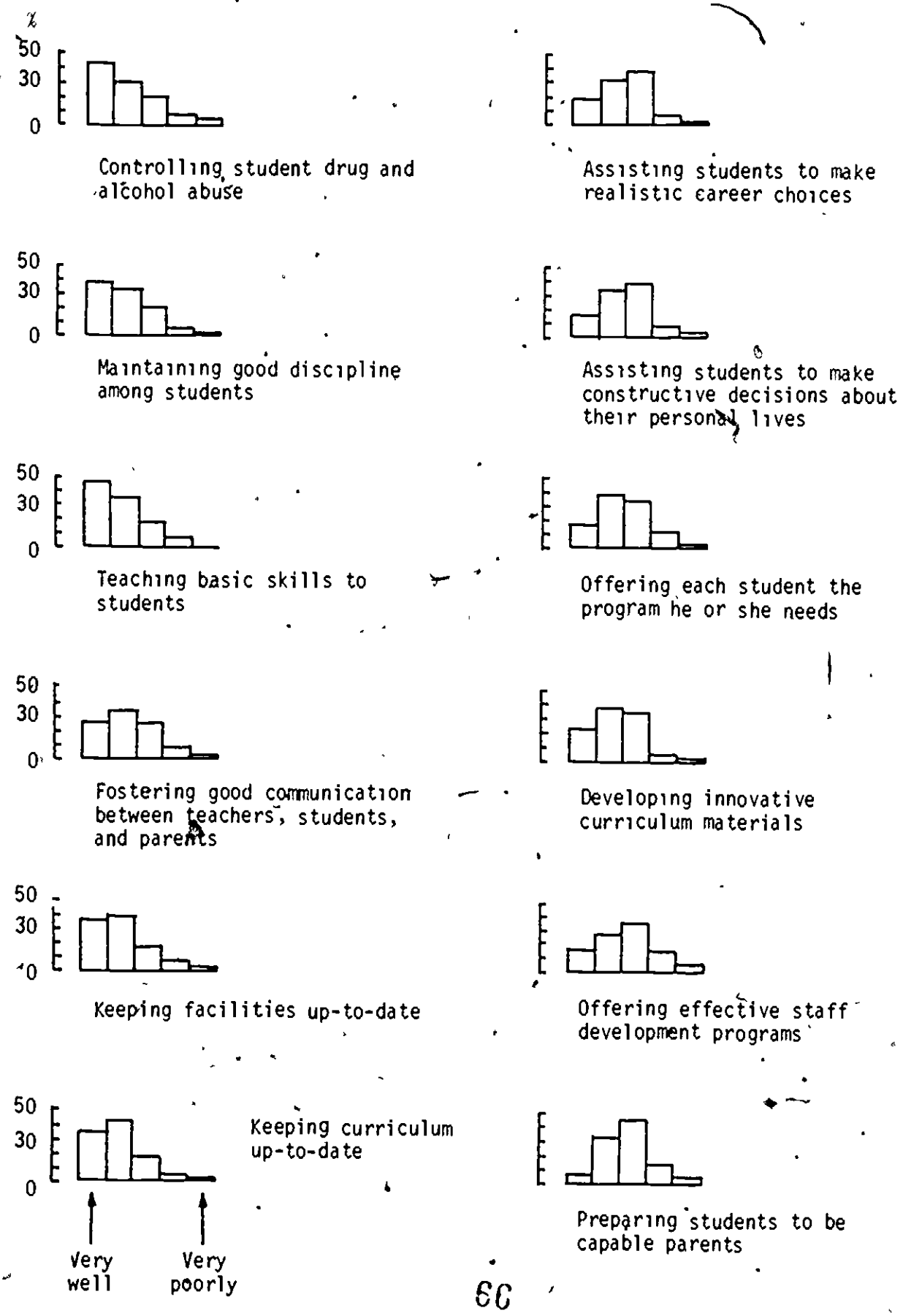
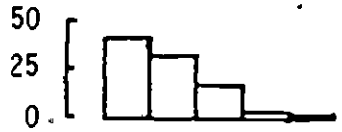
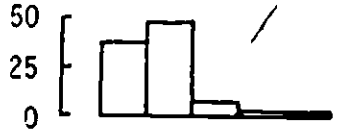


Figure 17. School board members' ratings of the jobs their schools do in a number of areas.

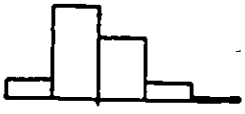


Controlling student drug and alcohol abuse

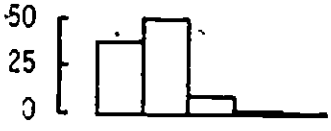
Assisting students to make realistic career choices



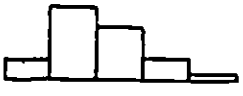
Maintaining good discipline among students



Assisting students to make constructive decisions about their personal lives

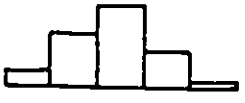


Teaching basic skills to students



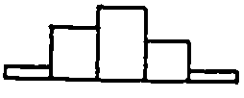
Offering each student the program he or she needs

Fostering good communication between teachers, students, and parents

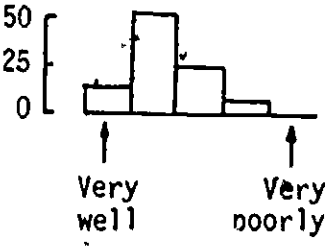


Developing innovative curriculum materials

Keeping facilities up-to date



Offering effective staff development programs



Keeping curriculum up-to-date

Preparing students to be capable parents

Figure 18. Administrators' ratings of the jobs their schools do in a number of areas.

Table 21 in the Teacher Profile gives teacher ratings of the strengths and weaknesses of their schools. Table 59 gives findings for the same block of questions, comparing responses of principals and school board members. The order in which the "areas rated" are tabulated in Table 59 is the same as the Teacher Profile ranking, and some differences in ranking are worth pointing out. As a group, board members are more likely to consider school facilities an outstanding strength (36.5%) than are the teachers or administrators who work in them (26.2% and 2.16%, respectively). Board members rate school curriculum higher as well (27.4%, compared to 22.9% for administrators, and 16.7% for teachers). Furthermore, 20.4% feel that there is strong parent participation, while only 15.9% of the teachers and 8.6% of the administrators consider that an outstanding strength of the school.

Board members were asked what they perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of consolidation. We collapsed their write-in responses into several groups; the results are summarized in Table 60. We coded as many as two advantages: Non-reponse was high however; 18.1% didn't write anything down.

It is interesting to note here that although exposure of students to a variety of people and social settings is frequently seen as a serious weakness in these schools, only 2.7% of the board members see such exposure as a beneficial outcome of consolidation. One possible reason for this phenomenon may simply be that nearby schools are composed of similar kinds of people; note from the School-Community Profile that only 7.5% of the board members believe that people in neighboring towns are "very different from people in this town."

