

ED296818 1988-03-00 Preparing Rural Students for an Urban Environment. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

[Preparing Rural Students for an Urban Environment. ERIC Digest..... 1](#)



ERIC Identifier: ED296818

Publication Date: 1988-03-00

Author: Swift, Doug

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools Las Cruces NM.

Preparing Rural Students for an Urban Environment. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

TEXT: The transition from youth to adulthood is difficult for many, traumatic for some. The stress experienced during the rites of passage can be severely exacerbated for persons who must simultaneously make the transition from a rural to urban environment. Although education is often viewed as preparation for adulthood, education in a rural setting often neglects adequate preparation for those who, by choice or necessity, will move to a metropolitan area for work or for further education. Preparing students for that move thus becomes an important responsibility for educators.

Much of this digest is based on *Preparing Rural Youth for an Urban Environment: A Handbook for Educators*, by Vaughn and Vaughn, which suggests appropriate learning activities for almost every aspect of preparing for and adjusting to a dramatic change in environment and lifestyle. Many of the learning activities are appropriate for assisting students in the transition from youth to adulthood, regardless of location. Thus, the learning activities are suitable for almost all high school students. The activities can be used in a separate course, integrated into existing courses, or applied in counseling.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND VALUES

The ability of a person to adjust to a dramatically different environment depends to a large degree on personal characteristics and values. Inventories of personality traits, values, lifestyle, and family orientation can be developed individually, in classroom groups, and in discussion with family and friends. The manner and extent to which these characteristics, values, and patterns are embedded in the rural environment and the degree to which they may be disrupted by moving to a metropolitan area--by, for example, being ruled more by the clock than the sun--are important considerations in preparing rural youth for transition to an urban environment.

Life in a rural climate is often characterized as relaxed, friendly, and warm. The urban atmosphere is often described as hurried, harried, and cold. These characteristics are frequently reflected in different language patterns and personal mannerisms which can instantly classify a person as an "outsider" and thus make adjustment a difficult task. Activities to increase assertiveness and to adopt language habits and personal mannerisms appropriate to the city are important in the preparation process. Making decisions in an unfamiliar situation without a support group can be devastating. Learning activities to increase students' feelings of control over their lives will aid in preparing for transition.

GETTING AND KEEPING A JOB

Economic conditions frequently force young people to move from rural to urban areas for employment. A high priority task, on arrival, is getting a job. Appropriate preparation before the move will greatly improve the probability of both finding a job and finding one well suited to the individual. Preparation also includes assessment of abilities, skills, interests, attributes, and previous work experience. Preparation includes practice in completing application forms, preparing letters of interest and resumes, and learning about appropriate dress and grooming. Preparation may include mock videotape interviews, perhaps with the personnel officer from a city business, with critique by fellow class members. Preparation also includes study of job availability in the target city and analyses of how various jobs match individual skills and interests.

Numerous resources are available for developing job-hunting skills: city newspapers, telephone directories, and publications from the Chamber of Commerce and the

Employment Security Commission. Family members and friends who reside in the city can be tapped for employment information. Small businesses tend to use informal means of filling positions; personal contacts are thus an important means of finding employment. Building networking skills through family and friends can be vital to job-hunting.

Preparation for keeping a job is as important as preparation for getting a job. Expectations--both employers' and employees'--can be discussed. Asking questions, learning about getting along with supervisors and co-workers, and assessing others' attitudes are important exercises in preparation for keeping a job. Timeliness, a day's work for a day's pay, and remaining within the assigned area of responsibility (at least initially) are important in keeping a job.

Getting along is important at first; in time, getting ahead--the promotion--becomes important. Learning related tasks, learning about the company's organization and procedures, and taking related courses at the local post-secondary school are helpful in getting promoted.

ADJUSTING TO AN URBAN LIFESTYLE

The workplace is only one part of life in the city. Home life and leisure activities are also important aspects of urban living. Preparation in these areas is an appropriate high school activity.

Finding an appropriate place to live is almost as important as finding a job. Ideally, the place is convenient to work, shopping, and entertainment, served by good transportation, and affordable. A map of the city, telephone books, and classified ads from the city's newspapers are excellent resources in planning a search for the right housing.

Planning for appropriate leisure activities before the move can be rewarding. Chamber of Commerce brochures and the city map and telephone book are excellent resources for planning affordable leisure activities. Urban areas offer a large variety of activities and there are clubs and organizations associated with almost every activity from acting and bicycling to rock-hounding and skiing. Some companies sponsor clubs and sports teams.

Despite the best plans, there are those who will find themselves in trouble. Contingency planning is appropriate before the move away from home. Knowing the kinds of service agencies available in time of trouble or crisis and how to contact them can be a valuable preparatory activity. Services can be located through newspapers and telephone books and include agencies for that provide abuse, rape, and suicide hotlines, pregnancy and birth control counseling; family counseling; legal aid; medical referrals; low or no-cost household items; child care; and police assistance.

ADJUSTING TO URBAN HIGHER EDUCATION

In his review of the literature, Brown (1985) cites a number of studies that indicate that rural students in higher education have a higher attrition rate than their urban counterparts. This difference may not be attributable to lower academic achievement. Some studies find that rural students do as well as their urban counterparts; others indicate that rural students do less well. Lower achievement--when it occurs--may be due, in part, says Brown, to limited access to appropriate course offerings in high school and lack of social and interpersonal interactions. The social system--low economic status, low family expectations, and a perception of limited options--also contributes to the rural dropout rate.

