DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 020 RC 018 662

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TITLE Distress and Survival: Rural Schools, Education, and the Importance of Community.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Dec 91
CONTRACT RP910002001
NOTE 105p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

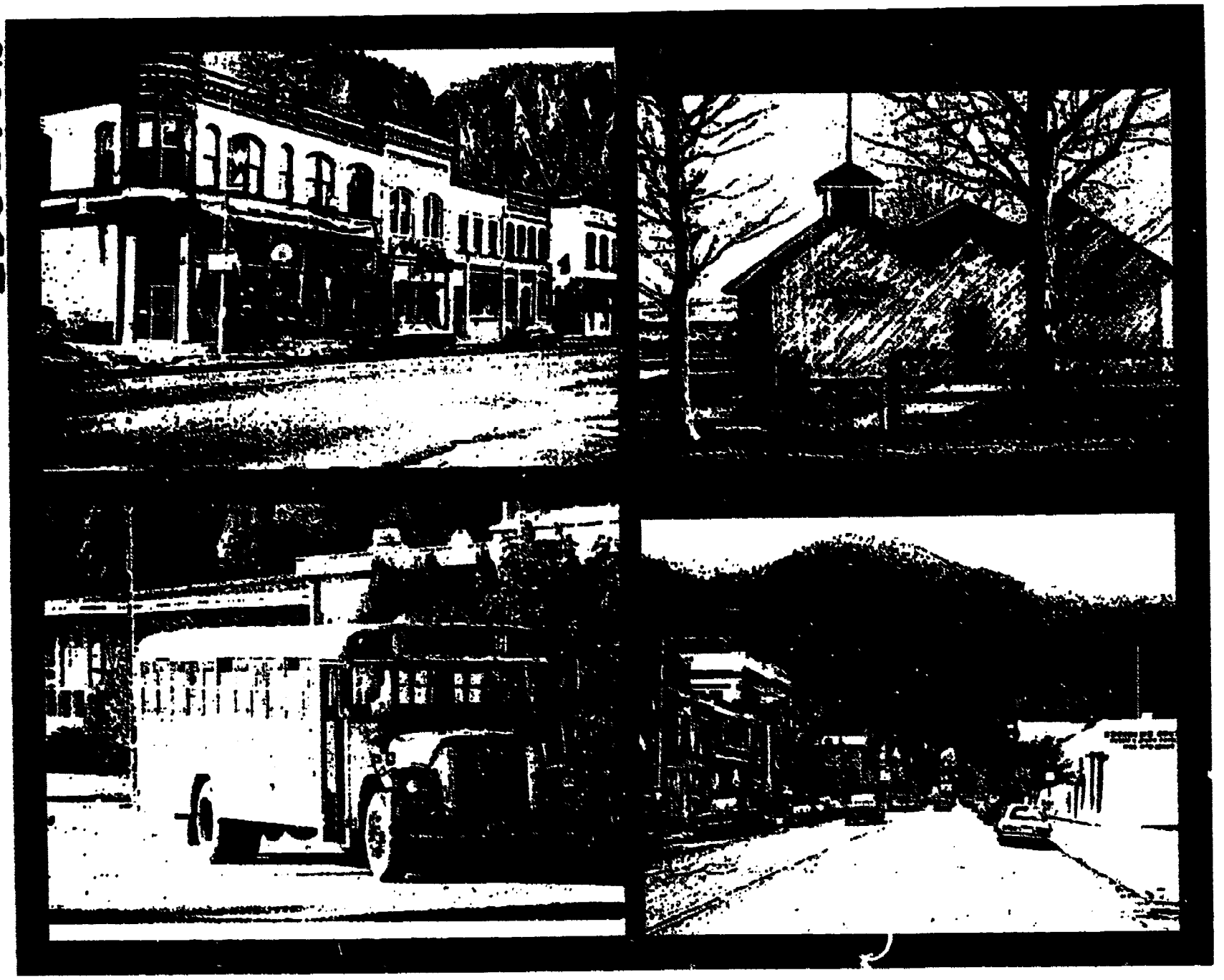
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Development; *Community Involvement; Economic Development; Economic Factors; Elementary Secondary Education; Program Development; Resource Materials; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; *Rural Schools; Rural Sociology; *School Community Programs; *School Community Relationship; Social Influences
IDENTIFIERS *Education Economy Relationship

ABSTRACT

This report reviews economic and social issues facing rural schools and communities in the 1990's, focusing on the mutual dependence and collaboration between communities and schools. Rural America, dependent on resource-based industries, has faced distressed economy and declining populations. With a historical overview of rural America under the influence of economic and social forces, this paper analyzes the current trends in which these forces have impacted rural communities and created high levels of social and economic stress. Community development, with the school as a key infrastructure, is crucial for adaption to the new socioeconomic structure. To strengthen the linkages between the school and community, three general approaches are in the areas of: the school as community center, the community as curriculum, and school-based economic development. The report describes specific programs that demonstrate the benefits gained when the school directly serves the needs of the community. It also describes a process for beginning a dialogue within the school regarding the school's role in community development, including activities, questions, and sample community-related curriculum projects. Appendices include: (1) a summary of research on community service education; (2) sample student learning activities; (3) sample activities for developing a school-community vision; (4) a community-school design conference agenda; (5) an example of a community and school simulation activity; and (6) a listing of agencies providing assistance to rural communities and schools. This report contains an extensive bibliography. (LP)

# Distress and Survival:

# Rural Schools, Education, and the Importance of Community



December 1991

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
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Sponsored by OERI Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education

This publication has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number RP91002001. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

# DISTRESS AND SURVIVAL: RURAL SCHOOLS, EDUCATION, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

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## Executive Summary

This report addresses community and educational issues of rural America as the United States enters the 90s. Beginning with the collapse of the mining industry in a small, rural community in Idaho, it is shown that rural communities and their schools face great hardships resulting from numerous complex, interacting economic and social conditions. But rural people are resourceful. They bring an ethic of determination and hard work to adversity. Many communities are beginning to employ creative solutions to solve their social and economic concerns. In small, rural communities, a closer look at how the school can serve community development needs is underway. This report begins by focusing on the historical context of the economic and social forces shaping rural America. This is followed by an analysis of how these forces have impacted rural communities, creating, in many cases, high levels of social and economic stress. Programs and efforts designed to increase community viability through the schools are described. Lastly, a strategy designed to strengthen the linkages between the school and community in order to facilitate mutual survival is described.

Historically, a large proportion of rural America has been dependent on resource-based industries such as mining, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Non-resource based industries such as manufacturing and tourism have also created community dependency on single industries. Environmental legislation and a shift toward an international market economy have reduced the competitive nature of the rural economy. Suddenly it became more profitable to use overseas markets and labor. In part, this fueled the strong recession of the 1980s which saw a decline in rural economic viability: many mines closed down, farms consolidated or were sold, and manufacturing plants ceased production. Rural communities dependent on a single industry found themselves in great distress.

Currently, rural America suffers from the highest unemployment rates in the United States, a rate of poverty that is growing twice as fast as that found in metropolitan areas, a 10 percent decrease in median family income, and a wide-scale exodus of the young and educated seeking employment in urban centers. These changes have seen the decline of rural communities, and in some cases, a loss of the will to act. Six general topics reflect these changes:

1. Rural America is no longer isolated from international, social and economic forces;

2. Changing demographics such as an aging population mean new emerging policy concerns;

3. An increasing proportion of personal income is coming from social security, public assistance, and unemployment compensation;

4. Off-farm income is a larger and more stable source of income for farm families;

5. A visible national shift to service-producing activities creating a need for changes in the existing work force; and

6. New information technologies hold a promise for new economic activity and to help remote communities overcome their isolation.

Community development has been used to help resolve the problems facing rural communities. However, it has often been soley equated with economic development and implemented with an impetus from outside agencies and organizations. A broader notion of community development that emphasizes the social, economic and environmental dimensions holds the most promise. Without addressing all three areas, it is unlikely that development efforts will be successful. Moreover, the notion that development must emerge from a local capacity to provide leadership and vision appears to be gaining support from community development practitioners.

A key element of community infrastructure is the school. However the school appears to be a powerful, but under-utilized resource. Three general approaches for using the school as a catalyst for community development are described: School As Community Center, Community As Curriculum, and School-Based Economic Development. Several programs, notably *Foxfire*, *REAL*, and the work of the McREL's Rural Institute have demonstrated the benefits to be gained when the school directly serves the needs of the community.

Finally, this report concludes by describing a process for beginning a dialogue within the school regarding the role the school might play in community development, including activities, focusing questions and sample community related curriculum projects teachers could use.

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## INTRODUCTION

On *Black Monday*, August 25, 1981, Gulf Resources and Chemical Corporation announced the closure of the Bunker Hill mining operation, immediately furloughing more than 2,100 workers. Comments by Vernon Lannen, an Idaho State Senator and Bunker Hill employee, reflect the shock felt throughout the Silver Valley of northern Idaho: "I'll never forget where I was when I heard. It was like when Kennedy was shot." Economically, he said, the community faced a radically different future, "I'll sell my house: It was worth $70,000 yesterday and it's [worth] $40,000 today" (Kellogg Evening News, 1981, p. 1-2). The impact on the community was immediate:

> A bus load of Silver Valley residents travelled 700 miles to visit the revitalized rural community of Leavenworth, Washington. They wanted to see how a rural mining community, located in the Cascade Mountain Range, transformed itself from a dying village into an economically viable community supported by a thriving tourism industry.
>
> Other Silver Valley residents visited Anaconda, Montana, to gain first-hand information and insight regarding the impact that a major industry shutdown had on other small, rural communities.
>
> Social workers began intensive social support efforts in the schools and communities of the Silver Valley to provide counseling and assistance to families faced with the distress of unemployment, monthly food and utility bills, house and car payments, and the disintegration of families.
>
> Elected town and county officials, school board members, business leaders and various service organizations met to consider cooperative and consolidation strategies to offset the plunging economic base that placed health, public safety, educational, and related social services in jeopardy.
>
> More than 33 percent of Silver Valley residents were unemployed. Mine failures, followed by the closure of support service businesses such as grocery stores, banks, insurance agencies, restaurants, and gas stations, created a climate of stress and anxiety for the entire valley.
>
> The out-migration of young professionals and mine management offices further exacerbated the economic downturn and highlighted dependence on a single, resource-based industry primarily controlled and dominated by economic interests outside the community.

These events occurred between 1980 and 1983, and were followed by community and economic development efforts that continue to this day. From 1980 to 1990 the face of the Silver Valley, especially the small town of Wallace, has been radically altered in the following ways:

- successive mine closures and termination of mineral processing;
- a 60 percent drop in the tax base;
- an 85 percent drop in local property values;
- student population decline of 42 percent;
- general population decline of 43 percent;
- school staff reductions, school closures, and decreased school access for community use;
- increased demand for social services such as AFDC, state aid, and food stamps;
- an in-migration of social and welfare dependent families seeking low living costs and the benefit of newly implemented welfare programs; and
- an increase in the special education population.

Although these alterations in the Wallace community clearly placed great stress on families and students, it also changed a way of life that for more than 100 years had been dependent on mining. Before the "crash," students could drop out of school and make more money than school teachers. Awareness of the extent of community dependency emerged as mines closed and workers faced long unemployment lines and retraining. More than 40 percent of those working in the mining industry had no high school degree or its equivalent.

*A renewed sense of "community", driven by a powerful instinct for survival, brought people together.*

However, many positive outcomes resulted from these mine closures. A renewed sense of "community," driven by a powerful instinct for survival, brought people together. Mine closures meant the loss of the local economic base and brought about a significant reassessment of personal and community identity. Valley-wide planning and development meetings, brainstorming sessions, data collection and information gathering, neighbors helping neighbors, and schools opening their doors in support of families and adult learning were common occurrences. By the late 1980s, noticable changes had begun to emerge in the Silver Valley as a result of community efforts to overcome the social and economic downturn created by the collapse of the mining industry in the area:

- Economic diversification into tourism and small business enterprise.
- Beautification of the Wallace downtown and a historic landmark designation.
- The construction of an interstate freeway with two Wallace exits and a construction design conforming to local economic concerns.
- Increased community solidarity and inter-community/school cooperation.
- Improved quality of environment and life.
- Improved community economic independence.
- The emergence of local community leaders.
- Awareness of the vulnerability of resource-dependent rural communities.

Although mine failures appeared to have abated in the mid-eighties, national and international economic trends continue to negatively impact the Silver Valley. Mines once considered bulwarks have begun closing, the tax base slides even lower, and unnemployment and out-migration have begun anew. The hospital in Wallace will close its doors for the first time and the school district cut programs and services in order to pass its levy the second time around.

It noted, however, that the events in the Silver Valley represents a rapid economic decline in a single industry (i.e. mining). Many other rural communities have declined gradually, through several interacting economic and social factors occuring over time. Such decline is slow paced and therefore insidious because it may go unnoticed for too long, like a gradual slope rather than an abyss.

*Such decline is slow paced and therefore insidious because it may go unnoticed for too long, like a gradual slope rather than an abyss.*

A recently completed research study of declining school enrollment in seven rural schools and communities in the United States illustrates the complex and diverse nature of rural decline (U.S. Department of Education, in press). Table 1 presents selected characteristics of the seven case study sites used in the research. If the rates of decline are compared, it appears that the 34 percent decline in enrollment in the mining community of Stafford is the most severe, with the lowest decline ocurring in Cottonview at 12.9 percent. However, data from the study indicates that the decline in the Cottonview community from 1950 to 1990 was 50 percent; between 1960 and 1990 there was a 38 percent decline. This illustrates the cummulative effect of ennrollment decline over time which may not appear significant if viewed within a narrow time frame. As the column on "factors in decline" demonstrates, there are many causes for decline that are neither directly related to economics nor occur in a short time frame such

as out-migration, declining birth rate, and aging. Such factors may be gradual, but aggregate to a significant level over time.

Taken as a whole, this study of declining enrollment in rural schools and communities presents a dispiriting picture of a distressed rural America: one faced with declining populations and diminishing resources, a low level of economic and social support, and a history of dependency on centralized, urban and multinational corporate resource industries. On the other hand, the case studies show that some rural communities fight against overwhelming economic and social odds to keep their schools and communities viable. But, whether the rate of social and economic decline in rural

**Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Case Studies on Declining Enrollment**

| *Site* | *Evergreen* | *Mountvale* | *Cottonview* | *Grant* | *Timberton* | *Stafford* | *Hallton* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Focus | State/school district | School district | School district | School district | State/school district | School district | State |
| Economic base | Agriculture and timber | Mining and tourism | Agriculture | Agriculture | Timber | Mining | Agriculture |
| Rate of decline | 16.2 | 15.9% | 12.9% | 24.3% | 17.9% | 34.0% | NA |
| Factors in decline | Economic decline, resource depletion, birth rate decline, out-migration, aging population | Economic decline, changes in technology, natural disaster, out-migration, birth rate decline, aging population | Minimum wage, improved farming technology, increased farm size and efficiency, out-migration | Improved farming technology, increased farm size and efficiency, out-migration, birth rate decline | Economic decline, changing market trends, out-migration, catastrophic fire | Economic and environ-mental trends leading to mine closures, out-migration | Improved farming technology, population shift, birth rate decline, changing market trends |

(adapted from U.S. Department of Education, in press, p. 20)

America is chronic or acute, it is evident that a large number of small, rural schools and communities face an uncertain future.

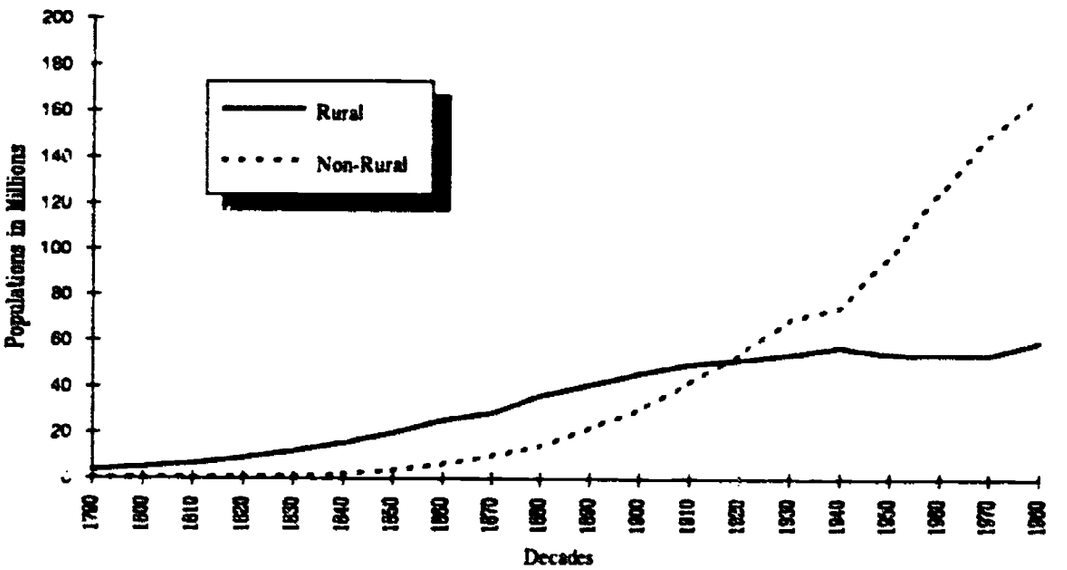
This paper will present a review and synthesis of economic and social issues facing rural America in the 1990s along with potentially successful approaches which distressed communities and schools have used for their mutual survival and well-being.

## DISTRESS IN RURAL AMERICA[1]

The years 1917 and 1940 are landmarks in America's population distribution. In 1917, the urban population surpassed the rural population for the first time in United States' history. In 1940, as the United States geared up to face a world threat, the rural population took another significant decline that continues unabated throughout the 1980s (Figure 1).

Associated with this increasing population disparity has come increased unemployment, poverty, and feelings of helplessness among rural people. The problems facing rural America are clearly not new. They are complex and interrelated with issues of geographic location, low population density, and historically dependent relationships on core urban centers for economic opportunities. Moreover, rural conditions appear

**Figure 1. The Growth of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Population in the United States**




(adapted from Garkovich, 1989)

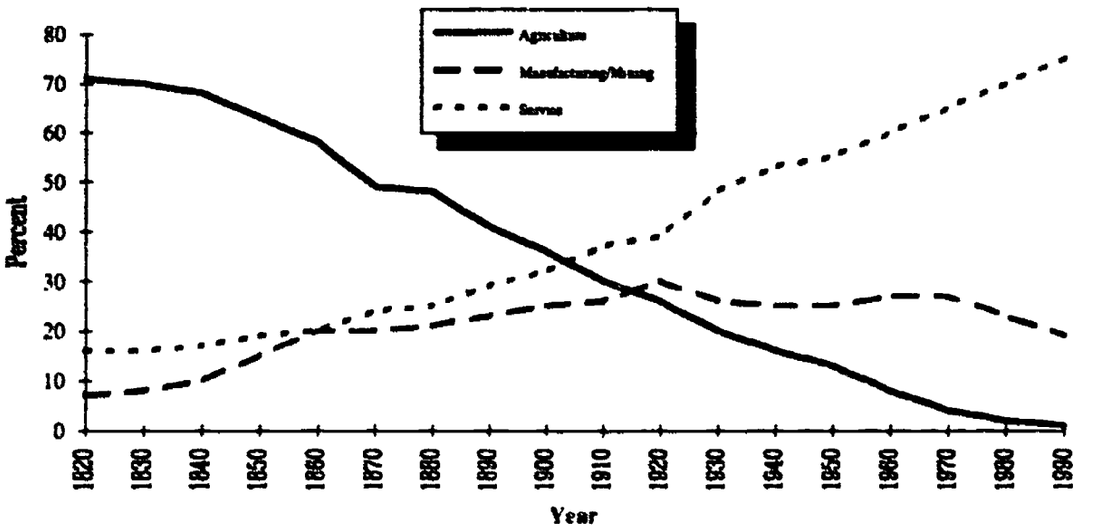
to be worsening as the United States moves from an industrialized to an information-based economy, and from a national to a global market place (U.S. Congress, 1989; Hobbs, 1988; Reid, 1988; USDA, 1988).