Table 61 shows the other side of the coin: board members' perceptions of the disadvantages of consolidation. Again, non-response was high: 24.2% wrote nothing.

We asked board members how much pressure there is from the state to consolidate. 12.2% answered "a lot," 30.8% said "some," and 57.9% reported none.

TABLE 59

Board and Principal Ratings:

Strengths and Weaknesses of Their Schools

Area rated	Outstanding strength		Considerable weakness	
	Board	Principals	Board	Principals
Personal attention given to students	52.7%	67.2%	1.4%	0%
Relaxed atmosphere	28.8	44.7	0	0.2
Student-teacher relationships	38.3	54.7	1.1	2.6
Quality of teaching	39.5	43.7	0.2	1.2
School discipline	37.3	44.6	2.7	0.4
Flexibility of curriculum and scheduling	23.3	25.7	2.8	6.6
Student opportunities for leadership	26.4	29.6	3.1	0.9
School-community relationships	29.8	28.4	2.3	1.2
School facilities	36.5	21.6	3.4	10.5
Extra-curricular programs, including sports	27.2	20.9	5.2	6.4
Academic preparation for college	22.5	18.3	5.7	2.2
School curriculum	27.4	22.9	0.8	1.2
Parent participation	20.4	8.6	4.0	5.4
Vocational training for jobs in the community	12.0	4.0	13.5	13.0
Vocational training for jobs outside the community	9.8	5.1	13.9	15.4
Exposure of students to a variety of people and social settings	6.6	5.7	12.2	13.6

TABLE 60

Advantages of Consolidation

Advantage	% of total responses
No advantage	36.8
Expanded curriculum	27.1
More money, lower taxes	8.6
Better facilities, equipment, supplies	6.7
More students, better athletic teams	6.3
Competition among students	5.6
Exposure to different kinds of people	2.6
Other	6.3

TABLE 61

Disadvantages of Consolidation

Disadvantage	% of total responses
No disadvantages	4.6
Transportation problems	42.9
Lose community cohesion, loss of an important part of community	16.9
Loss of individual attention	16.5
Loss of community control over education	7.3
Discipline or drug problems	6.5
Lowered quality of instruction	3.8
Other	1.5

6. Their Perceptions of Their Communities

We asked both the school board members and the principals to indicate their community's satisfaction with a number of aspects of the schools. The board members' responses are illustrated in Figure 19. The only noteworthy differences between this and Administrator Profile Figure 11 are higher reported community satisfaction with the quality of school facilities, and lower reported community satisfaction with the proportion of students who attend college and the accessibility of principals and teachers.

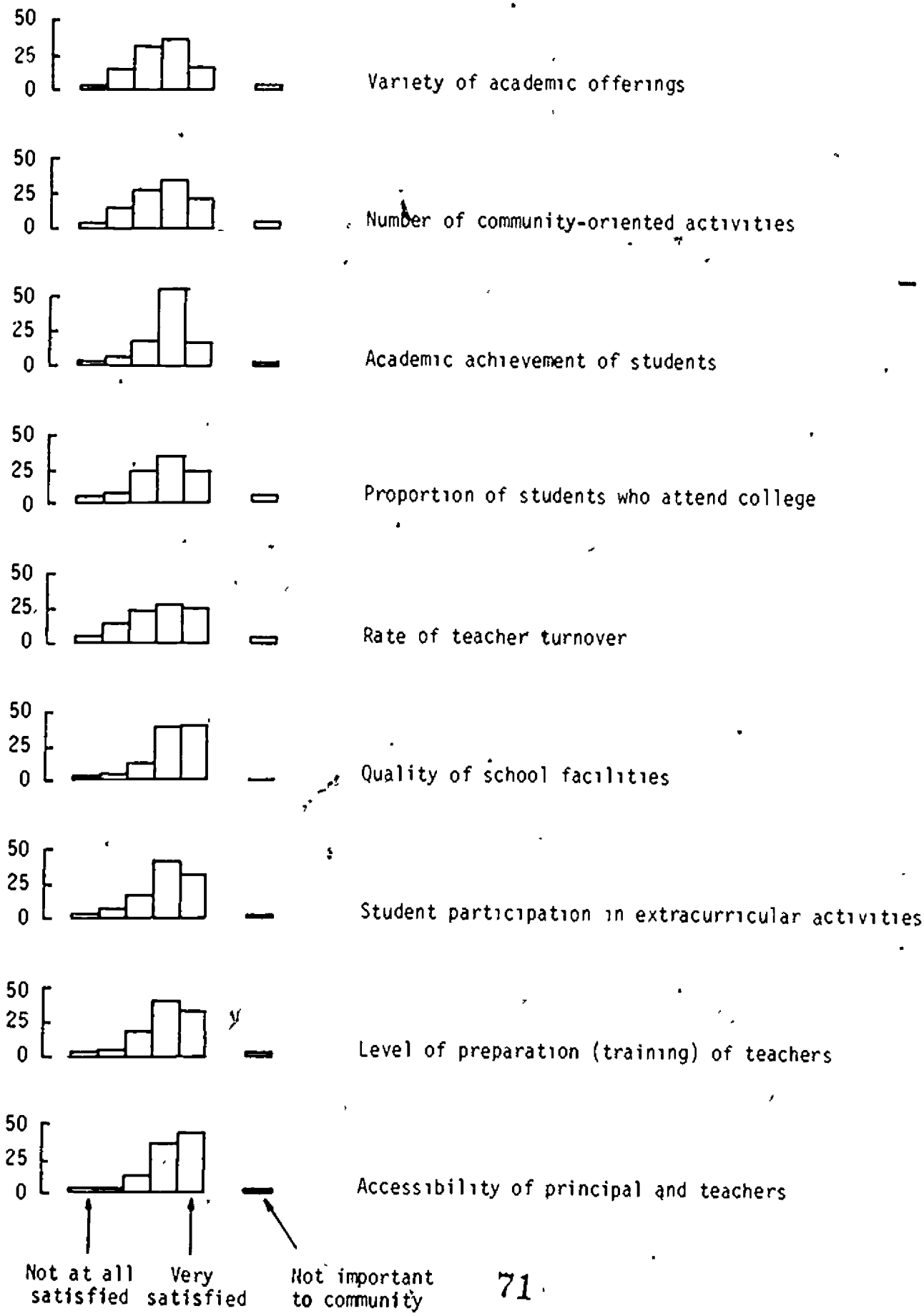


Figure 19. Levels of community satisfaction.

Figure 20 outlines board perceptions of the ways in which the community helps the school. School board members' responses are very similar to administrator responses.

Figure 21 gives the responses to a number of other questions about the school-community relationship. Again, there are only small differences between these answers and those of the administrators (Administrator Profile Figure 10), except that board members were more likely to report that community members are active in school-sponsored activities.

Finally, we gave board members a list of five of the reasons communities often have for opposing the closing of a small school. Accompanying this list was this statement: "If your school were under pressure to close, which of the following reasons would be the two most important to your community?" Their responses are tabulated in Table 62.