In a study of freshmen attending the University of Colorado, Aylesworth and Bloom (1976) found that "the rural freshman going away to college is not distinguishable intellectually from the urban freshman" and received equivalent college grades. Rural students, nevertheless, had a lower survival rate. Factors such as rural students' low socioeconomic origins, greater likelihood of carrying a full-time work load with classes, and greater difficulty in procuring financial aid and work study assignments all increased the possibility of attrition. Not surprisingly, rural students mentioned problems which reflected high levels of stress and alienation--problems of dealing with campus size and impersonality, developing good study habits, and finding other students who were culturally similar and/or friendly.

There are high school learning activities that can help students cope with the stress of leaving home and attending college. Many of these are the same as those designed to assist rural students migrating to urban areas for employment.

REALISTIC BUDGETING

Many persons moving from a rural to an urban environment have little concept of the associated costs and may therefore be in severe financial difficulties within a short time of arrival. A realistic budget is an important aspect of adjusting to an urban lifestyle. The cost of living--housing, food, clothing, entertainment, utilities, taxes, insurance--is often significantly higher in urban than in rural areas. And net income may be less than expected.

An excellent high school preparatory activity is to develop a budget of current income and expenditures which is then extended to an urban setting, using estimates of income and expenditures. The urban budget will generally include items that are not included in the current budget of a high school student.

In developing the urban budget, realistic anticipated wages must be used and gross wages must be reduced by payroll deductions: federal, state, and local withholding taxes, social security, union dues, and employee contributions to retirement and

insurance plans. Take-home pay may be as much as 30 percent less than gross earnings. Employer-provided benefits may be limited. If health insurance, for example, is not provided, the cost of health insurance or medical expenses must be budgeted and paid out of take-home pay. Projected revenue must consider such factors as whether the anticipated job is full- or part-time, seasonal, or cyclical. Some jobs pay well on an hourly basis, but employment may not be full-time, year-round.

Typical wage rates may be obtained from classified ads in the city's newspapers, from the Employment Security Commission, and from the catalogs of vocational programs offered at vocational schools and community colleges. Costs of housing, food, clothing, and entertainment may be obtained from newspapers. Utility companies can provide data on utility costs. Other expenses, such as medical, may have to be estimated.

In sticking to a budget, it is useful to keep track of all expenditures--every last penny. Variance between expenditures and the budget should result in adjustments to the budget or the expenditure pattern. High expenditures should be examined closely. The cost of eating lunch out compared to brown bagging, for example, can be substantial.

An excellent personal money management workbook, *Common Cent\$*, has been developed by Lawrence (1984). Included are monthly budget and expenditure worksheets, installment payment records, credit card purchase records, monthly expense records, a year-end summary, and a net worth statement.

CHOOSING TO BE A RURAL ENTREPRENEUR

If jobs are scarce in the rural community but a move to the city is not desired, entrepreneurship may provide an alternative. The entrepreneur must be skilled in basic accounting, financial records and reports, marketing, advertising, pricing, hiring and personnel management, payroll and payroll taxes, and the variety of reports that must be made to federal, state, and local governments. Certificates or licenses may be required. Sanitation inspections may be imposed. Safety and health requirements are often mandated. Capital may be needed to get the business under way. Personal savings, family, and friends may provide capital, but bankers are often unwilling to lend money to the inexperienced entrepreneur. A business plan is essential. The entrepreneur who is without a plan or who fails to follow and update the plan as necessary is likely to be doomed to an early failure. The student who plans on going into business should take advantage of every opportunity to learn, plan, and gain the requisite skills while still in high school.

SUMMARY

Many of the skills needed for a satisfactory transition to urban living are useful for successful transition from youth to adulthood. Learning activities for one are often appropriate to the other--and are therefore appropriate to high school students whether

or not a move to the city is contemplated. Continued, substantial migration of youth, however, can be expected. Whether the moves are for economic reasons or for postsecondary education, rural high schools will serve students well with learning activities that prepare them for the move.

REFERENCES

Aylesworth, Lawrence S., and Bernard L. Bloom. "College Experience and Problems of Rural and Small-Town Students." JOURNAL OF COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL 17 (1976): 236-242.

Brown, Dennis E. "Higher Education Students from Rural Communities: A Report on Dropping Out." Las Cruces: New Mexico State University, 1985. ED 258 771.

Downey, Ronald G. "Higher Education and Rural Youth." Paper presented at the Annual Kansas State University Rural and Small School Conference, Manhattan, KS, Nov. 9-11, 1980. ED 201 459.

Lawrence, Judy. COMMON CENT\$. Albuquerque, NM: JML Enterprises, 1984.

Riehm, Sarah. THE TEENAGE ENTREPRENEUR'S GUIDE: 50 MONEY-MAKING BUSINESS IDEAS. Chicago: Surrey Books, 1987.

Seyfrit, Carole L. "Migration Intentions of Rural Youth: Testing an Assumed Benefit of Rapid Growth." RURAL SOCIOLOGY 51 (1986): 199-211.

Vaughn, Lanette D., and Paul R. Vaughn. HANDBOOK FOR RURAL STUDENTS: FINDING EMPLOYMENT AND ADJUSTING TO URBAN AREAS. Santa Fe: New Mexico State Department of Education, 1985. ED 276 563.

Vaughn, Lanette D., and Paul R. Vaughn. PREPARING RURAL STUDENTS FOR AN URBAN WORK ENVIRONMENT: A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS. Las Cruces: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1986. ED 270 243.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under OERI contract. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.

Title: Preparing Rural Students for an Urban Environment. ERIC Digest.

Note: For a related document, see ED 270 243. Because this Digest was published in colored ink, on colored paper, and in reduced type size (for compression), a full-size

typescript version has also been included here.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Target Audience: Practitioners

Descriptors: Adjustment (to Environment), Budgeting, Entrepreneurship, Higher Education, Individual Characteristics, Job Search Methods, Rural to Urban Migration, Rural Urban Differences, Rural Youth, Secondary Education, Urban Environment

Identifiers: ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)