Figure 2 illustrates the change taking place in U.S. occupations as the labor market has shifted from predominantly agrarian and industrial production work to a society dominated by service occupations such as clerical and sales workers, technicians, managers, and professional workers of all types. Nearly all forms of physical production are declining at a rate that by the year 2010 they will represent a minority of the U.S. workforce; if current trends continue this sector of the workforce will be nearly non-existent by 2080 (Swyt, 1987).

Data drawn from a variety of federal and private sources provide a general backdrop for the problems faced by rural Americans:

**Population:** In 1950, nearly 30 percent of Americans lived in rural communities. This percentage dropped to around 25 percent in 1989 (The Associated Press, 1989).

**Figure 2. A Comparison of Three U.S. Workforce Production Sectors**




(adapted from Swyt, 1987)

**Farming:** There has been more than a 60 percent decline in farms between 1950 and 1986, a total of 3,400,000 farms (Congress of the U.S, Office of Technology Assessment, 1991).

In the mid-1980s, rising interest rates and declining land values contributed to an exodus of farmers that saw one million people leave the land (The Associated Press, 1989).

**Unemployment:** The 1980s recession, the move of factory jobs to the Third World, and increasing mechanization in mining, agriculture,and timber opportunities (The Associated Press, 1989).

Between 1979 and 1986, 733,000 rural jobs in manufacturing, mining, and farming were eliminated (The Associated Press, 1989).

In 1986, the jobless rate in rural America surpassed unemployment in the metropolitan sector (Population Reference Bureau, Inc., 1988).

In 1980, more than half of all farm women worked outside the home. This compares to 22.9 percent in 1960, and 12.2 percent in 1940 (The Associated Press, 1989).

**Poverty:**[2] The rate of rural residents living in poverty has increased by 3.2 percent from 1977 to 1987. (Population Reference Bureau, Inc., 1988)

As the rural population decreases with the out-migration of the young and often better educated workforce, rural community viability becomes threatened. The vast majority of these rural migrants resettle in metropolitan areas, enlarging the population and straining the existing infrastructure. This population shift creates a situation of double jeopardy. Metropolitan areas, swollen to capacity, choke on the rapid growth, while rural communities are losing their citizens and suffering from economic and social malnutrition.

Table 2, based on Congressional testimony given to the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (U.S. Congress, 1989), summarizes data on social and economic indicators of community distress (State Education Department/SUNY, 1987). These data

**Table 2. Comparison of Selected Rural and Urban Social and Economic Indicators of Distress**

| | Rural | Metropolitan | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Indicators: | | | |
| Rate of Poverty Increase Among Young Adults and Children | increasing at twice the rate of metropolitan | increasing at half the rate of rural | 50% |
| Children in Poverty | 25% | 20% | 5% |
| Workers: | | | |
| Covered by Employee Sponsored Pension | 44% | 50% | 6% |
| Poor who Qualify for Medicaid | 25% | 43% | 18% |
| Economic Indicators: | | | |
| Decrease in Median Family Income (1979 - 86) | 10% | 1% | 9% |
| 1987 Median Family Income | $24,397 | $33,131 | $8,734 |

(adapted from U.S. Congress, 1989)

help illuminate economic factors relating to rural out-migration such as minimal local job opportunities, low wages, and limited social support. What appears most alarming about these data is a downward spiraling trend toward increased poverty, reduced long-term health and social benefits, and decreased earnings.

Table 3 provides data on that segment of the rural and urban population most in need (i.e., those residents falling below the poverty line). Although rural poverty rates are greater than metropolitan rates, the information provides some indication of the relative

**Table 3. Comparison of the Poor Among the Rural and Urban Populations Using Social and Economic Indicators**

| | Rural | Metropolitan | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Indicators: | | | |
| Poor Receiving Welfare Assistance | 18% | 24% | 6% |
| Participating in Food Stamp Program | 47% | 44% | 3% |
| Receiving Nutritional and Medical Benefits | 33% | 38% | 5% |
| Homeowners | 50% | 30% | 20% |
| Average Household Budget Costs | $14,619 | $15,481 | $862 |
| Cost of Raising Children to Age 18 | Growing at 1/2 the rate of metro areas | Growing 50% faster than rural areas | 50% |
| Percent of Poor with Home Tax Liability | 43% | 28% | 15% |
| Economic Indicators: | | | |
| Average Earnings | 75% of average metro poor | 100% | 25% |
| Poverty Rates: | | | |
| White | 13.7% | 9.6% | 4.1% |
| Black | 44.1% | 30.7% | 13.4% |
| Hispanic | 35.6% | 27.6% | 8% |

(constructed from U.S. Congress, 1989)

strengths of rural residents. For example, rural poor are more likely to own their own home, pay less to raise their children, and have a slightly lower annual cost of living. However, these advantages appear to be offset by lower wages, fewer benefits, and a greater tax liability. In other words, owning your own home may be short-lived if wages decline in relation to inflation and other economic contingencies.

*Mounting evidence suggests that without building this sense of community, development efforts are likely to fail.*

Data presented thus far fails to account for the third indicator of distress: education. In Table 4, mean educational attainment levels and the average rate of high school dropouts are presented. For each of the three categories shown, nonmetropolitan populations lag behind their metropolitan counterparts. Since higher paying jobs relate to higher educational attainment, rural residents seeking employment in metropolitan areas are at a clear disadvantage. In a similar fashion, higher paying industry is less likely to locate in an area unable to provide a skilled workforce.

**Table 4. Mean Years of Schooling for Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan County Adults in the United States, 1980**

| Residents | Nonmetropolitan | Metropolitan | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adult Education Attainment | 10.9 | 11.6 | -.7 |
| High School Dropout Rates | 16.9 | 15.0 | -1.9 |
| College Educated | 9.2 | 12.8 | -3.6 |

(adapted from Swanson and Butler, 1988)

Based on the information presented thus far, a distressed community may be defined as one in which economic, social, and educational indicators reveal a decline and deterioration of the social and physical infrastructure that facilitate community renewal and sustainability--thus leading to a loss of the psychological sense of community. As we will see later in this report, the psychological sense of community may be the pivotal axis upon which successful community development turns. Interestingly, most efforts at community development have failed to focus on this psychological sense. Often, economic development is equated with community development, leading to an emphasis on economics at the exclusion of the social dimension of community. Mounting evidence suggests that without building this sense of community, development efforts are likely to fail (Sandmann, 1988).

Taken together, what does this demographic information reveal about the level of distress and needs facing rural residents?

## Distress and Impact: Implications for Rural Communities and Schools

In attempting to understand the impact and implications which current demographic data might have for rural communities and schools, it is important to say a few words about the diversity of rural America. If the data presented thus far were disaggregated by the various regions which constitute rural communities, we would generally find similar problems in nearly all regions, but with a wide variation in the degree and severity of problems. For example, as Cynthia Duncan of the Aspen Institute points out, "The remote rural areas that are falling farther and farther behind have little prospect for attracting industry. Rural areas that are closer to cities . . . are more resilient and are going to recover faster" (as cited in Cohen and Bartimus, 1989). A look at rurality in the Pacific Northwest will provide insight into this variation.

Kale (1991) conducted an analysis of nonmetropolitan employment and population change in the Pacific Northwest since 1970. He used counties as the unit of analysis and included the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and western Montana. Employment data were disaggregated by metropolitan, nonmetropolitan adjacent, and nonmetropolitan non-adjacent. This last category reflects those areas Duncan calls "remote." Nonmetropolitan adjacent generally reflects those areas within commuting distance to a core metropolitan center (e.g., Seattle, Washington or Boise, Idaho).

Table 5 presents employment and population change in the Pacific Northwest. Metropolitan and nonmetro counties grew at a faster rate than non-adjacent counties. Overall, employment and population growth slowed considerably. Non-adjacent areas had the least growth and the smallest employment rates of all other areas except in Alaska, where the non-adjacent areas grew faster than metropolitan areas.

If we look at the nonmetro (including non-adjacent) counties in the Pacific Northwest from the perspective of socioeconomic specialization, a clearer picture develops regarding the nature of economic decline (Table 6). Kale used a rural classification scheme developed by Bender and others (1985) that was designed to better reflect the diversity of rural America than previous rural typologies. The following description and criteria were used by Kale to define each socioeconomic area:

> **Farming-Dependent**: Farming contributed a weighted annual average of 20 percent or more to total labor and proprietor income in 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, and 1986 (1983 was dropped because it was an unusually bad year for crops).
>
> **Manufacturing-Dependent:** Manufacturing contributed 30 percent or more to total labor and proprietor income in 1986.
>
> **Specialized Government**: Government activities contributed 25 percent or more to total labor and proprietor income in 1986.
>
> **Federal Lands**: Federal land was 33 percent or more of the land area in the county in 1977.

**Destination Retirement**: For the 1970-80 period, net immigration rates of people age 60 and over were 15 percent or more of the expected 1980 population age 60 and over.

**Forestry/Wood Products**: Forestry and wood products contributed 20 percent or more to total labor and proprietor income in 1984.

**Mining-Dependent**: Mining contributed 20 percent or more to total labor and proprietor income in 1986.

**Unclassified**: All other nonmetro counties (Kale, 1991, p. 5).

**Table 5. Percent of Employment and Population Change in the Pacific Northwest**

| State | Average Annual Percentage Change | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Employment | | Population | |
| | 1970-79 | 1980-88 | 1970-79 | 1980-88 |
| Alaska: | | | | |
| Metropolitan | 6.1 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan adjacent | 11.0 | 7.8 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| Nonmetropolitan nonadjacent | 5.1 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 3.2 |
| Idaho: | | | | |
| Metropolitan | 7.8 | 2.4 | 5.4 | 1.9 |
| Nonmetropolitan adjacent | 4.2 | 1.6 | 4.4 | 0.9 |
| Nonmetropolitan nonadjacent | 3.6 | 0.3 | 2.4 | 0.2 |
| W. Montana: | | | | |
| Metropolitan | none | | none | |
| Nonmetropolitan adjacent | none | | none | |
| Nonmetropolitan nonadjacent | 3.4 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 0.3 |
| Oregon: | | | | |
| Metropolitan | 4.9 | 1.8 | 2.5 | 1.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan adjacent | 5.1 | 1.4 | 3.1 | 0.4 |
| Nonmetropolitan nonadjacent | 3.8 | 1.0 | 2.8 | 0.2 |
| Washington: | | | | |
| Metropolitan | 4.4 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
| Nonmetropolitan adjacent | 3.4 | 1.4 | 2.5 | 1.2 |
| Nonmetropolitan nonadjacent | 3.4 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 0.8 |

(adapted from Kale, 1991, p.3)

The Pacific Northwest reflects a diverse range of economic settings. Like the nation as a whole, the service, trade, and government sectors of the economy have earned the greatest share of employment. Resource-based industries and low-level manufacturing either declined or showed the slowest growth. Table 6 bears out this decline in terms of employment and population change. The greatest decline occurred in mining-dependent communities.

Given that a majority of rural communities are manufacturing or resource dependent, the future of rural America looks bleak without an infusion of creative ideas, resources, and an intense commitment to rural revitalization at the federal, state, and local levels. However, lasting change must grow from a better understanding of the social and economic factors contributing to rural decline.

**Table 6. Percent of Employment Change by Socioeconomic Specialization of Nonmetro Counties in the Pacific Northwest**

| Specialization | Average Annual Percentage Change | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Employment | | Population | |
| | 1970-79 | 1980-88 | 1970-79 | 1980-88 |
| Farming-Dependent | 2.3 | 0.5 | 1.8 | 0.3 |
| Manufacturing-Dependent | 3.9 | 0.8 | 2.7 | 0.4 |
| Specialized Government | 4.0 | 2.2 | 3.2 | 1.3 |
| Federal Lands | 4.0 | 1.3 | 2.9 | 0.6 |
| Destination Retirement | 5.3 | 2.3 | 4.2 | 1.2 |
| Forestry/Wood Products | 3.8 | 0.8 | 2.6 | 0.3 |
| Mining-Dependent | 0.9 | -2.6 | 0.0 | -2.0 |
| Unclassified | 3.5 | 0.1 | 1.9 | 0.1 |

(adapted from Kale, 1991, p.5)

## Toward An Understanding of Rural Decline

*This core-periphery concept provides a simple but powerful framework for understanding rural economic decline. A dependent relationship exists between core urban centers and peripheral rural areas that historically has produced much greater benefits for the core areas.*

Economists characterize the center of commerce and social activity as the "core," a term generally synonymous with urban or metropolitan areas. As you move out from this "core" center, you move into an area called the "periphery", which may be characterized

as adjacent and non-adjacent rural areas. For example, if we found the city of Seattle on a map of Washington and then identified the communities radiating out from this core urban area, we would be describing peripheral communities. This core-periphery concept provides a simple but powerful framework for understanding rural economic decline. A dependent relationship exists between the core and the periphery that historically has produced much greater benefits for the core.

An analogy using the human body will help make the relationship between the core and the periphery clearer. Think of the core as the heart and the circulatory system of arteries and veins as the periphery. The closer to the heart, the larger the veins and the greater the blood flow. This close proximity represents the suburbs. The most remote regions, such as the hands and limbs, symbolize small, isolated communities. The closer to the heart (core center), the greater the flow of vital resources, the better the circulation. At the outermost areas of the periphery (i.e., the hands and feet), resource flow becomes restricted because of distance and the narrower transportation linkages. However, all circulatory elements are interdependent and necessary for a healthy living body.

Core areas, being politically powerful centers, dominate the economy by controlling the flow of raw materials and resources. Moreover, the concept of core is relative in that even an urban core such as Seattle has respective core and periphery relationships with a larger core such as Los Angeles. This same concept stretches into rural resource-based communities, where "at the center of resource-based communities are the mill managers from corporate headquarters, local community leaders appointed to decision-making boards and commissions located in urban cores, and activists seeking local support. At the periphery of the resource-based community are the laborers and longtime residents who remain in the community" (Smith, 1991, p. 3).

The impact of rural dependence can clearly be seen in the demise of rural mining communities. One such community is located in the mountains of the Northwest (Miller, in press a). From 1975 to 1990, the community went from having the wealthiest tax base in the state to the poorest. When silver prices boomed, students quit high school and worked in the mines making more money than their teachers. The community provided cheap and cost-effective labor. The community was supported by one industry. The mines were owned and controlled by multinational corporations located in urban core areas such as New York City, with branch offices in the rural communities. Managers and professionals employed in the mining industry lived in the local communities but owed their allegiance to the core center. A similar example can be seen in the reorganization of Safeway Stores, Inc. in the early 1980s which led to the closure of many stores in rural areas. Leaving some communities without access to local grocery store.

*As international prices fluctuated and environmental legislation increased the cost of mining, corporations pulled up stakes and moved overseas where cheaper forms of labor and less environmental restrictions could be found.*

As international prices fluctuated and environmental legislation increased the cost of mining, corporations pulled up stakes and moved overseas where cheaper forms of labor and less environmental restrictions could be found. With this move came plummeting land values and an increased tax burden for local residents. Mining managers and professionals simply moved with their companies, leaving their homes. Ironically, the companies purchased the homes and unloaded them on the local market, significantly driving down property values. The irony is that locals often bought these homes with the mistaken notion of making an economic coup, only to realize much later the coup was on them.

Some of the companies were unscrupulous. One company, for example, highgraded the mines (taking out only the best ore, with no reinvestment in the mine) and defaulted on pensions and health benefits. The community was left with unemployment rates as high as 35 percent, a largely uneducated workforce, a failing tax base, a damaged environment, and a community in great stress. On the positive side, the crisis in the mining industry heightened awareness of a sense of community and solidarity among residents. Through such a crisis, people learn about themselves, their community, and what they really value. According to one long-term resident:

> I have learned through the total changes that people's spirit and willingness to participate and work hard has been really enlightening. The community survives because people have such a strong desire to live here and do something about it. (Miller, 1991, raw data file, p. 22)

Mining provides only one example taken from a single resource industry. Similar patterns in other resource industries, although not as severe as mining, continue to show decline as we enter the '90s (Reid, 1988). For example, farm-dependent counties that gained jobs in the early 1980s, lost jobs during the mid-1980s because of improved technology and farm closures. From 1983-86, manufacturing-dependent counties lost population because of slow job growth. Although production has increased because of automation, wood product-related industries have seen a decline in employment, especially in the Pacific Northwest (Sommers, Whitelaw, Niemi, & Harrison, 1988).

*More and more, resources from rural communities are required to sustain an increasingly urban world.*

Smith (1991), an anthropologist studying resource-dependent rural economies, provides an excellent summation to the problems of peripheral, resource-dependent communities:

> More and more, resources from rural communities are required to sustain an increasingly urban world. Population and power concentrate in urban cores. The

resource-based communities supporting this urbanization struggle to survive. The people of these communities see themselves as less able to control their destinies. Community leaders express frustration and powerlessness. They see themselves as being controlled by powers far away who neither understand nor really care about the needs of people in resource-based communities. (p.1)

## The Changing Landscape of Rural America

Many of the forces bringing changes to urban America are also creating significant changes to the diverse rural countryside. These changes are driven by the rapid growth of technology, the increased urbanization of rural areas, the globalization of the economy, and other forces. Although these changes affect every sector of society, they appear to have a greater impact on rural communities. Six key themes appear to underlie forces shaping rural America:

- Technological change has been a way of life in rural America. The mechanical/chemical revolution of farming since the 1950s is now being supplanted by a biotechnology and information technology revolution that could be even more dramatic in its effects on rural areas. The emergence of information technologies offers the opportunity to further reduce the isolation of rural areas and open the door to new rural economic activities that have been previously tied to concentrations of people. New technologies also have the potential to allow some activities now requiring urban locations to move to rural areas and vice versa. (Office of Technology Assessment, 1991)

- Rural America is no longer as isolated from international, social, and economic forces as reflected in the movement of rural manufacturing to other countries, the fluctuating value of the dollar, increased competition from foreign manufacturers and agricultural markets, and the impact of international trade negotiations and policies.

- Changing demographics, especially regarding an aging rural population, means emerging policy concerns relating to health care, housing, transportation, recreational facilities, training for emerging occupations, and the retiree as an economic force.

- An increased proportion of personal income is coming from dividends, interests, rents, private retirement funds, and transfers (e.g., social security, public assistance, unemployment compensation).

- Off-farm income is a larger and more stable source of income for farm families than net farm income.

- A visible national shift to service-producing activities has occurred (e.g., health care, finance, insurance, engineering, and information processing)

away from manufacturing and agriculture, thus creating a need for change in the workforce. (Faas, et al., 1991, p. 9)

## Identifying the Problem: Size, Isolation, and Loss of Community

With a decline in employment opportunities and the subsequent reduction in population, rural communities have found themselves dependent on a broader range of services outside their communities. As population declines, rural communities lose the critical mass needed to support such services as hospitals, banking, education, and many local businesses. Needed services often reestablish themselves, but only on a regional basis. Figure 3 illustrates the regionalization of services.