TABLE 62

Reasons to Keep a Small School Open

Reason	% of respondents
If the school closes, the community will lose its central focus.	73.3
If the school closes, taxpayers will lose control over how their tax money is being spent.	42.2
If the school closes, young people will be exposed to values of which this community disapproves.	30.9
If the school closes, young people will be more likely to become disenchanted with their home community and move out.	26.7
If the school closes, parents will not know where their children are or what they are doing much of the time.	25.6

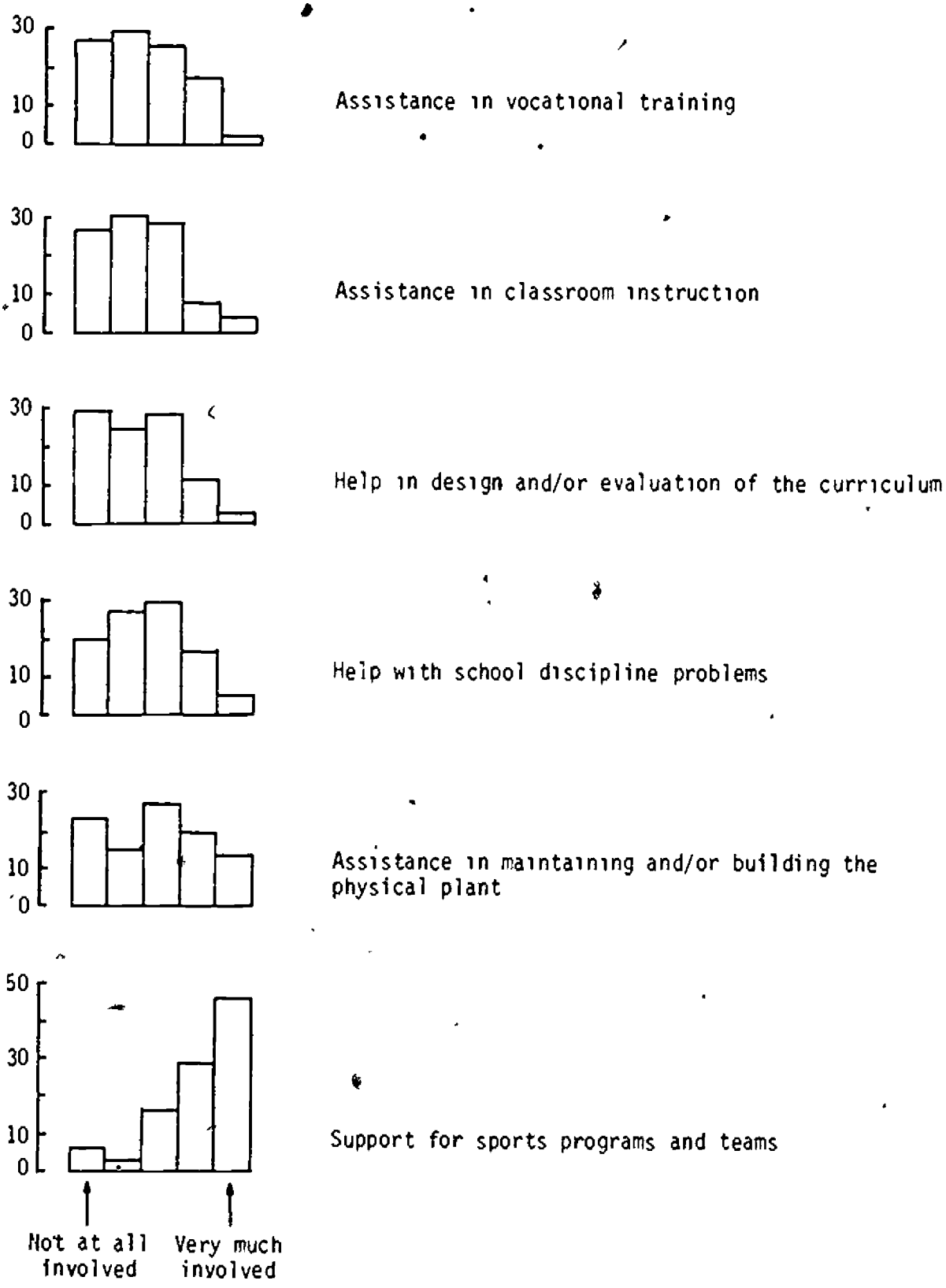
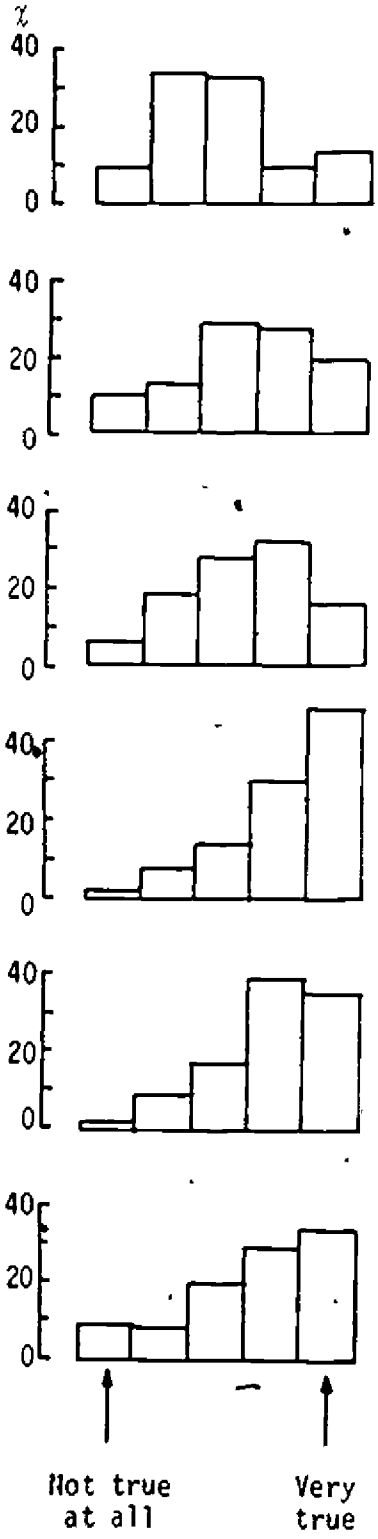


Figure 20. Administrator perceptions of how the community assists the school.



People in this community complain frequently about the school.

People in this community volunteer services and/or offer materials at cost or below in order to assist the school.

People in this community know what is going on in the school.

People in this community are active in school-sponsored activities (i.e., they support teams, they come to sports events, school plays, and similar events).

People in this community are very concerned about the values being imparted to their children through the school.

People in this community use the school building as a center for community events.

Figure 21. School board opinion on several statements dealing with the community.