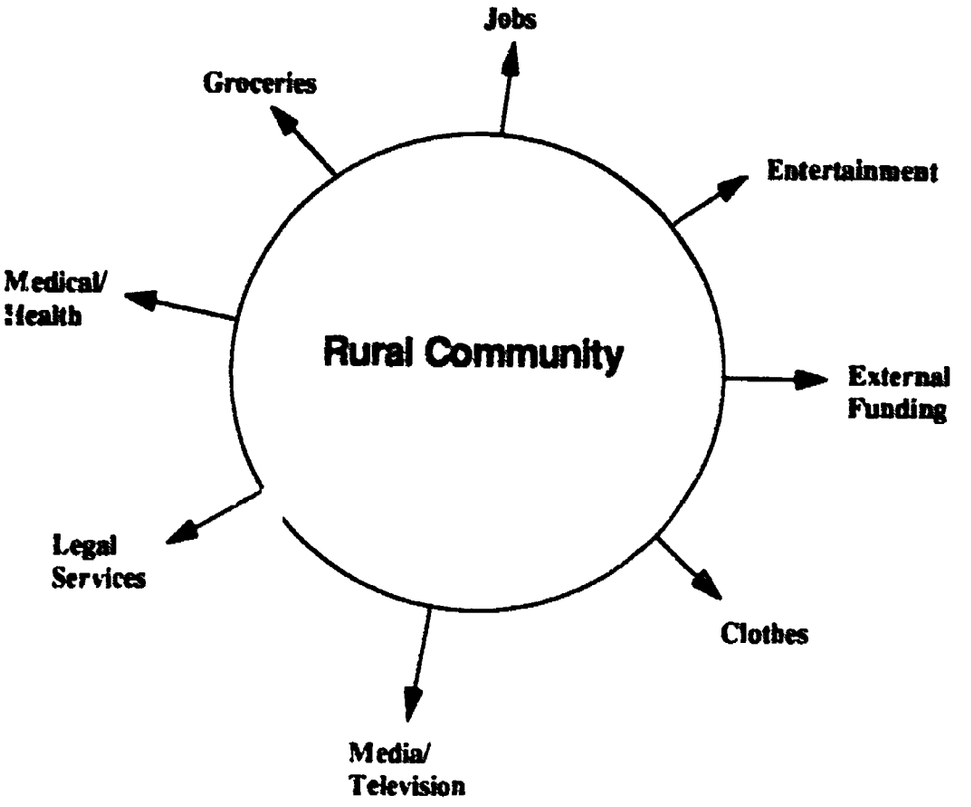
The traditionally small, rural community, that has often been characterized as demonstrating a high level of integration and self-sufficiency (Kohlenberg and Kohlenberg, 1991), finds itself in a state of *dis-integration* as local residents go outside their communities for services (Hobbs, 1988; Bryant and Grady, 1990). The degree of *dis-integration* may be related to the proximity to metropolitan areas. From one perspective, small, rural villages close to an urban center may simply find themselves reintegrated, but on the scale of a bedroom or suburban community. Ironically, the center of the once rural community shifts to the core; the rural village has now become urbanized.

Going outside the community loosens the bonds that traditionally tie people together. With *dis-integration* comes the loss of a sense of community. This may not be a problem or concern for rural communities adjacent to metropolitan areas, where proximity to the core guarantees access to vital resources. However, to non-adjacent rural communities it can mean paralysis; a loss of will toward the unified action necessary for successful community renewal (Sundet and Mermelstein, 1988).

### Defining Community

To better grasp the concept of *dis-integration* and its implications for the survival of small, rural communities, we need to understand the idea of community as a social structure and its relationship to school. Historically, schools have served two general purposes. First, schools have sought to socialize the students into the norms and values of the family and community. Schools serve to transmit the values of one generation to the next. But schools also serve another role; that is, to liberate the child from the limitations of the parent, to open up new horizons of a bigger and better world. In this sense, education can serve to free children from poverty, racism, and other imposed limitations. As Coleman (1987) points out, these two purposes are not mutually exclusive or necessarily in conflict. However, for them to be compatible requires a high level of homogeneity within the community and between the community and school. One contemporary example is the Amish, where community and school provide an apparently seamless continuum of values and norms. When the purposes fail to align, as is often the case in pluralistic societies such as those found in the United States, conflict may arise.

**Figure 3. Seeking Service Outside the Local Community**




(Hobbs, 1991)

**Functional Communities:** Coleman defines a functional community as one in which children's friends at school have parents who are also friends linked to the family. In other words, there is a consistent social structure or an "extended network of kinship, friendship, and work relations that pervade . . . the community (p. 182)." Coleman uses the term "intergenerational closure (p. 186)" to describe this network. In a small, rural community, where generations of families have grown up in close proximity, we could expect to find intergenerational closure (or structural consistency). For example, when a child has a problem or conflict in school or the community, someone in the social network will communicate to the parents and provide support. In a metropolitan area, where friends and relatives may be spread out over a large geographical area or not even live in the same city, the parents are often the last to find out when their child needs help-usually not from a friend or relative, but from a school official or a government agency.

Intergenerational closure has both benefits and constraints. On the positive side, Coleman says,

> The parent has additional channels through friends and acquaintances of the child, those children's parents, and back to the parent. The parent has a set of sentinels, each imperfect, but taken together, capable of providing a rich texture of information about the child's behavior. (p. 188)

In the absence of closure, children may exploit the situation by working the system to keep information away from parents, thus loosening the bonds of parental rules and guidance. In functional communities, one finds intergenerational friendships where a parent's friend may introduce his son and the son of his friend to fishing, "or a grandfather will help his grandson raise a calf for 4-H (p. 189)." In the absence of intergenerational closure, adults tend to be hesitant about encouraging relationships between children and adults because of accusations and/or fear of child exploitation or abuse.

*Children growing up in a close-knit community may be ill-equipped to enter the larger society or suffer culture shock upon entry.*

There also are costs to intergenerational closure usually associated with exclusivity and a separatist attitude that can isolate the children from the outside world. Children growing up in a close-knit community may be ill-equipped to enter the larger society or suffer culture shock upon entry. Some children may never leave their protected environment. Coleman (1987) sums up the advantages and disadvantages to living in a close-knit community:

> [T]he child loses one kind of opportunity--the opportunity for success in the larger world--by remaining embedded within the narrow constraints of the community and gains another kind--the opportunity to have the warmth, respect, and satisfaction of a member of the community as an adult. (p. 192)

Moreover, there are advantages for parents living in functional communities in terms of the resources available for raising children and monitoring the school. This is especially important for parents with "little education, few organizational skills, little self-confidence, and little money" (Coleman, 1987, p. 194). For these parents, the support developed around a network of friends and relatives can provide the kind of consistency necessary for developing norms for governing children's behavior. Intergenerational closure serves as a resource for parents raising children. Recent programmatic examples where functional communities have been developed around the school in inner city environments can be found in the work of James Comer (Comer and Haynes, 1991). He has been successful at developing a form of intergenerational closure among parents, school personnel, and community members that has proven valuable to parents, especially single parents.

**Values Consistency:** A functional community also has relatively consistent values developed over time by people interacting on a daily face-to-face basis, where mutual understandings and shared values become the cultural foundation for the community. However, values consistency can exist without having a functional community. For example, in a metropolitan area, parents with children in an alternative school may share similar values regarding education, but may not know one another because they live in different parts of the city.

*Values consistency may not be by itself a sufficient condition for producing a functional community.*

No intergenerational closure exists. In other words, values consistency may not be by itself a sufficient condition for producing a functional community.

Communities with intergenerational closure and values consistency may be characterized as highly integrated. In other words, the various constituents exist in relative harmony. In small, rural communities, this integration can be seen in the intergenerational support provided for children and adults. In a recent study of social service delivery in small, isolated rural communities, Kohlenberg and Kohlenberg (1991) noted:

> [C]aretaking and caregiving are indeed obvious and striking features of small town life. Often we were impressed, sometimes we were awestruck, at the almost casual acceptance of the idea that it is *necessary* to care for one's neighbors, friends, and family members. Such attitudes are not foreign in cities, but they are not reinforced by the circumstances of urban life. (p. 22)

### *Two Forces Devitalizing Community*

However, two forces have disrupted some close-knit communities. First, when young, educated residents work and socialize in nearby metropolitan areas, they no longer identify with the local community, its values, or its people. As a result, relations weaken and discontinuity develops between generations.

*Where rural parents once could insulate their children from the harsh realities of the outside world, media has brought those realities into the living room.*

A second source of disengagement arises from the rapid growth of communications technology. In the past, communications were primarily directed inward toward community members. However, communication technologies such as radio, television, and videos have shifted communication outward. According to Coleman (1987), "These new sources of communication, unconstrained by the norms that once dominated the community, now offer values that deviate sharply from those and provide a base of legitimation for the deviant values (p. 199)." Where rural parents once could insulate their children from the harsh realities of the outside world, media has brought those realities into the living room.

What can be discerned from these two areas of discussion is that functional rural communities are an endangered species. They straddle two worlds: On the one hand, they strive to maintain a world characterized by small-town values where residents look out for one another and kinship and friendship run deep. On the other hand, they face the continual encroachment of urban America and the need to somehow adjust to impending change. Monk and Haller (1986), conducted detailed case studies of small towns and their schools in New York State they describe the dilemma facing rural communities:

> In some respects the image Americans have of their small towns--shaded, tree-lined streets; a solid sense of community identity; friendly, caring neighbors; a

> reasonably stable economic base oriented to the surrounding farms; and a shared set . . . of values--describes the villages we visited. . . In every locality, the economy presented problems. The root of these problems was perceived to be the gradual drain of business and industry out of the community . . . whatever the cause, it was clear that each village was in some economic difficulty.
>
> This difficulty manifested itself in numerous ways. Perhaps the most obvious was a generally high rate of unemployment. . . The state of the local economies also had less obvious consequences . . . a drain of youth out of these villages to areas that offer greater economic opportunity . . . the lack of leisure activities for youth . . . people drive, sometimes lengthy distances, to work in neighboring small cities. (p. 25-28)

Probably the most significant theme to emerge from Monk and Haller's case studies (1986) was the central role the school played in the community. In these economically declining communities, the school remained one of the only, if not *the* only, viable institution. It served as a gathering place, a key recreational facility, an employer, and, maybe most importantly, "a stable pattern in the web of social life that binds individuals together. It is what makes a community something more than an aggregation of people" (Monk and Haller, 1986, p. 28). Interestingly, Monk and Haller did not find the school acting in a central role in community survival. The role of the school in these communities existed more by default than by intention.

If rural communities are to survive, they will need to appear as valued places to live, a difficult task when there are few means to earn a living. In order to explore the tension between quality of place and earning a living, Donaldson (1986) conducted a case study of 46 youths, ages 17 to 24, in Saywer, a small, rural community in Maine. He documented the attempts of these young rural people to "reconcile attachments to community and past with a desire--or economic need--to be a part of the modern American mainstream (p. 122)." The results of Donaldson's study provide a framework for viewing how rural communities might approach issues of decline and survival.

*If rural communities are to survive, they will need to appear as valued places to live, a difficult task when there are few means to earn a living.*

Donaldson (1986) found three patterns of development in the youth participating in the study. These were the *traditional, modern-achieving*, and *questioning* youth. Table 7 summarizes the three patterns and their implication for survival of the small, rural community of Sawyer. The *questioning* youth have lived in both the modern metropolitan world and the traditional small-town, rural communities. They found both advantages and limitations. In order to live in their tradition-bound small, rural hometowns, they sought integration of the best of both worlds. *Questioning* youth developed experience that allowed them to make informed choices. Unlike the *modern achieving* group, the *questioning* youth did not reject their roots. Moreover, they did not accept a static, unchanging view of their community as did the traditional group.

Donaldson (1986) draws several important conclusions that have implications for other rural schools and communities:

- Small community membership has an immense influence on individual development. It is essential that social science and social services respect, legitimize, and help make more viable such choice [traditional rural, community values and the community-bound forms of adulthood undergirding them.

**Table 7. Three Patterns of Development Observed in Rural Youth**

| Pattern | Percent | Characteristics | Implications |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Traditional** | 50% | Inexperienced beyond the rural community, they chose jobs and mates soon after high school. They operate in a familiar world revolving around family life-long social and cultural ties. | Sustains community norms and intergenerational closure. Limited experience reduces likelihood of understanding the issues necessary for community development and sustainability. |
| **Modern Achieving** | 40% | More experienced in the world beyond the local community. They pursue material goals: College, one's own job, travel, a modern home, and proof of membership in modern America. These goals produce a sense of competence not found in their rural roots. | They leave the community and seldom return. They produce discontinuity and therefore break up intergenerational closure. They become urbanized. If they do return, they bring a lifestyle that negates the traditional community values in favor of "modern" ideals of progress and development. |
| **Questioning** | 10% | They are the most experienced and uncertain about the future. They maintain an expanded view of the world, striving to integrate what is good from the outside with what they value in their rural community. They search for balance between the old and the new. | They maintain intergenera-tional closure by valuing collective ties and a supportive human environment. Community survival depends on finding ways to modernize without destroying rural community value and spirit. |

(Derived from Donaldson, 1986)

- Policymakers, educators, and rural developers need to work toward ways to bridge the worlds of native rural communities and urban America without denigrating one or the other . . . find ways to make rural towns viable without dismembering them as communities. (p. 125)

*He suggests the same respect be accorded these rural environments as one might give to another country.*

Donaldson views rural community life as culturally distinct. As such, he suggests the same respect be accorded these rural environments as one might give to another country. Secondly, he stresses the importance of the coexistence of rural communities and metropolitan America in ways that assure the survival of what distinguishes rural, small towns--their integrated structure and psychological sense of community.

The three patterns of development observed in the youth of Sawyer provide a framework for building community development and strengthening school-community relations. The *questioning* and *traditional* youth value their psychological sense of community. They understand the benefits to be gained by living in a community of intergenerational support. However, the *traditional* youth place themselves and their communities in a vulnerable position. By failing to actively recognize and understand their connections to the larger world, "traditional" youth remain especially dependent and vulnerable to forces outside the community that can negatively alter what they value most about rural, community life.

The *questioning* group represents an understanding that the very traditions which have helped to isolate and protect what is unique in the community may also be its undoing. Ironically, the *modern achieving* group represents the greatest threat. They present a view dominated by economic and financial concerns. It may be that the best chance for the survival of small, rural communities lies in a greater percent of rural youth shifting into the *questioning* group. This would require a changing focus for rural schools and the assumption of greater responsibility in community affairs.

## Toward a Balanced Perspective

Wilkinson (1974), a sociologist with extensive background in rural community development, describes three dimensions of social well-being in communities: economic-technical growth, human interpersonal growth, and environmental quality protection. Too often, Wilkinson points out, efforts at community development focus almost exclusively on the economic dimension. For example, bringing in an industry that creates new jobs but places strains on the other two dimensions, may, in the long run, be a liability to the community. Clearly, without employment and the means to feed and clothe one's family, there can be little chance for a community to survive. But this need for economic development requires a balance with the other two dimensions. The following summarizes the characteristics of the three dimensions:

**Economic-technical growth**

- Basic sustenance such as employment, income, and production
- Availability of services, facilities and amenities
- Social/cultural value structures which facilitate or impede economic growth
- Human resources; number of personnel, qualifications, aspirations, etc.

**Human interpersonal growth**

- Mechanisms for maximizing human welfare
- Emphasis on the quality of interpersonal relations
- Communications: pervasiveness, openness, and effectiveness of interpersonal transactions
- Potential for collective community action

**Environmental quality protection**

- Maintain a natural "ecological balance and integrity" in the environment while "maximizing economic-technical and human interpersonal growth." (p. 4)

With increasing urbanization, rural America faces a formidable challenge in sustaining a viable sense of community. In meeting this challenge, residents of small, rural communities must look beyond traditional solutions that had been viewed as successful in prior years. In resource-based economies such as forestry, mining, fishing, and agriculture, rural residents cannot expect the high levels of employment enjoyed in the past (Harrison and Seib, 1990). The manufacturing sector, which has proven to be a vital source of economic renewal in the 1970s and 80s, no longer holds much promise. The *shining knight* with a quick infusion of industrial blood is unlikely to emerge, even in the distant future. Rural communities must look to themselves for the key to their survival (Hobbs, 1988). This means taking a hard, cold look at the economic, social, and environmental realities facing their communities; establishing a collective vision for their future; and seeking to develop that future in ways which give them greater community control.

# SURVIVAL: THE SCHOOL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF "COMMUNITY"

*Schools can play a significant role in helping to revitalize small, rural communities because they often remain as one of the last infrastructures linking the community and the outside world.*

Schools can play a significant role in helping to revitalize small, rural communities because they often remain as one of the last infrastructures linking the community and the outside world (Hobbs, 1988; Reid, 1988). Many other institutions and businesses have become regionalized. In addition, residents often go outside the community for needed services, further weakening community self-sufficiency. By default, the school sits at center stage, providing the community with a sense of identity, a source of employment, and a common meeting place. However, these services create a major tax responsibility for the community. As one of the most stable institutions in rural communities, what aspects of school operations can be used for community renewal?

## Rural Schools and Communities are Inextricably Linked

> Newtown's historical records contain a hand-drawn map dating from the 1930s that provides a glimpse of a grander era, an era when downtown offered markets, restaurants, doctors' offices, a hotel--even a movie 'house.' Although the main street is almost empty now, the school remains; it has come to represent Newtown itself. (Koepke, 1991, p. 42)

Whether rural school personnel like it or not, schools have come to symbolize the identity and survival of many small, rural communities (McCracken, 1988; Peshkin, 1978). The ramifications of this central role have come under considerable attention in recent years as rural communities find themselves distressed by economic and social changes occurring at the state, national, and international levels of government (Hobbs, 1988; Rosenfeld, 1985). Although significant gains in understanding, model development, and implementation have been made in linking schools to their communities in substantive ways, school personnel and local community residents generally fail to recognize school-community interdependency and the synergistic benefits of collaboration. Two examples come to mind.

The first example relates to the difficulty of many small, rural districts in passing levies beyond minimal operating budgets. This sorely limits educational program growth and development. Secondly, teachers may garner the highest salaries in town and still seek to negotiate benefits and salary increases in a community characterized by high unemployment and an out-migration of educated youth (Monk and Haller, 1986). Both examples portray a serious dilemma for teachers and rural communities. On the one hand, rural communities need schools to prepare youth for future work and schooling opportunities. On the other hand, without offering competitive salaries, the quality of programs may be diminished. Additionally, reformation of schooling to better meet the

needs of rural youth competing for jobs in an information-based economy will require additional resources. These issues point to the necessity that rural schools and communities recognize how they are linked in vital ways and learn to collaborate for their mutual survival.

## How Schools Benefit Their Communities

Rural schools support their local communities in numerous ways. Some are obvious and others are subtle and often overlooked. The most visible contributions are educational--providing community residents with a basic education--and socially--serving as a center of entertainment and a gathering place for such activities as sports, plays, and recreational facilities. Teachers often play leadership roles in cultural and recreational activities Schools also have been noted to serve as safe havens during times of community environmental and social stress (Miller, in press). Economically, the school is often the largest employer in the community. But there are secondary economic benefits that tend to offset the costs associated with operating the school (Sederberg, 1987). These benefits often go unrecognized. Table 8 presents results of a study designed to quantify the rural school's economic contribution to the community. Sederberg used a sample of counties in Minnesota because they were rural and they represented diverse economies such as farming, tourism, and resource extraction.

Each county in Sederberg's (1987) study illustrates unique economic characteristics. The wealthiest county (*High Value Farm County*) receives the least economic benefit from the school districts while the poorest counties (*A Marginal Value Farm County* and *A Resource Based County*) reap the greatest benefit. However, all the counties benefitted economically from their schools. Interestingly, school districts in all the counties except *A Tourism County* (a recreational area with minimal taxable land) are perceived by real estate agents to enhance the value of residential property. This would support the idea that the quality of the school serves as a drawing card for families. Table 8 clearly points out that the poorer the county, the more valuable the schools are to the local economy. Rural schools benefit their communities in both economic and soical ways. What benefits do rural communities provide their schools?

*The poorer the county, the more valuable the schools are to the local economy.*

## How Rural Communities Benefit Their Schools

Without a community and its children, schools would not exist an obvious observation sometimes blurred by concerns over the professional role and organization of teaching.

Besides the client relationship, the small rural community also provides many other benefits, among them:

- Provides a tax base as a source of school revenue

**Table 8. Rural Schools Economic Contribution to Communities**

| | Economic Base | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A High Value Farm County | A Marginal Value Farm County | A Resource Based County (Wood/Mining) | A Tourism County |
| **Demographic Characteristics** | | | | |
| Population per square mile | 35 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Economics | high land evaluation | high un-employment & welfare | high un-employment | 69% of land is tax exempt |
| **Economic Indicators** | | | | |
| Gross school district payroll as percent of state gross income | 4.3% | 9.3% | 7.8% | 7.8% |
| Consumer purchasing power as percent of net school district payroll divided by retail sales | 4.7% | 7.1% | 9.9% | 7.1% |
| School district purchasing power S.D. (purchases divided by retail sales) | 1.3% | 1.8% | 1.9% | 1.6% |
| Recovery of state taxes as percent of school district revenues from state taxes | 28.9% | 107.1[3] % | 103.1% | 55.1% |
| School district staff as percent of total workforce | 1.4% | 4.9% | 5.2% | 3.4% |
| Recovery of federal taxes as percent of school district federal revenue | 1.9% | 7.9% | 3.3% | 10.1% |
| Average real estate agent ratings of the importance of schools to maintaining residential property values (1=low 10=high) | 7.0 | 7.5 | 7.0 | 1.0 |

(Adapted from Sederberg, 1987)

- Provides parent volunteers across a range of activities from curriculum resources and coaching to chaperoning school events
- Provides feedback and support regarding students, activities, and programs
- Provides sources of information regarding culture and values
- Hosts exchange students and student teachers
- Serves as an advocate for the school, teachers, and programs
- Serves as an advisor or decision-maker serving on committees
- Provides a unique experiential context for education, an environment where ideas from the various school disciplines such as math, science, and social studies can be explored

These general areas encompass activities often reflecting the norm in rural communities. Because of isolation, limited resources, and low population density, community residents do more for their schools than might be expected in a metropolitan setting. Moreover, such activities often carry the weight of tradition and therefore may go unrecognized as anything special. For example, parents often coach without pay in order that an athletic activity, such as basketball, be offered. Rural schools often have multigrade classrooms that use parents for instructional activities on a voluntary basis (Miller, 1988). This is especially true in communities where local traditions and language have been incorporated into the school's program. In many isolated communities it is common for parents to raise funds, provide transportation, and chaperone major trips.

*Because of isolation, limited resources, and low population density, community residents do more for their schools than might be expected in a metropolitan setting.*

It is important to keep in mind that the level of community involvement varies widely from one rural school district to another, depending on such elements as leadership, community solidarity, school culture, and climate. Further, the list of parent involvement examples cited above reflects what happens most frequently rather than what is possible. In other words, can one envision a school linked together with the community in ways that produce greater student learning while enhancing community survival? One example might be a school-community day-care program where students learn about child development in a "real world" situation while parents have a local day-care program.

**Business as Usual: Barriers to School-Community Linkages**

Schools as institutions are slow to change. So are small, rural communities. Ways of working and relating become routine. Over time, routines become traditions and go

unnoticed. Often, it takes an economic social or environmental crisis to trigger change. In the opening section of this paper we described such an event occurring in the mining community of Wallace. In this small, rural community in the mountains of northern Idaho, mine closures called into question traditions that had been in place for more than 100 years. Economic and social survival required immediate action.

In a similar manner, the farm crisis of the 1980s forced farmers to make major changes in farming practices. Often, they had to sell farms and abandon deep-rooted connections with the land. The causes of these changes reflect a clear sign of more insidious events to come for rural communities, especially those characterized by isolation and low population density. Significant community development efforts at the local level are necessary for survival. Even then, many small, rural schools will close and their communities will die. Some sociologists view this passing as a normal evolutionary event (Stoneall, 1983). However, for rural residents, and the country as a whole, such passing sounds the death knell of a way of life.

*One major barrier limiting school-community collaboration is a failure to recognize that a serious problem exists.*

Clearly, one major barrier limiting school-community collaboration is a failure to recognize that a serious problem exists. This is especially true for those rural communities where economic decline has been more gradual. Interestingly, even when community residents and school personnel recognize that a serious problem exists, they have difficulty envisioning how to approach the problem, especially in terms of how the school can be an asset (Emery, 1991). In a similar manner, school personnel appear to not see a role for the school in rural revitalization. Reid (1988) alludes to this problem:

> While schools are often the most significant source of information and leadership within rural communities, many do not recognize the application of knowledge to community problems as legitimate roles for them to play. (p. 16)

*A second barrier reflects a reluctance of educators to promote the rural school as a resource for community development efforts.*

A second barrier reflects a reluctance of educators to promote the rural school as a resource for community development efforts. Several forces play a part in this barrier. Hobbs (1987) suggests that teacher training does not prepare teachers with the conceptual understanding to link the classroom or the school with the community. In part, this is related to the second factor-- centralized state controls designed for large metropolitan areas (Nachtigal and Haas 1991). This includes such controls as accreditation, certification, and graduation requirements. Although these controls serve an important function in helping to maintain educational quality, they tend to be biased in favor of large, urban models. Both teacher training and centralized state controls grow from the dominance of core urban centers.

A third, and maybe the most significant barrier, relates to the role of the school as an institution providing a social service and the professional role of teaching. Schools are an institution designed to deliver a social service (education) to the community, but they often continue their primary purpose (serving the needs of students) with the means of meeting those needs. As Hodgkinson (1989) points out, social institutions, over time, begin to focus their attention away from the client:

> The essential focus shifts inward, rewarding those activities which maintain the bureaucracies' inner health, regardless of whether or not it is doing what it is supposed to do. This tendency is as strong in armies as in post offices. If a bureaucracy has used pencils for its entire existence, and is suddenly told to substitute ball point pens, a major riot could result. A means (writing instrument) has become an end ('no outsider can tell us how we should run our business'). (p. 7)

Hodgkinsons' observation also applies to problems associated with teaching. A simple transformation will clarify this point: "No outsider can tell us how we should run our school." However, professionalism is a complex topic, varying greatly even within a single school building. Hulsebosch (1991) examined the relationship between teachers' self-definition of professionalism and how they involved parents in school activities. She found that:

> 'High involvement' teachers equate professionalism with the ability to maintain a dialogue between the in- and out-of-school lives of both their students and themselves. For contrast 'low involvement' teachers, being a professional means separating and protecting their work with students from thoughts, experiences, and people beyond the classroom walls. (p. 183)

*Are there benefits to be gained by integrating outside-of-school elements into the curriculum of the school?*

Miller and Hull (in press) found a similar phenomenon while conducting a group interview with rural school parent volunteers. One parent said she had been told by the principal "that teachers are the professionals and know what is best for students." A second parent said she felt that teachers often forgot that students do not belong to the school, but are someone's son or daughter. From a legal perspective, the school possesses a contractual relationship with the community to provide education. Thus, school personnel may feel possessive in matters considered educational. However, as these parents point out, there is a whole child living a large portion of life outside school with parents or guardians. This raises the question: Are there benefits to be gained by integrating outside-of-school elements into the curriculum of the school?

Bell and Sigsworth (1987), in their work with rural schools in Great Britain, believe the answer to this question is an undeniable "yes!" They sum up what constitutes an appropriate focus of schooling by contrasting the "official" professional perspective on schooling with the "grassroots" perspective:

**The Professional View**

There is a firm commitment to the local children, to their educational opportunities and curriculum entitlement, but an equally firm rejection of the belief that local parents (or any other element of the community) can be the foundation for this. The notion of 'curriculum entitlement' seems to impute to education authorities the prerogative of guardian of the child's interests which might need to be protected against the ignorance or self-interest of the parents. Development work as education rests on the judgment of professionals. (p. 265)

**From a Grassroots Perspective**

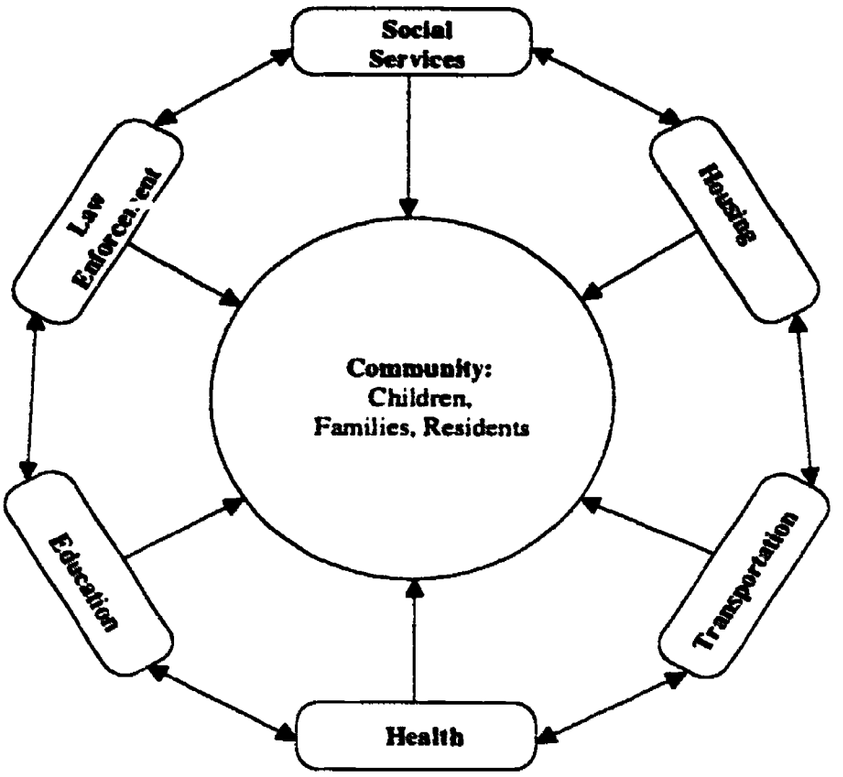
. . . Each parent's knowledge of the school includes something that is not available to local education [officials]. That is the intimate knowledge that is gained from seeing one's own children, not any children, but one's own children, going to and from school every day. Only parents have that experience. They know the daily triumphs and disappointments, the moments of excitement and the occasion of boredom. Through their children and their friends, through the casual conversation with neighbors, through the everyday incidents they observe and take part in, and their sense of the routines and ritual of the school, parents have a particular (but of course partial) knowledge of the school which is denied to the outsider.

Secondly, it ignores the fact that parents have hopes and aspirations for their children's education, which may well derive from local values, but which must carry legitimate weight, even when they differ from the views of professionals. (p. 265)

Clearly, professional educators possess important understanding and insight into the child, but it is only partial. The other piece required for filling in the whole child resides in the parents and the community where children play out their lives.

There are other barriers such as limited time, few resources, and making sure curriculum is adequately covered which constrain teachers from seeking increased school-community involvement. In presenting these barriers, no blame is placed on communities or schools. It is suggested that meaningful change must come from an understanding of community-school needs and the constraints that must be overcome if solutions are to be successful. To this end, school personnel and community residents need to reconceptualize the primary purpose of the school and its role within the web of social services created to serve the needs of the community. Figure 4 provides a way to envision this reconceptualization.

**Figure 4. A Conceptual Model for Social Service Delivery**




(adapted from Hodgkinson, 1985, p. 7)

While placing the client at the center of service is an obvious concept, client needs often remain obscured in the wide array of government agencies, organizations, and service providers. Although the integration and coordination of these various services is not as big a problem in rural communities as in metropolitan areas, increased urbanization has led to fragmentation (or, as discussed earlier, to *dis-integration*). As can be seen in Figure 4, the community is the center of service delivery. Ironically, service providers often fail to realize the power inherent in a well-coordinated and integrated effort.

*Meaningful change must come from an understanding of community-school needs and the constraints that must be overcome if solutions are to be successful.*

In reviewing more than 250 research articles, conference proceedings, and various reports and training materials on rural community development there was a conspicuous absence of schools as collaborative partners with their communities. The only exception is in the recognition of the valuable role a good school system plays in building successful economic development activities.

## Benefiting from Rural Community-School Collaboration

Many rural communities find themselves at the end of the road. Job opportunities have declined. The young and educated have been leaving for metropolitan areas. Businesses have closed. Social services have been relocated on a regional basis. And the fabric of many functional communities has begun to unravel. Mutual survival has become a compelling reason for communities and schools to work collaboratively. It also makes good economic and educational sense.

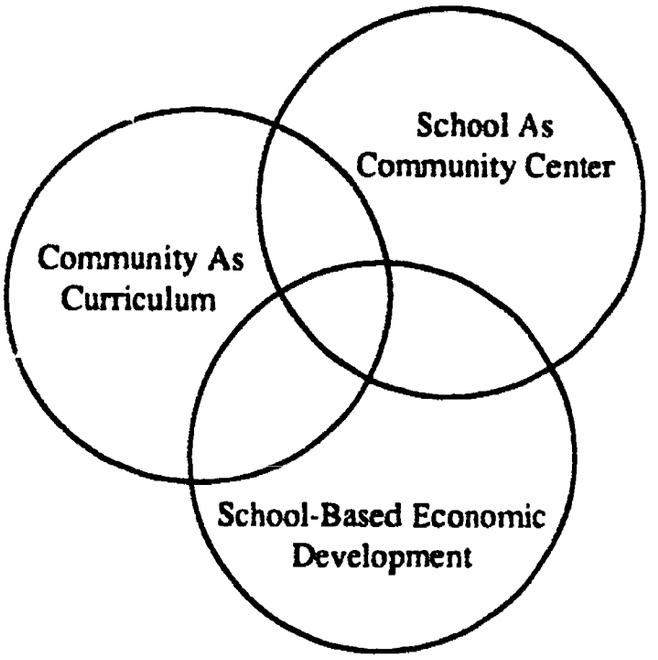
In the past, working harder was enough to keep rural communities alive. But as Hobbs (1988) has pointed out, rural communities must now work smarter, capitalizing on their inherent strengths and unique features. Many rural schools and communities have already begun to think smarter. Led by the work of Sher (1977), Wiggington (1985), and Paul Nachtigal from Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, rural schools have taken on a more dynamic and interactive role with their communities. These schools are involved in activites such as School Based Enterprise (Sher, 1977), community study, and school integrated service delivery. They also share similar assumptions:

- Rural America is a vital, national resource
- Solutions to rural problems are to be found in rural communities
- Education and community well-being are tightly linked
- Rural schools have the capacity to take on leadership roles in their communities
- All students have the capacity for creative, self-directed learning and responsible decision-making
- Experiential learning that focuses on the community produces greater benefits for the community, school, and the student than strictly school-centered learning
- Learning what is uniquely rural about one's community (history, culture, economics, and the social and political structures) is an empowering process
- Meaningful change occurs when all elements of the school and community work together

## Instances of School-Community Collaboration

We have found many examples of schools collaborating with their communities to ensure that a variety and quality of service reflecting local and societal needs and responsibilities be provided to children and adults. These have ranged from general education to lifelong learning, from day-care programs to meals for the elderly, and from vocational training to small business development. For the purpose of illustration, we have organized our examples into three discrete, but overlapping categories. The first category we call School-Based Economic Development, the second area we call School as Community Center, and the third category is Community as Curriculum. Figure 5 visually portrays each category. The intersections indicate elements they share in common while the unique areas represent their individual primary emphasis.

**Figure 5. Three Categories of School-Community Collaboration**




### *School-Based Economic Development*

This category is most notably represented by the writings of Jonathan Sher (1977) who pioneered the concept of School-Based Development Enterprise (SBDE). These ideas were implemented under the direction of Paul Delargy of Georgia State University in a program called REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning). REAL incorporates many of the ideas inherent in the neighborhood lemonade stand. Kids from

*"Students research, plan, set up and operate their own enterprises in cooperation with their local high school or community college." (REAL, date unknown a, p. 3)*

the neighborhood see the day is hot and reason that people will be thirsty. The children also know they are cute and friendly and everyone in the neighborhood has spare change. They also know which corners are safe and likely to attract the most business. Their market analysis and planning completed, the children secure the needed supplies from parents, and the lemonade stand opens for business. Although this illustration is quite simple, it does present several key elements of REAL: "Students research, plan, set up and operate their own enterprises in cooperation with their local high school or community college (REAL, date unknown a, p. 3).

Four primary goals underlie the REAL process:

1) **Institutional**: To help rural schools become effective small business incubators and community development organizations.

2) **Educational**: To help participants develop economic literacy, as well as skills in entrepreneurship and business management.

3) **Economic**: To help expand the local employment base by creating businesses that fill gaps in the rural economy.

4) **Individual**: To help rural students develop greater self-esteem, complete their schooling, and become productive citizens. (REAL, date unknown b, p.1)

REAL's roots have spread from North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina to the Northwest, where the program is being used in high schools in the states of Washington and Alaska.

REAL personnel point out that the program stresses an innovative, experiential approach to learning that occurs within the context of a local high school (and community college) and is not designed solely as a business development venture. Students learn many of the same things as students in traditional programs. However, REAL students go beyond basic academics into the development and application of entrepreneurial skills to a wide range of options chosen by students themselves:

> Students are welcome to choose any *form* of business--start-up ventures, franchises, purchase of an existing company, family businesses, micro-enterprises or home-based operations. They also are free to explore any *kind* of business--agricultural, service, manufacturing or retail . . . Students who want to use their entrepreneurial skills to create a needed community service or other worthwhile

non-profit venture are encouraged to do so. They, too, count as REAL successes. (REAL, date unknown b, p. 5)

An important outcome that differentiates REAL from traditional high school programs is the emphasis on learning about one's community and putting something of value back into the community, whether it be a needed day-care program or a shoe repair business.

REAL has a demonstrated history of success. In the past ten years, about 15 businesses have been started by students. Some of these continue to make a profit; other have gone out of business. However, REAL is stronger today than ever, with substantial development grants from the Ford Foundation and support from a host of other organizations and businesses, all attesting to the benefits REAL Enterprises holds for rural communities.

### *School As Community Center*

In small, rural communities, the school has always functioned as a community center and provided a meeting place and a social and cultural hub for community activities. However, it often does not go much beyond this role into such areas as health, nutrition, day care, and related social service delivery. In the mid '60s, a major community school movement emerged in Britain following the publication of the Plowden Report (1967). The report, which urged improved parent-school relations and the formation of the community school, was followed in the United States by legislation focusing on community education.

Early community education efforts in the United States primarily centered around recreational use of the school and adult education programs during non-school hours. In the mid-1970s, the concept of community school extended to encompass three general areas: "Making the curriculum more relevant," "Meeting the educational needs of the entire community," and "Effective use of social and governmental resources" (Minzey, 1976). Because of the crisis facing small, rural communities, this expanded concept appears more relevant than ever.

Ironically, even though this crisis impacts rural schools as hard as rural communities, the level of observable school activity appears minimal. For example, in a report for the Northwest Policy Center at the University of Washington, *Strategies for Rural Social Service Organization and Delivery* (Faas, et al., 1991), schools were not mentioned as a service delivery strategy. This is especially ironic when considering the fact that schools are one of the last elements of infrastructure left in many small, rural communities. They contain access to information through their library and media resources (and distance technology, in many cases), they house a high level of human capability, they are eligible

*Ironically, even though this crisis impacts rural schools as hard as rural communities, the level of observable school activity appears minimal.*

for various types of funding, and they are a large, centrally-located facility. Some schools and their communities recognize both the need and the capability that exists in using the school as a community center. Spears, Combs, and Bailey (1990), in their case studies of linkages between rural schools and their communities, present an example of such a school in York,.Nebraska, a town of about 8,300 residents.