VI. School Profile

In the preceding profiles (Teacher, Administrator, and School Board), we have summarized the information and opinions we received from a nation-wide survey of three groups of people involved in small-school education. In these last two profiles, we summarize and compare the responses of these three groups, and add additional information which does not deal specifically with any one group (e.g. the school's total budget).

The following three abbreviations are used to indicate from which questionnaire(s) came the information that is discussed: A = administrator, SB = school board, and T = teacher. When a number follows an abbreviation, it refers to a table; if the number is subsequently followed by the letter "F," the number refers to a figure. For example, "A7F" refers to Administrator Profile Figure 7. "A24" refers the reader to Table 24 in the Administrator Profile.

1. Organization

Tables 37 and 38 summarize administrator perceptions of how being small has been advantageous and disadvantageous in school organization. At least one in ten responding administrators listed small classes, ease of scheduling, and individualization as desirable features; ease of communication within the school was also frequently reported. The most frequent disadvantages listed were restricted course offerings and large classes, or too many grades in one classroom.

Teachers, when asked how the small school setting makes it easy or difficult to teach effectively, answered in a similar fashion (T17, T18). Close interaction, individualization, and intra-school cooperation makes their jobs easier; inadequate facilities or supplies and multi-class subjects or too many preparations were the most frequent complaints.

Classrooms in small schools are frequently occupied by more than one grade level at a time. Averaging the responses of all administrators equally (regardless of school size), we found that 42.4% of the classrooms in grades K-6 include more than one grade level, 27.3% of the required courses in grades 7-12 are made up of more than one grade, and 50.8% of the elective courses in grades 7-12 have more than one grade.

2. Personnel

a. Administrators

The overwhelming majority of the principals in K-12 and high schools are male, but about 40% of elementary principals are female. Most administrators are married, white, between ages 31 and 50, and from rural and small-town backgrounds. They most frequently live in the community they work in. The majority of administrators in all school types have master's degrees, but elementary principals were more likely to not have a master's than principals from the other two school types (A23-A29). Additional information about the characteristics of this group can be found in the Administrator Profile.

b. Teachers

Women outnumbered men in this group almost two to one. Teachers are, on the average, younger than principals: the majority were age 40 or younger (T6). And, given their younger ages, it is not surprising that they are more frequently single: 13.5% have not married, compared to 5.7% for the principals (T7, T8). Like the principals, most are white, and most grew up in rural areas or small towns. They most frequently live in the community in which they teach, but it is more common to find them living outside the community than it is for the administrators (T8, T9).

Questions about the educational backgrounds and professional experience of teachers were asked of both the surveyed teachers and the administrator group. Their responses were similar. Approximately 71% of small-school teachers do not have master's degrees (or other post-baccalaureate degrees), 76% of the teachers report less than ten years' experience in their present school (and other schools of the same size), and 64% of the teachers report at least one year of teaching experience in another school (for a more detailed comparison of administrator and teacher responses along these parameters, see the Sample Check, Chapter 8).

Tables A45-A48 outline specific characteristics of the faculties of these schools.

Table 63 gives administrator responses to a question asking what has happened to the size of the teaching staff in their schools in the past five years. Although slightly more than half reported no change, reports of increases outnumbered decreases two-to-one.

Table 64 gives responses to a similar question regarding changes in the size of the student body. Here the trend is different: decreases were commonly reported, and outnumbered increases 3:2.

It should be noted that the overall trend is not one of shrinking enrollments and increased teaching staffs. The situation is better described as one in which faculties are either growing or, more commonly, numerically stable, while student enrollments are showing frequent, but by no means universal, shrinkage.

TABLE 63

Changes in Size of the Teaching Staff

Change	% of schools
Increase	32.4
No change	52.5
Decrease	15.1

TABLE 64

Changes in Number of Students in the School

Change	% of schools
Increase	27.6
No change	30.0
Decrease	42.4

When asked if they had any pre-service training appropriate to teaching in small schools, 64% of the teachers answered "no." Of those that said "yes," most of the descriptions were of rural "experiences," or teaching (and student-teaching) in other small schools. 66% reported that they have had in-service training appropriate for teaching in small schools, but their responses to other questions indicates that, in general, they do not feel their schools do a good job offering staff development programs. 31% expressed dissatisfaction with their opportunities to interact with other education professionals, and 36% feel that most teachers in their school feel professionally isolated.

c. School Boards

Almost all of the board members in small schools are white, married, and from a small-town background. Men outnumber women more than two-to-one, and the group as a whole is older than the teachers and administrators. More than half ended their formal education with high school; 10.3% continued their education after receiving a bachelor's degree. Most are long-time residents of their communities (SB50-SB55).

Most school boards meet monthly, on a regular basis.

d. The Issue of Racial Make-up

Table 65 (below) points out that most of the administrators, teachers, school board members and students in small schools are white. Minorities are poorly represented among the teachers especially.

TABLE 65

Racial Make-Up of Small Schools

Group	White	Black	Native American	Other
Administrators	93.8%	2.5%	2.2%	1.5%
Teachers	98.0	0.3	0.7	1.0
School board members	95.9	0.2	3.0	0.9
Students*	89.2	1.8	4.4	4.0

* Data from the administrator questionnaire. Format of the question was different from that of the other three groups.

3. Programs

a. Resources

The five resources which teachers most frequently said they had access to and use are: libraries, reference books, teacher-made materials, films, and non-text printed materials. The five resources which teachers most frequently had access to but did not use are the out-of-doors, field trips, community resources, programmed learning materials (like SRA), and radio broadcasts. The five resources on our list which teachers most frequently said they did not have access

to are interactive television, computer terminals, team teaching, community studies programs, and internships/community work experience programs (T19).

In a list of other resources, school principals indicated that their schools utilize their state education department, media centers, and regional service centers more than 50% of the time. Regional program sharing, teacher centers, and student exchange programs are utilized by less than 30% of the schools (A39).

b. Programs Offered

Table 66 presents information provided by school board members about five types of programs. Non-response was high for this question: 10.3%.

TABLE 66

Program Availability in the School or District

Program	Yes	No
Hot lunch program	93.6%	6.4%
After-school programs	57.5	42.5
Summer programs	41.3	58.7
Homebound teachers	23.1	76.9
Breakfast programs	19.3	71.7

c. Curriculum and Innovations

We asked administrators where new curricular ideas in their school come from. They reported administrators, teachers, and outside workshop courses were the most frequent source of these new ideas (Table 67).

Similarly, administrators most frequently said that innovations in their school were introduced by administrators (A41). The innovations they reported involved many areas of school management and curriculum (A40).

d. Handicapped and Gifted Students

The Administrator Profile details a number of aspects of education for handicapped students. We found that schools deal with the special needs of students through a variety of means; most common are mainstreaming with assistance (76.7%) of the schools), and special education

TABLE 67

Where New Curricular Ideas Come From

Source	%
Adminstrator	88.1
Experienced teacher	61.7
Outside workshop course	60.3
New teacher	58.8
Resource person (outside school)	33.3
Community member	21.5
Advisor	5.2
Other	3.6

resource rooms (53.6%). In general, administrators feel that the services that they offer handicapped students and low achievers are "effective" (A44).