York, Nebraska has operated a commun.:y schools program since the early 1970s. Initially, the program focused on adult and lifelong education. But in the late 1970s, program personnel felt that the negative impact of economic changes occurring in the country required a different approach. A resource council consisting of the director of the community education program; social service providers (hospitals, mental health, senior citizens groups, government programs, etc.); civic groups such as Lions, Scouts, PTA; church leaders; law enforcement; and news media was formed. The resource council served as a needs sensing and communication coordination group within the community.

*The most promising direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community.*

Out of this group's discussions have emerged ideas that have become reality in York. Some of these include Meals on Wheels, a program that provides meals for the elderly and handicapped; Busy Wheels, which provides dependable and inexpensive transportation for the elderly and handicapped; and Before/After School Childcare, which provides childcare for school-age children.

The York experience is unique because it has survived for more than 16 years, and has continued to evolve with the changing needs of the community. Spears, et al. (1990) provide a cogent summary of the benefits accruing to the community:

> The conventional school environment is enriched as students see adults in learning roles, and teachers maintain closer connections with the real world through teaching both adults and young people. The community is enriched as school-community linkages enable adults to be more supportive of classroom learning and increased contact with young people encourage respect and acceptance across the generations. And finally, the young people themselves gain a realization that learning is indeed a lifelong process--a process they will be able to take with them no matter where they go. (p. 23)

Although not as comprehensive as the York experience, rural educators in the Northwest are beginning to see the vitally important role schools can have in serving their communities beyond basic education. In Rockland, Idaho, for example, the school has worked with the Southeast Idaho Council of Governments to provide meals for the elderly, provide childcare using home economics students, and provide community access to resource information via computers and distance technology. In Pilot Rock, Oregon, students, parents, and patrons established a community daycare program. In Burley, Idaho, cooperative efforts by children's services, law enforcement, courts, and

schools have begun in order to provide a more integrated service to better meet the needs of students (Miller, in press b).

> *"Many American schools of today are as separated from their communities as if a moat existed between them and the rest of the environment."* *Minzey, 1970*

What appears to be needed in order to enhance these fledgling efforts are teacher education programs designed to inform and train educators in community development, models, success stories, and networks of committed rural educators and community members upon which to build a local vision. The school's traditional role, that of being isolated to a task primarily focused on general education, limits the schools capacity for community collaboration and service. Minzey (1972), a leader in the community education movement of the 1970s, has harsh words for the traditional role of schools in American society:

> Many American schools of today are as separated from their communities as if a moat existed between them and the rest of the environment. . . School people have a good idea of what the role of the public schools should be. They resent being given a greater responsibility, and are opposed to outsiders using their buildings and their equipment. Boards of education, administrators, teachers, and custodians are often threatened by such suggested change as that implied by community education, and either actively or passively resist its implementation. (p. 77-78)

Minzey goes on to point out the advantages to be gained by the community school concept:

> The community must be brought into the school and the school must be taken into the community. This interweaving of school and community will tend to enhance both and result in a relationship which more effectively meets the goals of education. (p. 77)

### *Community As Curriculum*

All learning is a social act, even when one learns alone and in isolation from others. Put another way, knowledge is not private or individual. What one learns in school does not belong to the individual because it gains meaning from a community of learners who share common understanding. This observation has especially important implications for rural students and students from minority cultures. A simple illustration drawn from Bricker (1989), clarifies this idea of knowledge as socially agreed-upon meaning:

> I maintain that no person can attain an entirely personal, private knowledge of anything . . . When Julie achieves an understanding of a Spanish word, or of anything else, she then inhabits a community of persons who all follow the same rules that provided the grounding for that understanding. (p. 46)

In other words, when a student comes to know something, whether it be a new vocabulary word or an approach to solving a math problem, he or she comes to know an accepted set of socially agreed-upon rules. As a result, the learner joins "a community of persons who use the same rules together (p. 46)." What implications do these ideas have for rural students and their communities? The answer to this question may be found by asking a related, but slightly different question, What is the "community of persons" upon which curriculum in rural schools gain meaning?

*A hidden curriculum exists that supplants the values and norms of rural communities.*

Rural school curriculum (including the methods for imparting that curriculum) comes primarily from metropolitan America (Sher, 1977; Nachtigal, 1982). This does not mean the curriculum or methods are necessarily bad. However, it does mean that a hidden curriculum exists that supplants the values and norms of rural communities. It means that rural (and any minority) students gain knowledge that socializes them into a community of understanding quite different fr m their own. They become urbanized covertly. Interestingly, many practices viewed as school innovations by mainstream educators originated in small, rural schools such as multigrade classrooms, family grouping, and integrated curriculum (Miller, 1988; Goodlad and Anderson, 1963).

The effect appears as a kind of disempowerment, to use Donaldson's (1986) terminology, where rural youth become *modern achieving*, discounting their rural community roots in favor of membership in modern metropolitan America. Or they may become *tradi tional* youth, marrying soon after high school and rejecting further education and modern ideals. The third approach, and the one advocated here, reflects Donaldson's *questioning* youth, who are able to balance local community values with those of the dominant society. A simple example will help illustrate the influence of the hidden curriculum in terms of the values learned from the content and the methods of instruction.

While working with a rural school district in the Pacific Islands, the author discovered they had adopted a high interest, low vocabulary reading program developed by a major textbook company in the United States. Since the majority of students spoke English as a second language, it was felt this new reading series would be beneficial in helping students to read in English. The program had been chosen at the central office level, with very little involvement of teachers. In discussions with teachers, it was discovered the new program replaced a reading series written in New Zealand especially for Pacific Island children. Teachers said they liked the old series because it used pictures and words reflective of their culture and environment. The new series introduced words and pictures taken from areas in the United States. Since the majority of children had never left their island community, some teachers argued that this new content expanded student learning to the outside world. But it also tended to create discontinuity and confusion regarding their local culture and community by the introduction of alien content. The issue here was not the content per se, but the dominating effect it would have if not balanced with locally-relevant material.

Besides curriculum content, another area impacting student perceptions of themselves and their communities centers around instruction. In other words, how the reading program is taught to students. Many of the teachers interviewed taught classes with more than one grade (e.g., combined grades of fourth and fifth or fourth, fifth, and sixth). Following suggestions made by reading consultants for the newly adopted series, teachers assigned books based on grade placement. This meant, for example, that a teacher with fourth and fifth graders assigned fourth grade books to those in the fourth grade and fifth grade books to fifth graders. Then the teacher taught the class as two separate grades in the same classroom. Ironically, teachers pointed out that many of the students could not read their respective grade level texts let alone comprehend the cultural content. Traditionally, teachers would have taught all the children together, utilizing the natural helping relations of older and younger students and brothers and sisters common to their community.

What did students learn from this new reading series and from the method of instruction? Teachers indicated that students learned to be frustrated and uncertain. They were introduced and socialized into a "community of learners" characterized by an alien set of values and curriculum content. The learning process had become more fragmented than in the past as students were assigned to reading groups based on arbitrary administrative grade levels rather than student needs or achievement.

*Rural students learn more than curriculum content. They may learn to call themselves and their community into question.*

Although this illustration may seem more extreme than what one often finds in the average small, rural American school program, the problems and issues are the same. Moreover, because they are more subtle, they often go unnoticed. Rural students learn more than curriculum content. They may learn to call themselves and their community into question. However, the response is not to flatly reject curriculum that reflects values and content of the dominant culture, but to place in balance that which is local or endemic. Using the community as curriculum serves as a kind of compensating or balancing mechanism to curriculum whose origin and content reflect metropolitan and urban society. Moreover, local-focused curriculum serves a psychological role helping to validate and legitimize one's identity and membership in a community.

Rural educators have always utilized elements of the community to enhance their school programs. This has generally been in the form of using resources from the local environment such as local residents or historic documents. However, such use seldom treats the community as a focus of study, where the culture, history, political organization or economic status are systematically studied. Two notable examples are Eliot Wigginton's *Foxfire* (Wigginton, 1985) and the work conducted by the Rural Institute at Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (Nachtigal and Haas, 1991; Nachtigal, Haas, Parker, and Brown, 1989; Spears, et al., 1990).

**Foxfire:** *Foxfire* began in 1966 in Wigginton's Appalachian Mountain classroom, where

a quarterly magazine named *Foxfire* began publication. In this quarterly magazine, students published interviews with older community residents about Appalachian traditions, folklore, and culture. In 1972 a selection of articles from the magazine were published by Doubleday. Today, *Foxfire* is alive and thriving, with many schools across the United States engaging students in learning about their communities through interviews, observations, and writing. Several principles undergird the *Foxfire* approach to learning. According to Smith (1991),

> . . . students learn more efficiently when they have a genuine voice in planning what happens in their classrooms, when they produce a product that will be valued by a real audience outside the classroom, and when the state-mandated academic agenda is engaged in a meaningful way, not just teacher-initiated coverage of the material . . . It is student-centered, community-based, and academically sound. (p. 12)

*Foxfire* does not abandon existing curriculum, but brings it to life through direct connections with the local community. Again, drawing on Smith's summary:

> Connections between the classroom work and surrounding communities and the real world outside the classroom are clear. The content of all courses is connected to the world in which the students live. For many students, the process will engage them for the first time in identifying and characterizing the communities in which they reside. (p. 16)

**McREL's Rural Institute**: The work at McREL under the guidance of Paul Nachtigal has two basic outcomes:

> First, it teaches youth about their community's economy and characteristics and their roles as active community members. In addition, students learn how to make practical use of data collection and analysis. . . The second outcome is the actual knowledge of the community itself and the use that can be made of this knowledge. New understandings can add to awareness, develop new perspectives from which to make decisions, chart courses or plan development. (Nachtigal, p. 13)

*Students engage in community study in collaboration with local residents. Students also work in close collaboration with one another.*

Like *Foxfire*, this approach draws heavily upon interview and observation strategies which focus on the community. However, the McREL approach places an added emphasis on other forms of data collection such as community surveys and collecting and analyzing demographic and economic information. Students engage in community study in collaboration with local residents. Students also work in close collaboration with one another. Buffalo School in South Dakota worked closely with McREL's Rural Institute in developing a community study emphasis. The value of the Buffalo program centers around the reciprocal benefits accruing to students and the community. In this kindergarten through twelfth grade school, students engage in activities that focus on the community, producing information used by the community

for economic development efforts. Residents have gained an added appreciation for the importance of youth while students have enhanced their appreciation for their local communities.

Another site experiencing success with community-focused instruction is Belle Fourche, South Dakota. Interview data revealed that communication links between the school and community had strengthened, with an accompanying improvement in student motivation and attendance and a reduction in student dropouts. The school also developed integrated curriculum strands and new courses which focused on using the community. Special courses included historiography, where students conduct research about the history of their community and about the geography of the surrounding area; journalism, where students develop skills required for publication in the local newspaper; courses in rural and economics research, where students learn about local political processes; and, finally, business studies where students develop the entrepreneurial skills necessary for creating a business (Spears, et al., 1990).

*But there are many small, rural schools conducting business as usual and depriving both students and community residents of the opportunity for shared, collaborative growth.*

*Foxfire* and the work from McREL provide solid evidence of the viability of using the community as curriculum. But much work yet remains to be done. Currently, Nachtigal and Haas (1991) have a comprehensive collaborative project in place with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota State University, and related organizations concerned about rural education. The intent is to extend the work begun in communities such as Belle Fourche and Buffalo School. *Foxfire* is being used nationally with great success. But there are many small, rural schools conducting business as usual and depriving both students and community residents of the opportunity for shared, collaborative growth.

The three approaches outlined (i.e., Community as Curriculum, School as Community Center, and School-Based Economic Development) share a common belief in the power to be gained when the community and school work together for their mutual benefit. These three approaches overlap in many ways, especially in the work of Nachtigal and Haas (1991), whose main thrust flows from an economic motive grounded in the benefits of community-focused study.

### Adjusting the Balance: Community Well-Being Revisited

In a previous section of this document we reviewed Wilkinson's (1974) conception of community well-being as consisting of three dimensions: economic-technical growth, human interpersonal growth, and environmental quality protection. In comparing the various programs of school-community collaboration, "ecological-quality protection"

various programs of school-community collaboration, "ecological-quality protection" was not addressed in any clearly definable way. Given the current climate of feeling regarding environmental issues, it may have been politically appropriate to downplay this area. However, when a computer search for rural school programs that addressed the environment and the community was done, 23 examples were found, but only six had any relevance. Of these, the majority focused on the elementary grades. One notable example examined rural children's conflicting attitudes toward environmental change (Chaib, 1988).

It was found that rural elementary students faced with a decision to build a factory in their "somewhat idyllic community" favored building the factory because it would mean more children in school and more jobs. The children demonstrated negative attitudes toward consequences to the environment. In other words, they did not appear concerned about the environment if the factory meant jobs and more classmates. The authors recommend that environmental education must incorporate a "global perspective on society and its future, and must incorporate cultural and ecological development relationships (p. 1)." This finding is consistent with Wilkinson's (1974) observation that scant attention is paid to the environmental dimension in community development efforts. However, Wilkinson also pointed out that little attention has been paid to the human interpersonal growth" dimension as well, while major emphasis has fallen on "economic-technical growth":

> Human interpersonal growth and protection of environmental quality have been mentioned, but not taken seriously. When they are taken seriously, even a brief analysis of the context within which they have been presented reveals these to be critical ways inimical to the one dimension, economic-technical growth, which has been taken seriously in the rural development literature. Rural development . . . is revealed in the political-administrative sphere to be primarily a code word for economic development, the value of which has been debated widely. (p. 6-7)

The good news about the programs we reviewed is the central, pivotal role interpersonal relations play--students working together with teachers, working cooperatively with other students, and working collaboratively with the community. However, consistent with Wilkinson's observation regarding the environmental dimension, there was little evidence of efforts in this area. Although rural communities, especially those dependent on resource-based economies such as timber and mining, often harbor negative attitudes toward environmental issues, they cannot afford to ignore them any longer. Rural America has become the dumping ground for the waste products of urban core areas. With the decline in extractive industries, the quality of the environment may be one of the last marketable resources available in many rural communities.

*With the decline in extractive industries, the quality of the environment may be one of the last marketable resources available in many rural communities.*

# CONCLUSION

One morning you wake up, look out your window and discover the world has changed in unrecognizable ways. You are told that we live in a global village and what happened 10,000 miles away will affect your small, rural community. You are told that the information age is here and that the industrial age is on its way out. When you look around your community you notice there are fewer shops, the hospital has relocated to a larger community, and fewer job opportunities exist. The population appears older, with fewer young people moving into the community. Many of the valued elements of community--trusted, longtime neighbors and friends, active school programs, and community pride--have diminished. But you find yourself paying more taxes. You lock your door at night. You begin to wonder if the community can survive. If it did, you wonder whether the quality of life will suffer irreparable damage. You begin to think about leaving.

*To view the rural crisis solely in economic terms grossly oversimplifies the complex nature of community.*

Many rural residents find themselves in similar situations. Faced with severe economic distress, the survival of their communities and a valued way of life hang in the balance. But the issue of survival does not center entirely around economics and lack of employment opportunities, as many community development efforts would have us believe. To view the rural crisis solely in economic terms grossly oversimplifies the complex nature of community. It also limits the options for creative and meaningful solutions that go beyond economics to include other dimensions of community well-being. These include the value of place, quality of environment, one's history as a member of a community, and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of belonging and affiliation among caring friends, neighbors, and relatives. It may be that this psychological sense of community provides the foundation upon which successful community development efforts are built; not the other way around.

Evidence demonstrates that solutions based solely on economic gains create dependency relations between rural communities and urban cores. When production can be more profitable in another region of the country or overseas, operations move. In the case of manufacturing and resource-dependent economies, communities are left with high unemployment and an undereducated workforce. The community begins to unravel as young people leave for job opportunities. Those who remain often lose confidence that they can control their future.

Those concerned about the decline of rural communities feel the most promising direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community. This means,

*The most promising direction for revitalization and survival rests with education and the linkages that can be developed and sustained between school and community.*

among other things, changing the traditional role of the school, a formidable task given the institutional tendency for self-preservation. However, some schools and communities manage to transcend traditional bounds. Three general, but overlapping approaches for building strong collaborative bonds between schools and communities have been identified.

When the school is used as a community center it serves as both a source of lifelong learning and as a vehicle for the delivery of a wide range of services. Using the community as curriculum, it emphasizes the study of community in all its various dimensions. Lastly, school-based economic development places a major emphasis on developing entrepreneurial skills in rural youth. These three categories provide a way to think about how schools and communities can work together. Three powerful ideas emerged regarding learning and community:

- Grounding learning and curriculum in the local context produces the capability for informed choice. Students learn about their rural communities, thus providing an alternative frame of reference from which to assess urban culture and values.

- The value of community is best learned within a community of learners--teachers, students, and community.

- With focused effort, the school (students, teachers, and resources) can become a powerful resource for community revitalization.

The real value from these approaches may be the empowerment students develop through learning about their communities and applying that knowledge in meaningful ways. Bell and Sigsworth (1987) summarize this value:

> The purpose of basing the curriculum substantially in the things and the people pupils are familiar with is not to persuade them to remain when their schooling is over, within their community of origin, any more than it is to persuade them that the good life will be found elsewhere. It . . . should . . . enable them to recognize that they have a choice, and thereby, to make an 'informed' decision about whether to stay or to go. What it should provide them with is an understanding of the nature of community, an understanding which they can put to use wherever they choose to spend the rest of their lives. (Bell and Sigsworth, 1987, p. 268)

# PART II: IMPLICATIONS FOR USE

## INTRODUCTION

In the past, rural schools have generally been more tightly linked to their communities than most rural schools are today. Many reasons for this change in school-community relations can be identified: economic and social change, teacher mobility, school consolidation, professionalization of teaching, and greater centralized control of education from state and federal government. Given the current economic and social crisis in rural areas, the re-establishment of a more integrated relationship between school and community not only appears more desirable, but may be necessary for survival. The three general approaches (i.e., *Community As Curriculum*, *School As Community Center*, and *School-Based Economic Development*) previously described for strengthening community-school linkages have a demonstrated history of success.

Generally, the examples of the three approaches placed major emphasis on the involvement of secondary schools. This emphasis reflects two major goals of the programs reviewed. For example, School Based Enterprises (e.g. REAL) and McCREL's Rural Institute stressed the need for rural youth to understand the advantages and benefits of both rural and urban environments in order to make informed choices about future life goals. Secondly, these two programs stressed the value gained for both students and the community when students collect data for use in community development work. However, it is equally important to introduce many of the concepts underlying these three approaches at all levels of schooling (note: *Foxfire* emphasizes grades K- 12).

The community development strategies described thus far reflect two general directions: 1.) a curriculum-driven approach where students engage in direct community-related learning experiences, and 2.) an approach in which the school also provides day care, adult education, and health services to the community.

Several key issues need to be explored further and can be understood by asking several questions:

1. How does one begin the process of engaging the school in meaningful self-assessment and community-related development work?

2. Where should the process begin--within the school, the community, or both?

3. Who should be involved in the process?

A major role of the Rural Education Program at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory is to conduct the research and develop a process for assisting distressed small, rural communities and schools in community development and revitalization. Part I of this report reflects the first stage of this goal, developing a research base upon which to

build a collaborative community-school process. In Part II, two general frameworks for beginning a process of development will be described. The first framework will focus on working from within the school. An activity built around the concept of identifying and strengthening school-community links will be described. The second framework will broaden this activity and present the results of a community-school design conference aimed at developing a comprehensive community development intervention. During this conference, a wide range of community roles and community development experts were brought together over a two-day period. Finally, an outline of the Rural Education Program's plans for rural community-school development will be presented.