When asked to list the good and bad effects on their school of P.L. 94-142, 30.8% of the administrators said it had had no effect. 32.2% complained that it was costing the district additional money, 11.9% said that it was leading to increased understanding of the handicapped, 4.3% complained that it was causing additional bureaucratic headaches, and 1.1% said that the law has enabled them to hire a resident consultant teacher.

Administrators rated the effectiveness of their programs for gifted and talented students on our standard five-point scale. 46.5% feel that their programs are "ineffective," and 51.0% feel that they are "effective." Table 68 indicates what these programs consist of (note, however, that non-response for Table 68 = 77%).

e. Vocational Education

The Administrator Profile also presents our findings on vocational education in small schools. In summary: administrators reported that more than 60% of their students participate in vocational programs. Administrators rank their programs high in effectiveness, and most frequently cite geographical isolation and the high cost of such programs as barriers to participation by students (A42, A43).

TABLE 68

Gifted and Talented Programs

Program	%
None	46.7
Special programs in school	16.5
Individualize their program	11.7
"It's up to the teacher"	8.8
Send students elsewhere	3.1
Special materials purchased for them	2.3
Employ tutors	1.1
Use them for peer tutoring	0.3
Other	9.4

4. Budgetary Considerations

a. Revenues and Costs

Questions on the administrator questionnaire dealing with budgets had very high non-response rates, probably due to a number of reasons: unwillingness to do the extra work of figuring out or looking up the figures, uncertainty about figures for the coming year, perhaps even reluctance to share financial information with outsiders. Nevertheless, Table 69 gives our findings on the sources and uses of the monies used to run small schools. Figure 22 is a frequency histogram of per-pupil expenses reported by administrators. The mean budget for these schools is $631,000, with high non-response (18.2%) and a large standard deviation ($818,000).

TABLE 69

Budget Information Contributed by Administrators

Sources	% Contribution	S.D.	Non-Response Rate
Local community	54.8	26.7%	16.4%
State government	34.8	24.1	17.4
Federal government	8.3	10.9	21.6
Expenses	**% of Total Budget**	**S.D.**	**Non-Response Rate**
Salaries	62.7	15.1%	19.4%
Maintenance	10.9	7.7	22.1
Transportation	9.0	5.8	19.1

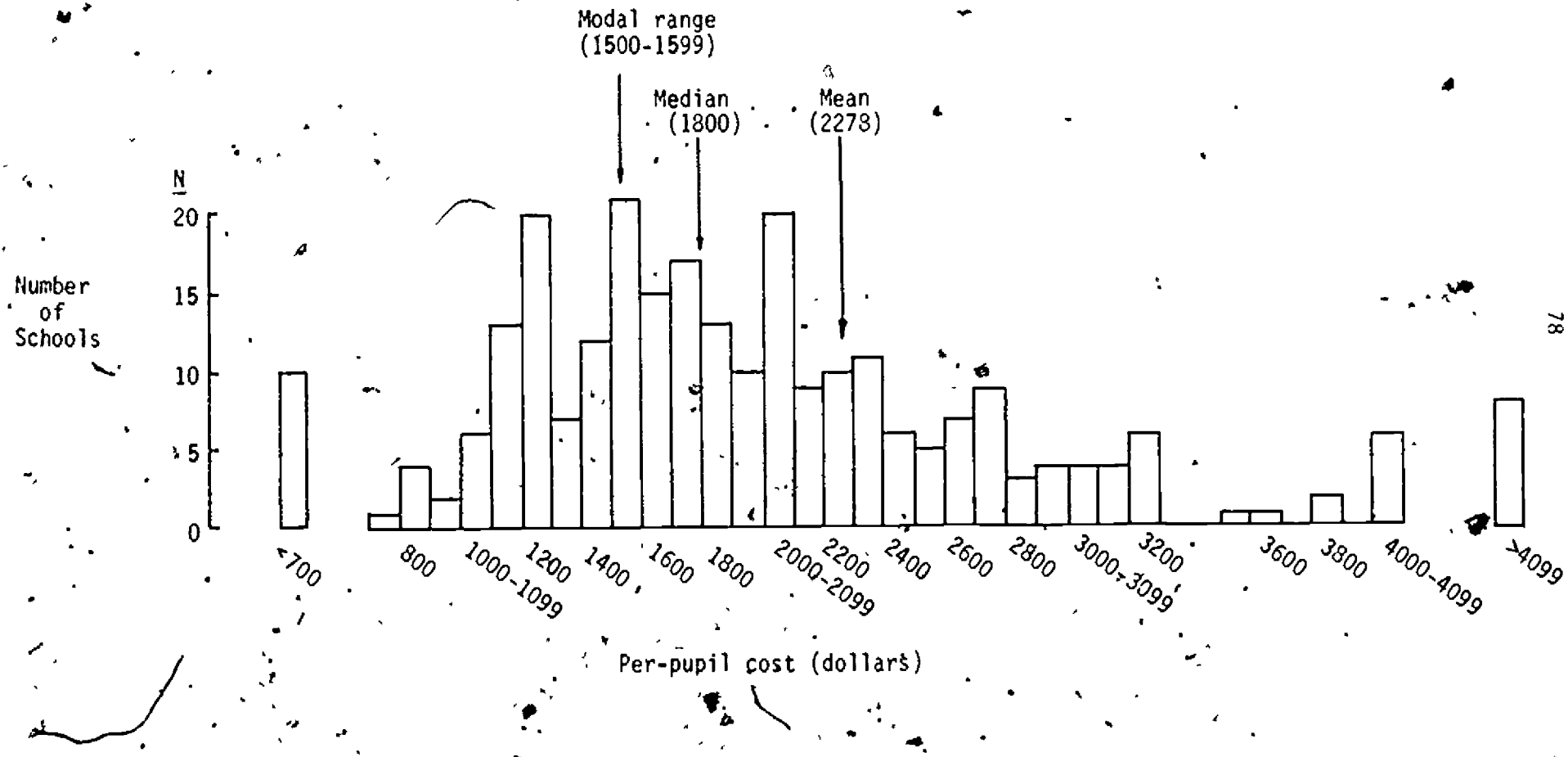


Figure 78. Frequency histogram of per-pupil costs reported by administrators.

b. Transportation

Table 70 indicates how long students in these schools must ride the bus each day. This is one crude indication of the area of these school districts.