There are numerous assumptions school boards, administrators, teachers and community members must understand and believe before engaging in community development where the school plays an active, key role. These assumptions grow from the information presented in the first part of this report on rural distress and the importance of community.

- Many rural schools and communities face serious economic decline that negatively impacts community well-being.

- Strengthening and building links between the school and the community produces mutual benefits that increase the probability of community survival.

- A strong psychological sense of community is critical for community development initiatives to be effective. This sense generally includes such elements as "feelings of closeness to other community members" and "willingness to sacrifice for others in the community." It also includes such things as neighbors' willingness to help with problems, feelings of security in community numbers, enjoyment of community life, attitude toward prominent community members, and satisfaction with current community well being (Wiseman, 1986, p. 58).

- There are multiple ways to build and/or strengthen school-community links.

Where one chooses to begin a community development intervention will depend on local resources, leadership, and community and/or school needs. One could begin with a community group such as the chamber of commerce, Grange, or a local church group. Action could also begin in the school. Lastly, action might begin as a joint venture between the community and the school. Research literature relating to school-community collaboration and community development indicates that successful programs may begin in all three places. In this report, initiating the development process from within the school will be emphasized.

## Beginning from Within the School

The following information outlines a set of procedures to consider when developing a community-focused learning program initiated within the school that is aimed at strengthening community-school linkages. Many rural schools currently include experiential activities that use the students' knowledge of the community. One example is the elementary teacher who conducts a unit on mapping and asks students to draw a map of their house or community. Another illustration can be found in nutrition units where students keep track of food they eat using the data to help them understand principles of nutrition. However, these examples do not require much adaptation of existing curriculum or the learning environment. Activities which take students and teachers outside the classroom or bring resources from the community into the school generally require increased planning and development on the part of the school. This need for planning is also true when school resources are made available to the community.

### Areas of Consideration for Developing and Operating Community-Focused Educational Programs

**Commitment to Act:**

This is the first and foremost step. There must be a sincere desire to examine and modify current practices which prevent programs from being more relevant.

The commitment to act must come from teachers, administrators, school boards, and community. It is unrealistic to expect an individual teacher to be creative and responsive to this concept of community-based educational programs without support and encouragement from the principal, superintendent, board, and community.

**Leadership:**

- Generally, it is logical for administrators to take the initiative in establishing community-focused programs. However, school board members, a group of interested individuals, or a teacher also may initiate a program. Whomever takes responsibility for carrying out program initiation and development will require the involvement of all those to be affected by the program. Their role is most effective as one of facilitation, coordination, and problem-solving.

**Ownership:**

- Teachers must be consulted. Regardless of the extent to which the educational process becomes community-based, teachers must be involved (and committed) in working out the administrative and instructional procedures to be used.

- The community must be involved. An assessment of the willingness to participate and an identification of the available resources must occur.

- Students must be involved in expressing their areas of interest. Their needs and concerns should shape the nature of activities undertaken.

**Policy and Curriculum Guidelines:**

- Administrative arrangements must include a legal review. Anticipating possible problems will largely eliminate program setbacks?

- School and district curriculum guidelines must be determined.

**Implementation:**

- Implement the program as planned, allowing for continuous monitoring and adjustments. However, do not jeopardize credibility by never acting. Address all concerns and reservations about developing and implementing community-focused educational programs.

**Evaluation:**

- Evaluate the program. Determine its effectiveness and how it can be improved.

### *Developing a Commitment*

In this section, a process used to initiate the development of understanding and commitment beginning from within will be described. This process was piloted with a group of teachers, counselors, and administrators involved in a seminar on rural communities and schools sponsored by a teacher training organization. The following outlines the goals, materials, process steps, and final outcomes.

**Initiating a Focus on School-Community Linkage**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Goal One:** | Develop an information base regarding rural school-community development issues. |

**Activity 1.** ***Develop Understanding -- Cooperative Reading in Small Groups***

Participants are divided into groups of about seven. The report, *Rural Distress and Survival: The School and the Importance of "Community,"* is divided into seven sections of about equal length. The group decides who would read which sections. A time limit is set in order to keep the activity moving. At the end of the time or when participants are finished reading, they share the high points. The process of sharing works well. Participants describe their reading, but also add personal experiences in order to embellish and illustrate their readings.

Upon completion of the small group reading and sharing, a brief discussion across all the groups is held. This discussion focused on surprises, questions, contradictions or observations and served as a good time to assess participant understanding.

This reading activity can be implemented using many variations of group size and configuration. However, in working with large groups, it is best to divide them into small workgroups of no more than seven. Mixing groups of teachers, janitors, cooks, and secretaries is desirable (this may also be a good place to involve community members).

The following figure presents the reading assignment used with a group of 30 people divided into workgroups of seven participants:

| All | The Introduction | | Page 1-3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who | Begin at | | Stop at |
| _____ | P. 5 | (Distress in Rural America) | P. 15 (The Changing Landscape....) |
| _____ | P. 15 | (The Changing Landscape....) | P. 19 (The Two Forces.....) |
| _____ | P. 19 | (The Two Forces.....) | P. 22 (Survival: The School.....) |
| _____ | P. 22 | (Survival: The School.....) | P. 27 (Business as Usual.....) |
| _____ | P. 27 | (Business as Usual....) | P. 32 (Benefiting from ....) |
| _____ | P. 32 | (Benefiting from Rural...) | P. 37 (Community as Curriculum) |
| _____ | P. 37 | (Community as Curriculum) | P. 43 (Conclusion) |
| All | The Conclusion | | P. 43 |

Upon completion of this activity, participants were given a definition of community development:

> ***Community development*** *is a group of people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action process (i.e., a planned intervention) to change their economic, social, cultural, or environmental situation* (Christenson and Robinson, Jr., 1980, p. 12).

Based on this definition, school efforts designed to improve economic, social, or environmental situations in the community could be considered community development.

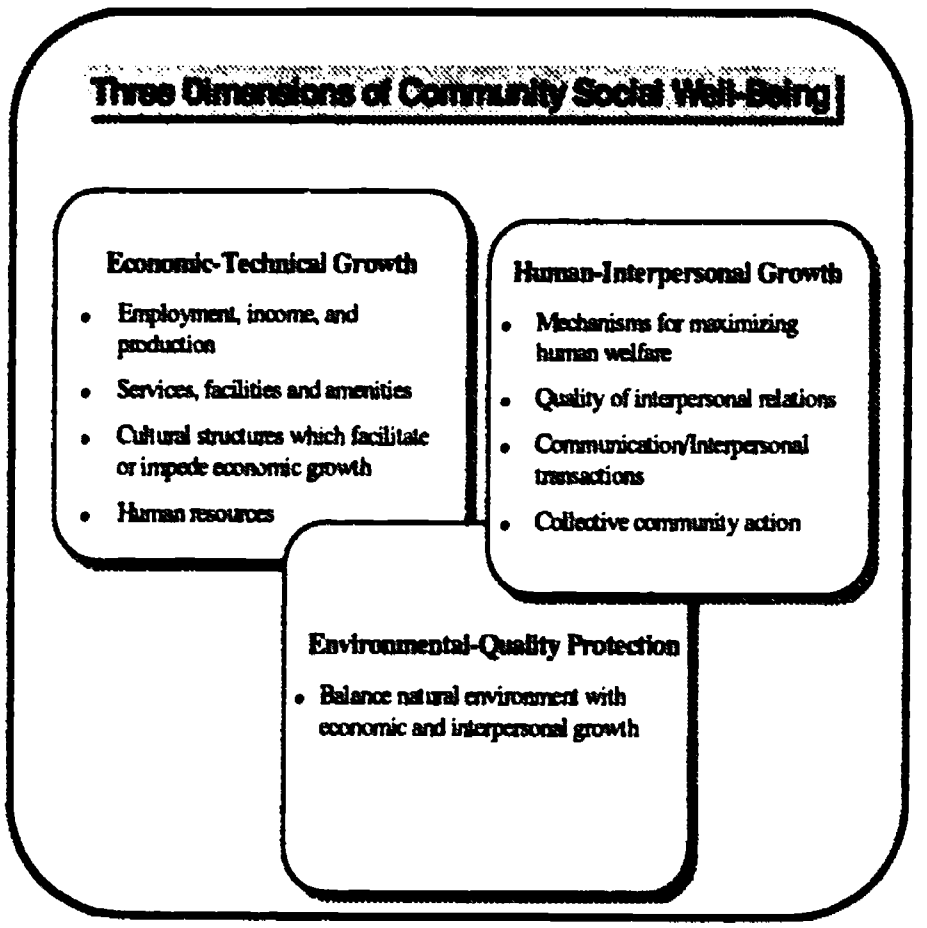
It was also emphasized that each participant's school was likely to be currently engaged in community development activities. This activity was followed by a short presentation on key concepts reinforcing the schools linkage to the community.

**Activity 2:** ***Presentation -- Conceptual Implications Using Transparencies***

**Goal Two:** Describe ways schools and communities are linked.

This activity revolves around a brief presentation of key concepts relating to how schools and communities are linked together. The concepts presented during this activity are described in detail in the report reviewed during the first activity. Four overhead transparencies are used in this presentation.

**Transparency 1:** *Three Dimensions of Community Social Well-Being*



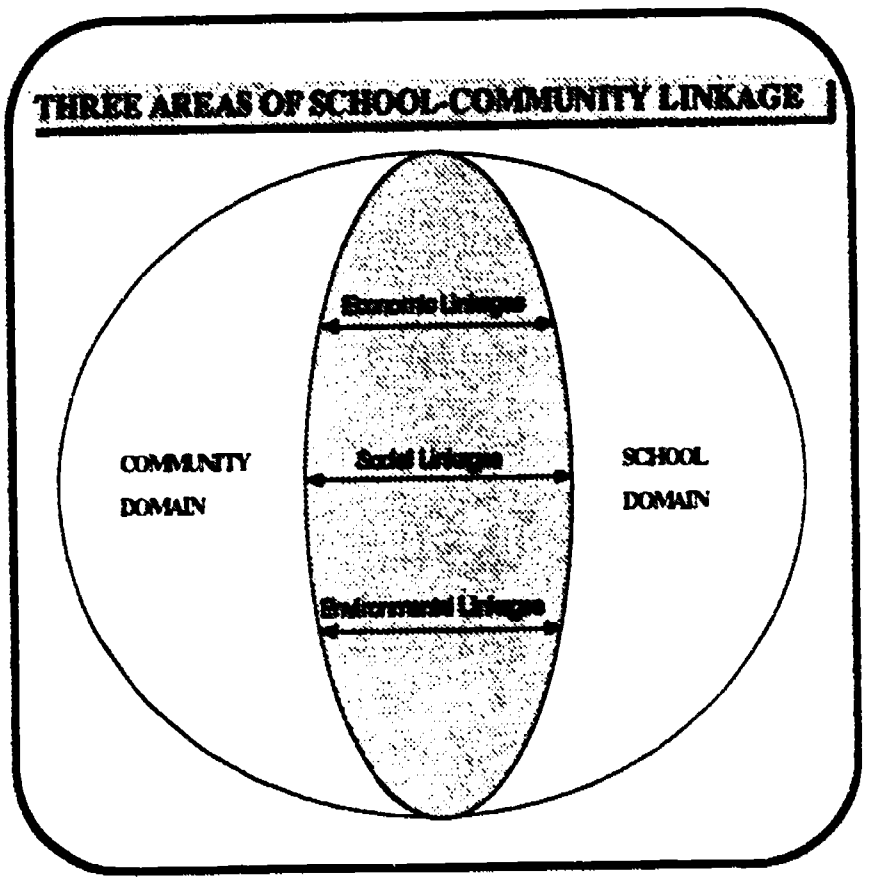

Transparency one is used to introduce a framework for thinking about school-community linkages. The economic dimension addresses the community's capacity to support economic growth. This includes such areas as the types of facilities and social support services that make it desirable to live in the community, the quantity and quality of the available workforce, and community attitudes and structures that support economic development.

The Human-Interpersonal dimension addresses the ideas surrounding an individual's "psychological sense of community." This includes those conditions that lead to

community solidarity: effective interpersonal communications, collective action, personal support networks and structure, and feelings of affiliation or belonging. This dimension may be the most important. It should be stressed that building strong school-community linkages leads toward the development of a sense of community, both within the school and throughout the community.

The last dimension, and the least emphasized in efforts at community development, is Environmental-Quality Protection. In many rural communities, people enjoy hiking, fishing, skiing, hunting, and privacy, etc. that the environment provides. The balance between maintaining environmental quality and promoting economic development must be explored. (These three dimensions of community well-being are presented on page 20 in the first part of this report).

**Transparency 2:** *Three Areas of School-Community Linkage*




Transparency 2 illustrates the three dimensions of community well-being as areas of linkage between the school and community. It is important to stress that the school and community are together within the large circle. Their separation indicates role differences. The area of linkage expands depending on the strength of the linkages. One or two examples are given for each linkage area:

**Economic-Technical**

School employees purchase goods and services in the community.

Community taxes support school programs.

**Human-Interpersonal**

Community uses school facilities for town meetings.

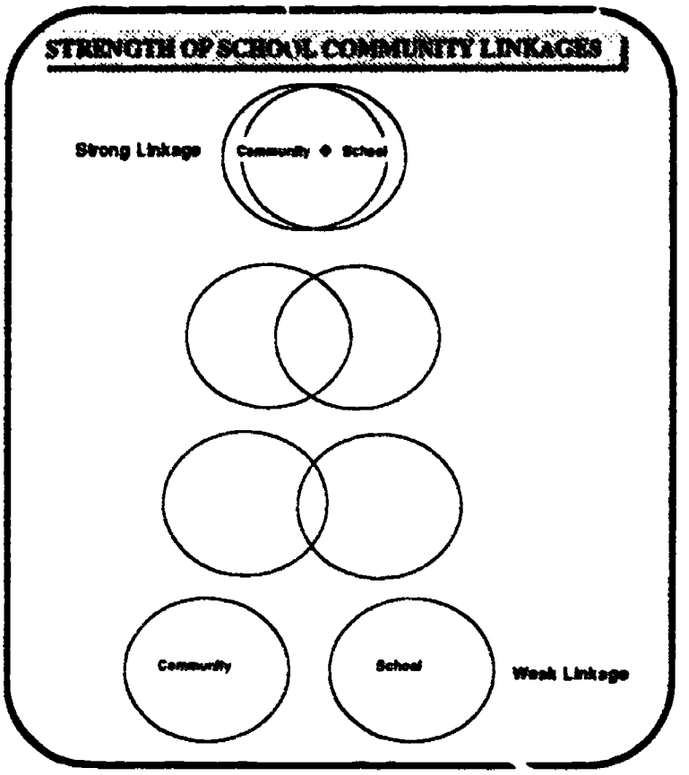
Parent-teacher conferences are held once every grading period.

**Environmental-Quality Protection**

School garbage is collected by local disposal company.

School maintains grounds.

**Transparency 3.** Strength of School-Community Linkages

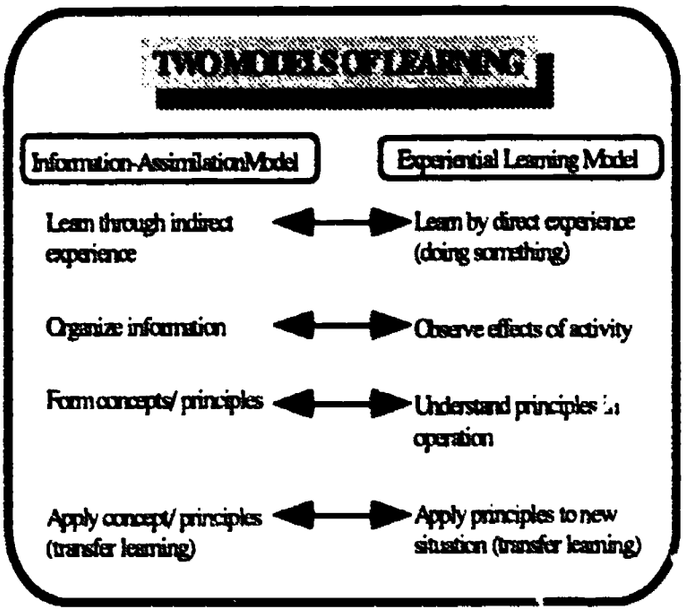



In Activity 3, each small group will brainstorm linkages in each of these areas.

Transparency three portrays the effect strong linkages have in uniting the school and the community. Weak linkages, shown at the bottom of the transparency, suggests the school and the community exist in isolation from one another. School-community relations may exist anywhere on this continuum for any one of the dimensions of community well-being (i.e., economic, human-interpersonal, or environmental). In other words, one might envision the top set of circles as portraying strong linkages for all three dimensions, the second set of circles from the top as representing strong linkages in two areas, while the bottom set of circles suggests weak linkages in all areas.

Transparency 4 presents two models of instruction. The information-assimilation model represents the norm in most schools. Students spend a dominant part of their time in school learning about experience through the use of textbooks, discussion, and audio-visual materials. This is not all bad. This model has the advantage of being time efficient and often lower in cost than an experiential model. However, it often leads to reduced motivation and retention of learning, and may be inappropriate for certain types of leaning styles.

**Transparency 4.** Two Models of Learning




In building linkages with the community through instruction focused on the community, emphasis needs to be placed on experiential learning. The *Foxfire* approach discussed earlier in this report is one effective example of experiential learning (see Appendix A for a review of research-based evidence in support of experiential learning; Appendix B for sample activities for each of the dimensions of community well-being).

**Activity 3.** ***Brainstorming: School-Community Linkages***

| **Goal Three**: Describe linkages between the school and the community for each dimension of community well-being. |
|---|

During this activity, participants will brainstorm school-community linkages for each of the three dimensions of community well-being. Prior to beginning brainstorming, write *Economic*, *Social*, and *Environmental* at the top of three large pieces of paper. Tape these up on a wall in easy access for each group. You might begin the activity with the following script:

> "We would like you to brainstorm all the ways your school is or could be linked to the community for each category of social well-being (i.e. *Economic*, *Social*,

and *Environmental*). Draw on all your experiences. Have one person be a recorder. Begin with one category at a time. You will be alerted to change about every five minutes. As you complete one category, have a recorder write the linkages on the chartpack. Put a check by a linkage written by another group if it is the same as yours. Meanwhile, each group should continue brainstorming the next category.

When thinking about linkages, be creative. Think about ones that existed in the past, exist now, and ones you might like to see in the future. Some linkages exist, but we often do not think about them. Jot these down as well. For example, one might consider informal "grapevines" or "gossip" to be social linkages.

Upon completion of this activity, review the linkages as a group, and add any new ones people might suggest.

The following lists of brainstormed linkages, generated during the pilot session, were designed to assess the potential use of these materials. While participants tended to describe typical activities associated with parent involvement, other less common linkages also were described (i.e. "old building, historic registry," "design/add to parks," and "bringing social agencies into the schools").