TABLE 70

Length of Time Students Spend Getting to and from School Each Day

Time	%
30 minutes	53.3
30-60 minutes	31.9
60-90 minutes	6.7
90 minutes	3.4

School board members report that 86.6% of the schools do not provide transportation for students staying after school to participate in extracurricular activities. However, on five-point scales ranging from "not at all" to "frequently," members report frequent travel by students (positions 4 or 5) outside the community to participate in competitive sports (78%), fairs and contests (50%), and field or class trips (48%), but not for outdoor education (19%), study at nearby colleges or vocational centers (18%), or student exchange programs (9%).

c. Energy

When asked "Do you expect to have to modify (or have you already modified) the operation of your school because of the cost/limited availability of fuel?" 62.0% of the school board respondents said "yes." However, only 19.7% are considering alternative energy sources (e.g., solar, wind, ethanol). Most are modifying or planning to modify via conservation practices or investment in standard technologies like more efficient burners and insulation.

5. Other Topics

a. The Issues of Consolidation

We asked school board members several questions about consolidation, an issue that many small schools have had to face, and, as enrollments decline, will continue to face.

When asked "Would it be possible for you to consolidate with another school within reasonable bus distance (i.e., no more than

an hour's ride for any child)?," 39.9% said "no;" 60.1% said "yes."

"How much pressure from the state or county is there to consolidate?" 12.2% said "a lot." 30.8% said "some." 57.0% said "none."

"What do you see to be the advantages and disadvantages of such a consolidation?" (Or, "What would be the advantages and disadvantages if it were possible for you to consolidate?") School Board Profile Tables SB60 and SB61 summarize the results of these write-in queries. 37.6% see no advantages to consolidation. 27.8% see advantages in an expanded curriculum. No other area (lowered taxes, better facilities, better athletic teams, etc.) accounted for more than 9% of the responses.

"Has the consolidation issue been brought to a vote in your community?" 22.3% responded affirmatively. Of these communities, 60.9% clearly opposed consolidation, 22.4% clearly supported consolidation, and for 16.8% we received "other" responses (such as "undecided").

b. The Problems of Small Schools

We asked all three of the groups we surveyed to indicate what their concerns are about student problems in their school. The response distributions are virtually identical among the three groups: few of the problems we listed are ever considered serious. Of the thirteen areas we specified, the three areas most frequently listed as troublesome are lack of student motivation, lack of parental support, and lack of educational goals and direction (A24, SB51, T8-9).

c. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Small Schools

All three groups were asked to rate sixteen areas as "strengths" or "weaknesses" of their schools. In general, the responses of all three groups were similar, but there were a couple of differences between the board members and the other two groups; these are discussed in the School Board Profile. The following areas were rated "outstanding strengths" more than 30% of the time, by all three groups: personal attention given to students, relaxed atmosphere, student-teacher relationships, quality of teaching, and school discipline.

Respondents saw all areas as "considerable weaknesses" (the other end of our five-point scale) of their schools much less frequently. The only areas seen as "considerable weaknesses" more than 10% of the time by all three groups were: exposure of students to a variety of people and social settings and vocational training for jobs in and outside the community (SB59, T21).

d. Internal Ratings of the Schools

What do people who work in small schools think of their schools? Most teachers and administrators feel their schools do well teaching basic skills, maintaining good discipline, keeping the curriculum up to date, controlling drug and alcohol abuse, fostering good communication between teachers, students, and parents, and keeping facilities up to date. They were much less likely to say that their schools do poorly in any areas; of the teachers, 27.0% said that their schools do a poor job of developing innovative curriculum materials, and 43.3% said that their school does a poor job offering elective staff development programs. Administrators rated all twelve areas as "poor" less than 25% of the time.

e. Internal Satisfaction with the Schools

Figure T2F summarizes teacher satisfaction with their schools. Most teachers are happy with their autonomy, student discipline, opportunities to develop close personal relationships with students, the amount of time they spend at school and school functions, the length of their commute to work and the quality of student-teacher relations. They were less satisfied with their pay relative to the cost of living, the school facilities, and their opportunities to interact with other education professionals.

VII. Community Profile

1. Community Characteristics

We asked school board members seventeen questions about their communities. The results:

a. Economics

In 76.5% of these communities, most of the residents are employed in farming or ranching. When asked if theirs was a "one-industry town," however, only 41.1% said "yes" (non-response = 11.9%): 29.8% of the respondents specified "agriculture," 6.3% said "mining," or "logging," 2.6% said manufacturing of some type, and the remaining 2.4% were classified under various headings, including tourism and fishing.

In a separate question, 7.4% said that a substantial portion of local income comes from tourism.

Only 22.1% agreed that "employment opportunities here are pretty diverse." Nevertheless, 69.7% verified that "there is a wide range of family income here." Finally, 49.5% of the people responding to the question, "Do most people here have to struggle to make ends meet?" said "yes" (non-response = 6.2%).

b. Education

93.5% of the respondents agreed that most people in their community finished high school. Only 4.2% said that most people have a college degree.

6.9% of the respondents agreed that "many children here go to private or parochial schools."

c. Backgrounds

70.1% of the respondents agreed that "most people here are from a single racial or ethnic background" (5.5% non-response). The breakdown:

White	74.9%
Black	.1
Native American	4.7
Spanish American	.6
Other groups	18.5

86.8% verified that "most people who live here were born here or nearby," but 39.9% reported that "a lot of people moved here from elsewhere in the last ten years." 24.9% agreed that their community has "changed substantially in the last five years."

The breakdown:

7.5%	Immigration
3.1	Becoming a retirement community
1.5	Population decline
1.1	Energy or other "boom"
11.7	Other change (e.g. "military base closed")

And roughly one-quarter (26.1%) affirmed that "there is a large generation gap in this community."

d. Isolation

When asked "Do most families here live at least a quarter mile apart from each other?," 63.7% answered "yes." Despite physical isolation, however, only 8.2% agreed that "it is often difficult to get to the next town." 7.5% of the respondents said that "people in neighboring towns are very different from those in this town."

2. Community Attitudes About the School

A11F and SB19F illustrate administrator and school board member perceptions of how satisfied their communities are with their schools. In general, both groups report community satisfaction with the schools. Neither group thinks that "people in the community complain frequently about the school," but they do "know what goes on there," and "are very concerned about the values being imparted to their children through the school" (A10F, SB21F).

3. Community Interaction with the School

Administrator Profile Table 49 outlines some of the feelings principals have about community involvement with the school. Most principals report that community members are interested in what their children are learning but, beyond talking to school board members, they are not very active in curricular matters. However, less than 10% reported that "people from the community do not seem to care about what is taught in the school."

A9F and SB20F outlined other aspects of community involvement with the schools. Both groups generally reported little or no involvement in maintaining or building the physical plant, classroom instruction, vocational training, designing/evaluating curriculum, and school discipline.

VIII. Report on Sample Check

Because we were disappointed with our 38% response rate, we conducted a telephone check of 62 randomly sampled non-responding principals to ascertain whether non-responding schools differed in some important fashion from schools which responded to the questionnaires. Twelve questions were asked; these questions are summarized below.