**Economic Linkages**

Tax base/levy
Community members as resource in classrooms
Build homes for community
Rural Renewal projects (student labor and vocational training)
Utilization of school
Co-ops
✓Business partnerships
Community brochures--printing jobs
General fund raisers
Create qualified labor force
Pilot programs--try out new ventures on small scale in schools
✓Vocational education
Piece work to earn funds for school
Adult Ed
Restaurants/retailers--$ or good for receipts
Tourism--festivals
Old building, historic registry

**Environmental Linkages**

Outdoor labs--$H_2O$, Air Quality research to give to city council
Recycling
Consuming "Green" products
Adopt-a-Duck
✓Environmental learning centers
✓Fish & Wildlife - "Project Wild"
Spotted owl, grey wolf and timber wolf
Electricity conservation
Car Pools
Geology--mapping
Aesthetics - Outdoor/Survival skills
✓Recycle
Garden clubs
STEP Program - salmon and trout
Plant trees/Arbor Day

Earth Day activities
Design/add to parks
Letter writing/political lobbying
Clean rest homes
Stream cleanup
Local TV debate on environmental issues

**Social Linkages**

Sporting events
✓Keep schools open for public uses--classes, group meetings, etc.
✓Plays, musicals
✓Carnivals, festivals
Community service sports teams
Boy/Girl Scouts
Students as volunteers
✓Libraries
✓Music--bands, etc.
(Family) counseling
Reunions
✓Use school for adult re-education programs
✓Bring social agencies into the school, health clinics, CSD, etc.
✓Halloween parties, etc.
Community built projects--i.e., playground in Wilsonville
Church services
Fund-raisers (Bingo, etc.)
Political events (voting, etc.)
Food banks, Goodwill, lost and found sales
Homecoming parades
Community billed Christmas trees
Computer classes---adult ed
Arts/crafts/activities of students-community (i.e., for elderly)
Exchange programs between schools

**Goal Four**: Describe ways school and community linkages can be developed and/or strengthened.

**Activity Four**: *Identifying Linkages to Build and Strengthen*

In small groups, have individuals review lists, coding each item as a past linkage needing *rebuilding* (R); a current one needing to be *strengthened*, (S); or a *new* linkage needing to be developed (N). Depending on the size of the group and the size of lists, it may be desirable to have different work groups code a different dimension (i.e., social, economic and environmental).

Activity four will help to sharpen understanding of community-school development and establish both the potential and direction for future activities. By having work groups code the lists, priorities will begin to take shape.

Conclude this activity by sharing what participants learned while trying to code the lists of linkages. Several questions may be appropriate:

> Did any priority areas emerge that your group feels should be part of any future activity? What were they? Why were they chosen?
>
> If we chose to work on a linkage from each area, what do you envision the next steps to be?

> What benefits do you envision for students, the staff, and the community if we work to build, renew, or strengthen any given linkage?

This may be a good place for participants to think about future steps, including an evaluation of current activities.

It is highly recommended that if community have not been involved at this point, to begin to establish a dialogue with key individuals from the community. Ideally, a steering committee consisting of school staff, school board members, and community representatives should be formed. This group would explore future directions for strengthening school-community linkages.

It is also important in school-community development work to hold a series of town meetings in order to explore community-school needs. Often such meetings lead to community-school vision-setting. Appendix C contains a sample vision setting activity developed by Lorilee Sandmann (1988) of the Minnesota Extension Service. Although Sandmann's approach does not specifically focus on the school, it does provide a framework that has worked with distressed rural communities. It also builds on many of the ideas introduced in this report on rural stress and the importance of community.

In Sandmann's framework, defining community is the first step. She says

> The specific definition of community is left to those initiating the effort. It is recognized that community can be residents of a neighborhood, school district, town, city, township, county or group of counties. It can also be a group of people who share a common interest . . .(p. 8)

However, she goes on to emphasize that a community of people share certain characteristics: "a common identity, feeling of solidarity and belonging, and are willing to volunteer on behalf of the community . . . If a sense of community does not exist, or cannot be created or revitalized, it is difficult for sustained community improvement to take place" (Sandmann, 1988, p. 7-8). The following outline provides an overview of steps used by Sandmann (1988) and the corresponding steps one might consider if working from within the school:

## An Outline for Community and School Renewal

| Development from within the Community | | Development from within the School | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Step 1: | Defining community and making a commitment to act. Steering committee organized and trained for engaging the community in visioning and development activities. | Step 1: | Describing community-school linkages and developing a commitment to act. Decide on next steps: continue to work from within the school (see following steps) or begin a dialogue with key community members (see steps under "community development). |
| Step 2: | Develop a "community of the future" vision upon which there is consensus and from which specific action projects can be developed. | Step 2: | Develop a "school - community of the future" vision upon which there is consensus and from which specific action projects designed to strengthen linkages can be developed. |
| Step 3: | Citizen problem solving teams are formed to develop and carry out plans that will help achieve the community vision. | Step 3: | Problem solving teams are formed to develop and carry out plans that will help achieve the school-community vision of stronger linkages. |
| Step 4: | Continuing Self-Renewal | Step 4: | Continuing Self-Renewal |

### Engaging the Entire Community

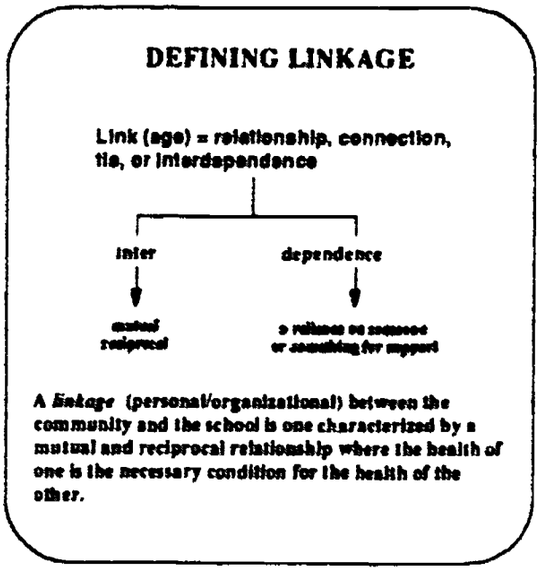
In an effort to deepen understanding of rural community development, a group of 17 individuals representing a wide range of roles and experience in small, rural communities and schools attended a design conference sponsored by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Three development teams were organized so that each team included someone representing a range of expertise and experience in working with rural communities and/or living in a rural community:

- rural community development
- rural teaching and administration

- state policy decision makers
- rural business
- rural economic development
- higher education
- county rural extension service
- social service delivery
- long-time rural community residents

The conference began by developing a common understanding of issues relating to rural community and school distress. This was accomplished by using the same linkage activity described in the previous section (see Appendix D for a copy of the conference agenda). The process was slightly modified to clearly define the term "linkage" (see Figure 6) and to enhance idea development and reduce duplication. For example, after each team brainstormed environmental, social, and economic linkages they rotated their lists and built on the ideas of the previous team (see Part I, page 48 ff for an review of the linkage activity).

**Figure 6. Defining The Concept of Linkage**




Results from the brainstorming activity identified the following linkages:

**Economic Linkages**

Payroll -------- Purchase
Work Study Programs
Brings taxes back to community
Training future employees (voc. ed.)
Recruitment and retention of local residents
Starters of small businesses (entrepreneur)
Students are a source of workforce
Adult education
Can attract grant dollars
Provides entertainment
Retain social services "Meals on Wheels"
Transportation system

Communications Link
Brings technology into the community
Mentorships--both ways
Fund-raising
Better educated--less welfare, crime costs
Tax system

Remodeling and school construction
School as employer
School-based development corporation
School/business partnerships (example: soup labels, etc.)

## Social Linkages

Interscholastic activities schedule
Host for community activities
Use of facilities and equipment by community:
- -ski school
- -adult education
- -organization meetings
- -before/after school latch-key program
- -community events--concerts, etc.

Advisory activities (regarding policy)
Involvement in social service clubs
Adult education classes--parenting skills
Main player with "at risk students"
Interagency collaboration
Dances held on campus and off campus
Museum--oral histories

Community service projects
Governmental training
Reinforce the values--history and culture
Bring in new cultural experiences
Dating service
Before and after school child care programs
Health services--nurses
Food programs--lunch, breakfast
Library usage--school, community, college
Plays--school/community
Music, etc.
Academic, political, issue forums/speeches
Contest--magazine, essays, posters
Foreign exchange students

## Environmental Linkages

Field trips, outdoor education
Cleanup activities
Recycling--reducing-revising
Conservation
Concept of eco-system and interrelationships
Awareness and development activities on environmental health hazards
Cause and effect relations
Asbestos expertise (radon, lead and water)
Source of safe water

Development of activities to solve problems
Understanding of state and federal regulations
Hunter safety education
Car and bus pools (energy conservation)
Arbor Day activities
Environmental/interdiscip. curriculum
Lobbying efforts
Community service (student/staff activities)

"These lists," noted one participant, "appear to be the kind of ideas a school identifies when they are about to seek passage of their annual levy."

Participants felt the area of community responsibility was missing from the lists. In other words, how does one build a sense of belonging and community responsibility for

community residents, students, and school employees? A process needs to be developed that is more comprehensive, pushing participants to think more inclusively regarding the school's role within the community. In addition, participants said that any community-school development activity must be broadly based and involve representatives from business, single parents, students, farmers, social organization, etc.

The linkage activity provided a context for the second conference activity - designing an intervention for a simulated community called ROOL. Each team was given a description of the ROOL School District and community. Participants were told they had been contacted by the superintendent who was concerned about a slow decline in community population and student enrollment (see Appendix E , for a description of ROOL). Each team prepared a presentation outlining their intervention and then presented their process to a committee of concerned ROOL citizens. Each team also discussed the strengths and weakness of their proposals. Upon completion of the presentations, participants analyzed and discussed the similarities and differences across the three intervention plans. The following represents the plans developed by each team:

## TEAM 1: ROOL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Process Steps** **Activities and Events**

1. The superintendent, Matt Pendergast, calls an outside organization for assistance (to be called the Rural Community Facilitators, or RCF).

Strengths:
-Local person recognizes the problem.

Weaknesses:
-Does Matt know what he is talking about?

2. Hold an initial meeting: Matt, RCF team, four to five key community members (e.g. mayor, school board president, council president) to develop a commitment to act.

OUTCOMES:
A. Initial commitment to proceed
B. Identify data needed -- key indicators
C. Identify resources -- people, money, training materials
D. Identify initial *task force* (cross section of community) and facilitator (RCF team member)
E. Select *community encourager* (this person will manage local task force needs such as communications, coordination, setting agenda, etc. and facilitate local meetings)

Strengths:
-Grass roots approach
-Local leadership, someone to be responsible

Weaknesses:
-Depends on who he invites
-May not be representative.
-May be insufficient data

3. *Task Force* meets (8-15 people)

OUTCOMES:
A. Review data collected by superintendent (research)
B. Brainstorm
   1. mission statement
   2. job descriptions for group
C. Select process for engaging the community [Purpose: Create awareness and explore linkages]:
   1. public meeting **AND/OR**
   2. work with existing community groups

Strengths:
-Representative of community

Weaknesses:
-Might leave someone out
-Labor intensive

4. Second meeting of the initial *task force* to learn communication and process skills (facilitated by RCF team member).

OUTCOME:

A. Go through paired down version of "linkage" activity (select key reading sections appropriate to the local setting)
B. Discuss facilitation process and skills
C. Select chairperson

Strengths:
- -Representative of community teach facilitation skills
- -Broader horizons develop own leadership

Weaknesses:
- -Might leave someone out
- -People may not be trained adequately
- -Somebody may be railroaded

5. *Task force* members conduct and/or explore "linkages/linkage activity" with component groups (i.e., educators, business, parents, farmers, etc.).

OUTCOME:

A. Increase awareness
B. Increase community involvement
C. Encourager collects "linkages"
D. Encourager prepares for next meeting/sets agenda

Strengths:
- -Broader community involvement
- -Works within framework of existing groups
- -Creates more possibility for community involvement and commitment down line

Weaknesses:
- -Labor intensive
- -Might leave someone out
- -Time

6. Third *task force* meeting

OUTCOMES:

A. Review and analyze "linkages"
B. Identify linkage issues needing to be researched (i.e. questions arising from linkages)
C. Identify "linkages" to develop
D. Identify questions to be answered regarding alternatives approaches for developing linkages (e.g. visiting a community-school latch-key program in a neighboring community)
E. Refer back to initial support group for models/information

Strengths:
- -Participate in own research

Weaknesses:
- -May not have adequate expertise
- -Too much information

7.-12. *Task force* continues to meet and invites public where appropriate using a public forum format in order to explore strategy alternatives (e.g. presentation on latch-key programs)

OUTCOMES:

A. Identify strategies
B. Review research data (collect data)
C. Review model linkage
D. Testimony where appropriate (people to talk about their experiences elsewhere)
E. Identify top linkages (priorities) for possible implementation

Strengths:
-All of the above

Weaknesses:
-Lack of expertise
-Too much time
-People will have to be very committed

13. Hold a public meeting in order to brainstorm implementation of top linkages (e.g., how would we get a latch-key program in place).

OUTCOME: Select projects to implement

Strengths:
-Get community input
-Allow people to participate in decision making and limit future controversy

Weaknesses:
-May not be representative
-Some projects will not be selected and may turn people off

14.-16. Conduct *Task force* meetings for developing a strategic plan/evaluation design *Task force* members, the facilitator, and the community encourager work together in developing the design.

Strengths:
-Allows selected projects to be implemented
-Everyone understands what is needed

Weaknesses:
-Someone must monitor -- see it is carried out
-Get on planning and don't follow-up

17. Implementation -- follow strategic plan

Strengths:
-Include evaluation
-Must be flexible

Weaknesses:
-May be too inflexible
-People leave and new people come in and change things

18. Ongoing monitoring

## TEAM 2: ROOL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Process Steps** | **Activities and Events**

I. Superintendent (Matt) calls an outside organization, the Mullan Magicians ($M^2$)

- Problem clarifying process with school board, facilitated by $M^2$
- Define intervention (general approach to solving problem):
  -Identify alternatives
  -Select an alternative*

*If alternative is strategic (i.e. long term), comprehensive, involves commitment and is community based, $M^2$ is engaged.

ESTABLISH SPONSORSHIP

Sponsoring group is made up of key community leaders such as superintendent of schools, key business leader (e.g. mine owner), social and government leaders. These are people who provide their blessing, but often do not have the time to actually participate in on-going development work.
Role of sponsor:

- Enable process (intervention)
  -create visibility
  -provide financial support
  -create local project leadership
- Select/hire leader (process manager: facilitates community activities, manages information, coordinates, etc.)
- $M^2$ trains leader

II. Leader (process manager) implements process in community

- Leader becomes visible in community
- Community council is formed (community council functions to manage issues)
- Council is organized, oriented, activated:

  This group represents all sectors of the community (i.e., farmers, business, schools, etc.). Sponsoring group members identify and nominate leaders from their respective sectors who have potential in group process, etc. These sector leaders make up the council and, in turn, form sector focus groups. Each sector leader is trained by volunteers (a reciprocal process).

III. Assessment of community concerns

- Community-wide meeting facilitated by Community Council
- Stakeholder development
- Consensus building model used rather than an advocacy model

This assessment activity legitimizes leadership for the process and creates linkages within the community

- Council engages in issue analysis with community
  -key informant interviews
  -focus groups
  -surveys
  -data review
- Consensus recommendations presented to sponsor

IV. Sponsor structures process for implementation

## TEAM 3: ROOL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

| Process Steps | Activities and Events |
|---|---|

1. Matt talks to the school board, indicating changes in the community and district that may warrant strategic planning for the future (important that he approaches the board in a planning/strategic mode rather than in a, "we have a problem" mode).

2. He collects some statistics:

   a. Asks counselor to do follow-up study of school graduates over past five years.

   b. He calls the State Economic Development Department for data on economic base, business declines, other appropriate community related data.

3. Matt and the school board identify respected and influential leaders to meet informally, discuss/agree if there are problems and need for planning for ROOL's future, including school/community linkages. This becomes a core planning group.

   - Leaders representative of array of groups in community as appropriate.
   - Representation from Mayor, City Council, county, state legislators, etc.
   - Education, business, farmers, loggers, etc.

4. Leaders from core planning group meet their respective counterparts in small groups (i.e., education, farmers, etc.) to discuss problems/concerns, what to do.

5. Written survey - list problems, prioritize - sent to each household in town. (Help from inside or seek out-of-district technical assistance)

6. Hold a "town hall" meeting

   a. Present survey results.
   b. Divide into priority topics via small group discussions.
      - Have facilitator and resource person identified in advance (train if necessary).
   c. Vision of what they want Rool to be.
   d. Discuss solutions to problems.
   e. Reports to full group.
   f. Form volunteer Task forces to flesh out solutions on topics discussed and prioritized.

7. Task forces work on 30-day time lines.

   - Each task force includes at least one member from "core" planning group as liaison.
   - May visit other sites - "success" stories.
   - Encourage some meetings in school buildings, as well as community.

8. Core planning group receives reports from task forces and melds into an Action Plan.

9. Call another "town hall" meeting

   a. Reports from task forces on proposed problem solutions.
   b. Present action plan.
   c. Thank you to volunteers.
   d. Establish Rool Coordinating Committee to oversee implementation of plan. Committee may include representatives from:

      Chamber of Commerce
      County officials
      Cultural/social organizations
      Health care
      Mayor-City Council
      Religious groups
      School Board of Directors/teacher organizations
      Service organizations

| BARRIERS | STRENGTHS |
|---|---|
| Chasm between school and community. | Community-based activity. |
| Resistance to change. | Involvement from wide spectrum. |
| Getting different groups to work together. | Concise time frame. |
| Identifying/admitting there are problems. | Momentum built. |
| Resistance to involvement process (old boys). | Indirect, low-key approach. |
| Stratification of socio-economic groups. | Assimilated activity of co-equals, rather than layered. |

## Toward Designing A Pilot Intervention for Distressed Rural Schools and Communities

The design conference brought together a wealth of experience and knowledge regarding the needs of rural communities and schools. There were both similarities and differences in each plan. However, the most important lessons to be learned emerged from a concluding discussion regarding the commonalities running across the plans. Table 9 presents the common key elements found among the three intervention plans, along with characteristics defining each element.

**Table 9. Common Elements Among Three Intervention Plans**

| | Element | Defining Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Validating* perceived problems or needs | Collecting hard data and public opinion in order to validate perceived need. |
| 2. | Converting from a problem focus to a strategic or *development focus*. | Change from a reactive, problem/crisis orientation to a strategic or comprehensive development orientation. |
| 3. | Develop an initial *support base* for action. | Identify community leaders across a range of roles to support development work. |
| 4. | Using some form of *community task force* | Organize a grass-roots task force representing all segments of the community: educators, parents, business, environment, etc., to serve as a core group to manage the process. |
| 5 | Utilization of existing informal *community networks* | The selection process for who will participate on committees relies heavily on local knowledge and judgement (existing community structures) of who can best represent various groups within the community. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6. | Local *leadership* identification and development | An emphasis is placed on identifying and developing local grassroots leaders who represent all segments of the community. |
| 7. | Developing a *vision or mission* | Using a process whereby the community describes a vision of itself. They define what they mean by "community." This also refers to describing what the mission of any task force group or committee may be in light of this vision of "community." |
| 8. | Continuous two-way *communication* | The community is continually kept informed of progress through public forums, informal networks, and by the way the intervention process is structured. |
| 9. | Attention to *immediate* and *long term needs* and sustaining *momentum* | To be an effective process, it must address short-term as well as long-term needs of the community. Resolution of short-term needs helps build and sustain momentum and credibility. |
| 10. | *Comprehensive* and *inclusive* view of community | The community is viewed as the totality of all people and organizations situated together. Community development can only be successful when all elements of the community are meaningfully represented, committed, and engaged. |
| 11. | *Sustaining* a process over time | Community development is not a short-term process, initiated by outsiders. It is a long-term process of transformation where local residents take the responsibility for their own futures, utilizing outside consultants to facilitate, but not to direct or decide what is best for the community.. |

In addition to these elements, two powerful concepts emerged from the design conference. The first concept, the *Project Sponsor* relates to element number three, developing a support base of local leaders. Jeff Butler who participated in the conference introduced the term which grows from his work with a program called, *Healthy Futures: A Development Kit for Rural Hospitals* (McGinnis and Butler, 1991). After working with rural communities over the last decade, he concludes that the recognized leaders of

any community (i.e., school superintendent, director of the local bank, owner of the local mill, etc.) may be poor choices to serve on task force committees because they are too often the ones chosen to lead community projects and serve on local boards. They simply may not have the time for one more project. In addition, it may be beneficial to tap and develop the leadership potential of other community residents. Butler and McGinnis compare the *Sponsor* concept to the sponsors one finds in a Little League baseball team. The *Sponsor's* role is to ensure the team has uniforms, a coach, and the resources to play ball. However, the *Sponsor* does not play ball themselves, that is the role of the team.