No Significant Differences Between Responding and Non-Responding Schools

(At Significance Level $p = .05$)

(Parenthetical notes refer to questionnaire numbers)

1. Agreement with the statement, "Most young people prefer to settle here" (AD#24a).
2. Agreement with the statement, "Young people who leave frequently come back to the community to settle down" (AD#24c).
3. Affirmative response to the statements:
   - "Are the employment opportunities here pretty diverse?" (SB#42d)
   - "Is there a wide range of family income here?" (SB#42e)
   - "Did most people here finish high school?" (SB#42h)
   - "Has the community changed substantially in the last five years?" (SB#42q)
   - "Were you a teacher at this school before becoming a principal?" (AD#60a)
4. "How long have you been a principal at this school?" (AD#59)

Significant Differences Found Between Responding and Non-Responding Schools ($p < .05$)

	Non-Respondents
1. "Are most of the residents employed in farming or ranching?" (SB#42a). $p < .001$).	Fewer farmers
2. Agreement with: "People in this community know what is going on in the school" (AD#5b. $p < .01$).	More perceived community awareness
3. "Were most people who live here born here or nearby?" (SB#42j. $p < .001$)	More immigration
4. "Do many children here go to private or parochial schools?" (SB#42o. $p < .05$).	Fewer students sent to private schools

Due to the difficulty and uncertainty of weighting small samples, the non-respondent samples have not been weighted. We do know, however, that the Plains region and the West account for roughly 82% of the small schools in the United States, with the Plains states contributing 60% and the West contributing 22%. Without actually weighting the non-respondent sample, a look at the region-by-region frequencies of our telephone survey questions alters our interpretation of the differences between responding and non-responding schools:

1. "Are most of the residents employed in farming or ranching?"

19 out of 24 or 79% of the administrators in the Plains and West said that yes, most of the residents of their community are employed in farming or ranching. This compares favorably with a "yes" response rate of 77% for the large nationwide weighted sample.

2. "How true is this statement about people in your community?
   'People in this community know what is going on in the school.'"

A breakdown in these two regions for the question regarding community knowledge of what goes on in the school is given below:

	1-2 (not true)	3	4-5 (true)
Plains and West	0	2	22

Hence, special consideration simply accentuates the difference: non-responding schools perceive greater community awareness.

3. "Were most people who live here born here or nearby?"

The differences we found between the mail sample and the telephone sample are negated by regional consideration. 19 out of 24 of these two important regions said yes, most people who live here were born here or nearby; 13 out of 13 of the numerically-important Plains schools' principals answered affirmatively.

4. "Do many children here go to private or parochial schools?"

Regional considerations do not affect the private/parochial participation question, since all telephone respondents answered "no." It is our feeling, given the borderline-significant chi-square and the inherent introduced statistical bias in skewed bivariate contingency tables, that the significance of this difference is certainly questionable, if not unlikely.

Hence, after taking into consideration the important factor of regional weighting, we found clearly significant differences in only one of twelve questions asked survey non-responding principals. This question

was of the five-point scale type, and asked them to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement "People in this community know what is going on in the school." This difference may be attributable to one of three things:

1. An actual difference: administrators in school-aware communities were less likely to respond to our questionnaire.

2. A Type 1 error: it should be noted that at our predefined significance level of p = .05, there is a one in twenty chance of this occurring (we asked twelve questions).

3. A sampling error: telephone respondents may have answered differently because of the "telephone versus printed questionnaire" differences in the way the question was administered.

Given the lack of differences in responses to the other questions, it is our feeling that the difference is most likely attributable to a Type 1 error.

Although our check of non-respondents was, in some respects, rough, we feel that it has provided strong indication that a response rate of only 30% to 42% is not concealing any important characteristics of small-school respondents. The answers by questionnaire respondents and telephone-called non-respondents were comparable.

Finally, one of our concerns with these data was that the method by which teacher-respondents were selected was not inherently bias-free: administrators were instructed to give the teacher questionnaire to "that teacher who you feel is most likely to fill it out responsibly." We have, therefore, run two checks with the information we have available to see whether specific characteristics of the sampled teachers differed from those of other small-school teachers.

Regarding educational background, our sample appears to be representative of small-school teachers: administrators reported that 70.5% of their teachers do not have master's degrees; 71.4% of the surveyed teachers do not have master's degrees.

Questions regarding teaching experience were not identical between questionnaires, but reports of teaching background appear to be equivalent. 76.0% of the surveyed teachers report less than ten years' experience in their present school and other schools of the same size; administrators report that 76.8% of their teachers have ten or fewer years of teaching experience. 64.3% of the surveyed teachers said they had at least one

year of experience teaching in schools other than their present one; administrators reported that a mean 66.9% of their teachers had experience in other schools.

These comparisons, while by no means conclusive, indicate that the teacher sample is bias-free at least along the parameters of educational background, teaching experience, and teaching experience in other schools.

IX. Conclusion

The Goals of Small-Scale Schooling

"Is your school worth the trouble?" We did not ask that question in our survey, but, judging from the responses to other items, it was not necessary. The answer seems to be an overwhelming "Yes!" Rural teachers aren't putting in their long hours at varied preparations for the financial rewards or the professional prestige -- their salaries are significantly lower than those of their urban counterparts. Rural administrators aren't staying in small schools because the job is an easy one -- on the contrary, a common complaint is that a school of 100 has to fill out the same number of state and federal forms as a school of 1000, without the assistance the larger unit provides. Rural school board members aren't running for office for either glory or gain -- they are rarely compensated and often embroiled in complex community wrangles which follow them to church and grain elevator. Nevertheless, the people we surveyed think that their schools are worth the extra effort of forging (and, often defending) an educational program for a handful of students in a nation whose regard for small schools is virtually non-existent.

Like the rest of the nation, rural residents think schooling is important. In a 1980 Gallup Poll, an overwhelming majority of Americans said that schooling is "extremely important" to future success.

80% of the people in small towns and open country felt that way. So it is not surprising that, for example, all three of the groups we surveyed placed great emphasis on the significance of basic skills: the "three r's" are important to rural teachers, administrators and school board members alike.

But schools are important to rural people as more than academic institutions. They are perceived as significant socializing institutions: 76% of the board members we surveyed said that one of the most important goals of a good school is to prepare students to "be ready to be good parents and citizens." They are seen as centers for vocational preparation: 70% of the board members think that rural schools must prepare students to be successful in jobs after graduation.

Parents and school board members everywhere would probably agree with these goals. Two other objectives seem especially relevant to rural life, especially in small or isolated rural communities. The first is the function of the school as a "window" on the world outside the home community. Few rural children have the opportunity to travel extensively, and their local community rarely provides a range of different cultural backgrounds, a variety of views on major social or political issues, or a large number of different occupational or role models. Yet many of these young people will leave their communities after high school graduation; board members and administrators reported a [illegible]% outmigration by recent graduates. Television and other

popular media forms have unquestionably helped expand the horizons of isolated children, but the school still plays a major role in exposing young people to the urban, industrialized society which dominates our culture. Rural people believe that the "window" role is an important job of the school: 28% of the board members in our sample feel that one of the most important goals of a good school is for students to learn "a great deal about the world outside their home community."

A second major function specific to rural schools is their role as community institutions. Most of the small schools we surveyed are multiple-use buildings: they are centers for community events, meeting places for civic groups, frequently the sites of wedding receptions, 4-H meetings, and hearings on bond issues. In small communities, the school is often the largest building. Frequently, it is the single institution that the citizenry holds in common. In places where people live far away from each other (as in most of our survey districts) the school is the meeting ground for the community. The small schools were characterized by all three groups surveyed as accessible and responsive to the community.

Community Satisfaction with Small Schools

The survey data clearly show that rural people are generally satisfied with their small schools. Nationally, citizens say that the four greatest problems in the public schools are: lack of discipline, use of drugs, poor curriculum/poor standards, and the lack of adequate financial support (Gallup Opinion Index, August,

1980, p.4). Figures 17 and 18 indicate that the first three of these problems are rarely sources of concern in small rural schools. Only the last problem — financial security -- is widely considered a serious worry for small rural schools. Inadequate support has been a well-documented problem in rural education for many years (see Fratoe, 1980; Rosenfeld, 1981; Schneider, 1980; Tompkins, 1977). It is probably more true of small schools than of larger rural districts. In our survey, nearly one-quarter of the administrators reported difficulty in getting enough money to keep the school open.

Financial problems do not appear to undermine rural satisfaction with the schools. Data from a variety of sources indicate that rural people tend to be more satisfied with their schools than are their urban counterparts. The 1980 Gallup poll, for example, showed that people from rural areas and small towns and cities gave their schools the highest ratings; respondents from larger cities (50,000 and up) gave lower ratings (Gallup Opinion Index, August, 1980, pp.4-5). People from rural areas and small towns and cities also expressed greater confidence in their public schools. For example, 64% of the 1979 respondents from small towns and cities expressed "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in their public schools; the corresponding percentage for residents of very large cities (populations one million or more) was only 42%.

In our survey, the reported satisfaction levels were very high. Most small school communities are satisfied with the academic

achievement of their students: about 75% of the respondents reported community satisfaction in this area. Most small school communities are satisfied with the proportion of students who attend college. Most are happy with the extent of student participation in extra-curricular activities. By and large, they are content with the level of training achieved by their teachers. And an overwhelming majority is satisfied with the accessibility of the principal and the teachers.

In other areas -- variety of academic offerings, number of community-oriented activities, rate of teacher turnover, and quality of school facilities -- satisfaction was not as consistently high. But in no case was more than one in four communities dissatisfied even in these "problem" areas.

Smallness: What Goes With the Territory?

Satisfaction, it should be noted, does not mean good-natured myopia. Small schools people recognize that smallness makes some things difficult. High schools of 150 students find it inconvenient to simultaneously teach every student, rewrite the English curriculum, negotiate teacher contracts, and produce a winning basketball team -- all in the same year. These efforts are made especially difficult when the teacher, curriculum designer, bargaining unit representative, and coach are all one person. Some things take precedence over others, and occasionally the English curriculum gets shelved for another year.

However, the school board may not object to another year of the old curriculum. Figures 18 and Table 59 suggest that school curriculum is an "outstanding strength" nineteen times more often than they consider it a "considerable weakness." Boards are far more concerned about students' lack of exposure to a variety of people and social settings (the "window on the world" function), vocational training, and the preparation of students to be capable parents. To some extent, this finding is a function of aggregated data from elementary and secondary schools; obviously, elementary schools do less formal preparation either for work or parenthood. Tables 71-73 indicate the extent to which the perceptions of this problem vary by school level.

TABLE 71

Board Member Reports of How Well School Prepares Students to Be Capable Parents

Type of School	Very well 1	2	3	4	Very poorly 5
Elementary	2%	24%	46%	21%	6%
High School	12	37	37	9	5

TABLE 72

Board Member Ratings of School's Vocational Training for Jobs in the Community

Type of School	Outstanding strength 1	2	3	4	Outstanding weakness 5
Elementary	7%	12%	43%	18%	20%
High School	17	21	30	25	7

TABLE 73

Board Member Ratings of School's Vocational Training for Jobs Outside the Community

Type of School	Outstanding strength 1	2	3	4	Considerable weakness 5
Elementary	7%	12%	43%	18%	20%
High School	17	21	30	25	7

However, even when elementary schools are removed from consideration, these tables show that these areas elicit far lower satisfaction levels than we found for other school functions.

There are also interesting trends within the generally high ratings given in certain areas. For example, curriculum was given high marks, but school board members felt that curricular materials were effectively modified or updated far more often than they felt that a good job was done developing innovative materials.

The responses to our survey showed other areas of strength and weakness within the small school setting. To a great extent, these are the virtues and defects identified by other researchers (cf. Fratoe, 1980; Schneider, 1980) working on non-quantitative studies. Our questionnaires systematically validated many reports recognized as intuitively true by rural schools scholars and practitioners.

Rural teachers and administrators generally found strength in small classes, easy scheduling, individualization of instruction, and close interaction and cooperation among students, teachers, and community members. They found weakness in restricted course offerings, multi-grade classes, large numbers of preparations (without the time to do them adequately)[6] and limited facilities and supplies.

To what extent are these strengths and weaknesses a function of smallness? Clearly, close interaction and cooperation among staff, parents and students are facilitated by small size. Inadequate facilities and supplies, on the other hand, are probably more a function of poverty (or unwillingness to spend money). To some degree, low funding levels are correlated with small size, since most state funding formulae are based on per-pupil allocations, and thus small schools are penalized for smallness. But the vast differences in wealth among the schools surveyed indicate that this penalty is far from uniformly imposed.

Other issues, such as ease of scheduling, are not so easily viewed as absolute functions of school size. In field site visits, we have found that other factors come into play. Some school plants facilitate innovative scheduling, others may not. Some administrators encourage staff to team-teach, or to schedule correlated classes back-to-back. Others make every effort to run a school of 300 as though it were a school of 3000. Organization of a small school to take advantage of smallness is, we suspect, a function of factors like how willing and able an administrator is to recognize the possible potential of limited size.

What Does It All Mean?

We have looked at the commonly held goals of small schools. It is clear that rural communities are generally satisfied with their small schools. It is equally clear that they are aware of some of the problems their small schools face. Can we say, from these data, that small schools accomplish their goals?

Not necessarily. There are many differences among the small rural schools in our sample. We know that, overall, the communities we surveyed believe their schools are meeting the most important objectives they set out to achieve: training in basic academic skills; preparation for work, for parenthood and citizenship; acquainting children with the world beyond the local community; and service as a community institution. But we also know that some small schools are doing a superb job in all these areas, and that others are not. We know that some schools take advantage of smallness, while others suffer from it. We know that many simply ignore as best they can the fact that they are small. In the next round of data analysis, we plan to examine the factors which influence these attitudes, and how different strategies of dealing with smallness affect the outcomes of schooling.