The concept of an *Encourager* or *Process Manager* was the second concept used in several of the plans. In some ways, the *Encourager* may be viewed as a glue holding the process together. This person is carefully chosen from the community to take responsibility for ensuring the development process flows successfully. The role requires an individual who has communication and group process skills, is credible in the community, and believes strongly in the community development process. The *Encourager* is most often a paid position and carries out such activities as running local task-force and community meetings, setting agendas, coordinating work-flow, publicizing progress, and carry out many activities supporting the development work of the local task-force or community council.

Like the concept of the *Sponsor*, the *Encourager* role fills an important niche in a community development process. If one understands the multiple roles played by many rural community residents, it becomes clear that time is a scarce resource. The *Encourager's* role addresses this need by ensuring someone has the time to carry out the valuable function of managing and promoting the development process.

Taken together, the ten elements and the concept of the *Sponsor* and the *Encourager* provide a powerful set of guidelines for designing a community development intervention. Clearly, the underlying message in all the proposed plans developed by conference participants is the strong belief that community development efforts must avoid a problem fixing orientation to being a strategic and comprehensive process involving all sectors of the community. Further, although outside facilitators may support and guide the process during initial development, the capacity for sustained, long-term success, must reside with the community itself.

## Next Steps

The Rural Education Program's distressed rural community development project will utilize the design elements and ideas emerging from the design conference to develop a process for working with small, rural schools and communities. Three pilot sites will be identified in the Northwest and worked with over a four year period of time. Training materials for both local leadership development and local community decision-making will be written and tested in the three pilot sites. The research and development process is evolutionary and will unfold over the period of the project. Training sessions, regional

conferences and pilot site visitations will be an on-going part of the development work. The following outcomes are expected:

- Development of community-school training modules
- Development of leadership training modules
- Pilot testing of community development process
- Development of a regional policy implications report
- Transfer of capacity for local community development work through a training of trainers model

Lastly, and most importantly, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Rural Education Program hopes to enhance the local capacity of small, rural communities and schools to engage in community-school development and renewal.

# Endnotes

[1]Defining rural is fraught with many complexities that reflect the diverse and complex nature of rural America. The U.S. Census Bureau defines rural as any area that is not urban and defines urban areas as consisting of a central city and surrounding contiguous areas having a population of at least 50,000. In addition, people living outside these urban areas in places with a population of 2,500 or more are also considered urban. Rural, then, is considered all areas that are not defined as urban. The Office of Management and Budget divides the U.S. in terms of counties that are either MSAs (Metropolitan Statistical Areas containing 50,000 or more residents or an urbanized area with 2,500 or more residents). All areas outside MSAs are considered nonmetropolitan. To further complicate matters, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service has developed a classification system that subdivides nonmetropolitan areas into six categories:

ERS Classification of Nonmetropolitan Counties

| | Size of urban population | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | < 2,500 | 2,500-20,000 | > 20,000 |
| Adjacent to a metropolitan county | rural adjacent | less urbanized adjacent | urbanized adjacent |
| Not adjacent to a metropolitan county | rural nonadjacent | less urbanized nonadjacent | urbanized nonadjacent |

(adapted from McGranahan et al., 1986)

Demographic data used in this report reflect all three of the definitions described. Often, however, research described in this report does not specify how the term "rural" is being used. In general, it is safe to say that most authors cited in this report use rural to describe a rural place, not adjacent to a metropolitan county. In other words, rural often reflects both isolation from metropolitan areas and low population density (under 2500 residents). This author uses rural in a similar way: A rural place is one where residents live in an unincorporated area or a town of less than 2500 people and is over 30 miles from an urban center.

[2]Poverty is based on the poverty index established by the Social Security Administration. Poverty income thresholds are updated each year to reflect the Consumer Price Index. These figures are based on the 1986 threshold which was $11,203 for an average family of four, $22,497 for a family of nine, and $5,572 for a single person. For more information, see O'Hare (1988).

[3]Percents above 100 reflect results of state finance redistribution formulas

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# APPENDIX A:

## Research on Community Service Education

The following summarizes research conducted on community service learning. Community service utilizes an experiential model of instruction including such activities as tutoring, business apprenticeships, political action and participation in service programs.

**Student Benefits Gained From Community Service Activities**

- Consistent gains in the types of factual knowledge associated with the field experience
- Increased open-mindedness
- Increase in problem-solving ability
- Gains in social responsibility
- More favorable attitudes towards adults, organization and people in the field
- Gained more positive attitudes toward others, greater sense of efficacy, and higher self esteem
- More active exploration of careers
- Growth in moral and ego development (Conrad and Hedin, 1991)

These benefits have been derived from studies that compared students involved in community service with students who were not involved. Clearly, from the standpoint of the various tools used to measure change in student outcomes, community service activities produced important changes in students.

If we look at the effect of involvement in these types of programs through the eyes of students, the case for community-focused education becomes even more compelling. Of 4,000 students surveyed, 75 percent indicated they learned "more" or "much more" than in their regular classrooms. An analysis of high school journals of students involved in service revealed that 95 percent felt they learned more than in their regular classrooms. Students revealed they learned:

- The power that comes from being in different roles such as tutor and then student

- Relating with others in a real context (tutoring children) was a more compelling reason for responsible action than school rules and demands
- Broadening experience and connections with a wider range of people, places, and problems built confidence
- A new way of thinking and knowing about experience (Conrad and Hedin, 1991)

## APPENDIX B:

## Sample Student Learning Activities

### ECONOMIC:

Determine the job opportunities and manpower skills needed in the community.

Organize a "career day" for high school students.

Establish and operate a placement service for students who want summer or after-school work.

Conduct an educational tour of nearby businesses and industries.

Develop promotional brochures for community products, news releases and/or radio and television programs.

Examine financing available in the community for local business and industries; prepare and carry out programs to publicize this information.

Form a corporation, issue stock, and start a community-based business.

### SOCIAL:

Make a comprehensive survey of community housing needs.

Survey and analyze the potential of each of the recreational resources available in the community, and become involved in developing recreational services.

Plan first aid classes in cooperation with the local Red Cross, county medical society or health department.

Examine needs for and access to community services and present results to local government officials.

Cooperate with local agencies in examining services for the elderly in the community, or in providing such services.

Make an inventory of community health resources in cooperation with local health groups, and become involved in providing selected health services.

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*Adapted from Future Farmers of America, 1984, pp. 8-14.

**ENVIRONMENTAL:**

Conduct energy conservation programs for elementary schools, secondary schools and community groups.

Assist elderly people in making their homes more energy efficient.

Sponsor an energy-saving contest among community groups.

Develop a community tour of energy-efficient farms, homes and businesses.

Design and carry out a program or programs to encourage soil and land use conservation.

Initiate a project to make forest lands, woodlands and shelterbelts more productive for their owners and the public.

Conduct a project to landscape and beautify public grounds, streets and walks.

Cooperate with local business owners to renovate, paint and landscape business properties.

Prepare a map detailing sources of pollution in the community and organize a cleanup campaign.

# APPENDIX C:

## Sample Activities for Developing A School-Community Vision*

### Overview and Rationale

**Section 1:** ***Creating a Comprehensive "Community of the Future" Vision***

1. IDENTIFY OR DEVELOP A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION with interest in all aspects of the community to perform or direct the community vision process.

2. Define the PURPOSE FOR THE COMMUNITY VISION:

   a. Challenge peoples' thinking

   b. Develop a shared vision from which committed persons can "take action"

3. BROADEN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PERSONS CREATING THE VISION BY ASSISTING THEM IN IDENTIFYING:

   a. Forces--from both inside and outside the community which are impacting on the community

   b. Trends in the community

   c. Strengths and weaknesses of the community

4. ENGAGE CITIZENS IN A CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON THE FEATURES OF LIFE IN THEIR COMMUNITY IN THE YEAR 2000 OR 2010.

5. COMBINE THE RESULTS OF THESE SESSIONS IN A 2 OR 4 PAGE "script" of life in the future community. Publicize and distribute widely.

6. CONDUCT REACTION AND DISCUSSION MEETINGS--modify and reshape "community vision" to reflect consensus.

7. ORGANIZE ACTION PROJECTS THAT WILL HELP REACH VISION.

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*Adapted from Sandmann, 1988.

## Section 2: *Translating the Results of Engagement Meetings into a Community Vision*

The conducting of engagement meetings with community organizations will typically produce the following products:

1. Listings of community strengths and weaknesses (or sometimes they are called assets and areas of needed improvement)

2. Listings of features, characteristics or suggestions for the community of the future

3. A 2-4 page COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

In some engagement meetings, sufficient time may be available to also identify the driving forces affecting the community as well as current community trends. However, the primary engagement outcome is expected to be a COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT from which specific improvement projects can be organized. The following is a generic vision statement definition:

> COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT = a description of the lifestyle and features or characteristics of a future community with illustrations of change, examples of what has been retained from the past and a "sampling" of some of the events or trends which help create this future community.

A Community Vision Statement must be:

- Understandable
- Have a *rationale* behind it (which is apparent to the reader)
- Represent a mixture of common sense and aspiration
- Relate to the overall world of the future
- Be viewed as attainable with a concentrated positive effort by the community

### Steps in Developing a Vision Statement

The following process (A-K) can be used by a community committee given the responsibility to develop a vision statement. At all times, the committee should be respectful of citizen suggestions, and willing to undertake additional engagement activities to provide the basis for a comprehensive community vision.

A. *Sort* engagement description of community or the future features under the following headings:

   1. COMMUNITY LIFE STYLE

a. Developing, "growing", learning as an individual (it's more than formal education)

b. Developing and "growing" as a family or group

c. Expressing talents and interests (sports-recreation-arts-culture)

d. Expressing values and spiritual dimensions

e. Joining with others in formal and informal groups

f. Alternatives and options available to residents in all aspects of life

g. Interaction with the neutral environment

h. Sense of community--community spirit

2. COMMUNITY POSITION IN THE WORLD

a. Community image and reputation

b. "Niche" or special position of community on local, regional, and statewide basis

c. Community uniqueness--in any form

d. Community relationships

1. with other communities

2. with other levels of government

e. Community relationship to natural environment

3. EVIDENCE OF CHANGE IN COMMUNITY AND WHY! (For example, has change developed from a community strength(s) or corrected a community weakness?)

a. Physical features

b. Use of technology

c. Diversity of the economy

d. Physical/natural environment

e. Attitudes among people

f. Relationships between people

g. Number and age distribution of people

4. ONGOING ATTENTION TO CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

a. Community leadership

b. Citizen involvement

c. Type of local government involvement in future planning

d. Community attitude toward change

e. Community attitude toward progress improvement--the future

f. Youth attitude toward an involvement with community and remaining in community

B. Identify community features which appear to be contradictory and discuss. By group consensus, indicate where *one feature has to be selected over another because they cannot simultaneously exist.*

C. Identify causes or change of reasons why community features came about. This will prove valuable in describing the changes and help to bridge the gap between "what is" today and "what will be" in the future.

D. Expand the list of community of the future features to include what could be extrapolated from other described feature or "what would follow from" or "what would have to *take place first* before the desired feature could come about". For example, if certain type of shopping facilities are desired, then what critical mass of people need to be present to support that shopping?

E. What are the *most* significant *changes* from the current community that are identified in the "community of the future"?

F. What community of the future features appear to have the most consensus among resident (have appeared the most times in engagement discussions).

G. What community of the future features are continuation of today's features? Would they occur in the same way as in the past or in a different form which needs to be described within the vision statement?

H. Do qualitative judgments of a community feature need to be further described--perhaps by illustration? (What is a "good" school system or "strong" family life or a "stable economy"?)

I. Did engagement participants adequately address all areas of community life? If not, what additional topics should be discussed and by what groups?

J. Drafting a community vision for discussion purposes (attention getting--illustrate change--"jolt"--provide reassurance--build confidence--foster "more" creative thought).

1. Is there an overall theme to the community of the future which can be used in the early part of the description to capture attention?

2. Are there words or phrases in the community of the future relating to IMAGE-REPUTATION-UNIQUENESS which would be *attention getting*?

3. What lifestyle descriptions would *ILLUSTRATE* daily life in the "community of the future"? (Could these be presented in the form of "skits" or short plays?)

4. What description of change and lifestyle would potentially *JOLT* readers to realize that change forces WILL AFFECT their community whether people want them to or not?

5. For what change does some type of CAUSAL factor need to be described to make the change seem possible?

6. What wording should be used to indicate continuity with today's community and reassurances that the good aspects of today will be carried forward into tomorrow's community?

K. VISION DIMENSIONS--For printed materials

2-4 pages

Highly readable for students as well as adults. Primarily composed of sentences of less than 15 words.

Common usage of words--wherever possible.

## APPENDIX D:

### Community-School Design Conference Agenda

**GOALS:**

- **Identify key survival issues facing rural communities and their schools.**
- **Describe school and community linkages.**
- **Describe strategies and goals for enhancing and/or building school-community linkages.**
- **Describe a process for engaging the school in community development activities.**

## OCT. 28

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|---|---|
| **8:30am - 8:50am** | **Coffee and Refreshments** |
| **8:50 - 9:30am** | **Welcome and Introductory Remarks** |
| | Learning Who We Are |
| | Review Agenda |
| | Overview of Distressed Schools and Communities Project |
| **9:30 - 10:30am** | **Identifying Key Issues** |
| | Divide into three groups. Cooperatively read and discuss *Rural Distress and Survival: The School and the Importance of "Community,"* identifying key issues and implications for rural community and school revitalization. |
| **10:30 - 10:45am** | **Break** |
| **10:45 - 12:00pm** | **Continue Key Issues** |
| **12:00 - 1:00pm** | **Lunch** |
| **1:00 - 1:20pm** | **Building Linkages Between Schools and Communities -- An Overview** |
| | *Link and Linkage* -- defining community-school interdependency |
| | *Three Dimensions* -- defining social well-being as an organizing principle |
| | *Three Schools* -- applying social well-being as a framework for linking schools to communities |
| | *Strength of* -- defining power gained from strengthening linkages |
| | *Two Models* -- finding the axis for moving schools toward greater community-based learning |
| **1:20 - 2:15pm** | **Brainstorming: School-Community Linkages** |
| **2:15 - 2:30pm** | **Break** |
| **2:30 - 4:30pm** | **Designing a Strategy** |
| | Workgroups independently design a process for improving the small fictitious town of Rool using the school as a catalyst for change. |
| **6:30 - 8:30 pm** | **"Rendezous" and Hosted Dinner** |

[redacted]

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| **8:30am - 8:50am** | **Coffee and Refreshments** |
| **8:50 - 12:00pm** | **Designing a Strategy - continued** |
| | Teams work throughout the morning in preparation for presentations. |
| **12:00 - 1:00pm** | **Lunch** |
| **1:00 - 3:30pm** | **Activity 6 Team Presentations: Integrating Models and Debriefing Team Work** |
| | Teams present the results of their efforts. These will be reviewed and discussed by the other teams. Based on discussion, a set of guidelines will be identified and a proposed implementation strategy outlined. |
| **3:30 - 3:45pm** | **Break** |
| **3:45 - 4:15pm** | **Conclusion** |

# APPENDIX E:

## The ROOL Community and School Simulation Activity

As a team, design and describe a process that will lead the small town of ROOL to improve through a collaboration between their school and community. The following information will provide you with an overview of the context and the problems faced by the community of ROOL.

ROOL school superintendent Matt Pendergas has concerns about the viability of the community and the school. He has lived in ROOL for five years. The school consists of grades K-12 and is located on a two-building campus. There are 200 students in the school. In the past seven years, student enrollment has declined by 20%. Matt has been talking with board members, local residents and teachers about the declining student population. He has also been observing changes in the community. He has come to the conclusion that the population as a whole has been declining as people leave the community for employment in the city located 55 miles away. This has led to a decline in the number of businesses.

The school often serves as the center of the community for recreational and social events. A strong competitive spirit reveals itself during athletic events, when the entire community comes out to support their local teams. The school also is a large employer in town. Most teachers live locally. Students often speak about leaving as soon as they graduate. However, the school is viewed as important by the community.

School levies generally pass, but an aging population as well as a small influx of outsiders seeking the good country life have begun to erode traditional school levy support. In addition, the local economic base has been slipping as farms have been sold and timber in the area has played out.

**Demographic Summary:**

*Population*: 1,500

*School enrollment*: 200

*School configuration*: K-6 and 7-12

*Location*: 55 miles from a town of 25,000 people

*Infrastructure*: mayor, town council, no hospital

*State accreditation*: minimally met (pressure to consolidate in the state)

*Past school-community relations*:

parents help out with class parties and some parents volunteer for various activities

parent-teacher conferences held as needed

all athletic events heavily attended

school has been used by community on occasion for meetings

teachers feel there is not enough support for learning by the community

**Your team may want to consider the following questions:**

1. What would be your point of entry? In other words, where does the process begin and how do you develop support?

2. What steps would you build into your process and who would be involved in each step?

   - What type of site training and activities would need to be conducted for each step?
   - What barriers would need to be addressed at each step?
   - What strengths could be built upon?
   - What role would your assistance team play?

3. What is leadership, how would it be identified/developed, and what role would it place in your process?

Using what you know about rural communities and schools, outline a process for strengthening the linkages between the school and the community in ways that would enhance and strengthen both. Your final task will be to present your plan or process to a group of concerned ROOL citizens and/or educators. Chart-pack, felt markers, transparencies and tape will be available for your presentations. In addition, to your presentation, please use the worksheets provided for documenting your efforts.

## ROOL Simulation Team Worksheet

Team Members:

Spokesperson:

Describe the steps and who would be involved:

Describe development and training needs:

Describe the strengths of this step and the barriers to be overcome. List ideas for overcoming barriers. (Use the back for any additional notes)

| STRENGTHS | BARRIERS |
| --- | --- |
| | |

## APPENDIX F:

## Agencies Providing Assistance to Rural Communities and Schools

The following list of organizations are potential sources for locating both human and non-human resources applicable to community development efforts:

Cooperative Extension Service
Department of Agriculture Extension Service
South Agricultural Building
Independence Avenue between 12th & 14th Streets
Washington, D.C. 20250

Contact your county Extension Service for a listing of services.

Economic Development Adminstration
Herbert Clark Hoover Building
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230 202/377-2000

Contact county or state for local assistance.

Future Farmers of America
National Future Farmers of America Organization
National FFA Center
Box 15160
5632 Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway
Alexandria, VA 22309-0160 703/360-3600

Or, contact your public high school for local chapter.

Small Business Problems
Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization
Regional Office Building
Seventh and D Street, S.W., #3120
Washington, D.C. 20202 202/708-9820

Also, locate your state university business department.

Small Business Administration
Office of Consumer Affairs
1441 L Street, N.W., Room 503-D
Washington, D.C. 20416 202/653-6170

Rural and Small Community Development
Department of Agriculture
Room 5037-S
Washington, D.C. 20250 202/447-4323

Regional Educational Laboratories
Council for Educational Development and Research/CEDAR
2000 L Street, N.W., Suite 601
Washington, D.C. 20036 202/223-1593

Contact this office for address of regional education laboratory.

In addition, an annual *Directory of Organizations and Programs in Rural Education* is published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools and the National Rural Education Association. This directory provides over 56 pages of annotated resources including the organizations mentioned above, journals, federal agencies, associations and networks. Copies may be obtained from:

ERIC/CRESS
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325
1-800-624-9120.

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