October 2009

School Dropouts in Rural Colorado School Districts

Colorado Youth for a Change

Solving America's Dropout Crisis

NCSE National Center for School Engagement

COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN

The National Center for School Engagement

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Executive Summary

Dropouts from rural school districts have not received the same scrutiny as given to those from urban ones. The reasons behind this lack of knowledge about the experience of rural school districts with dropouts are unclear. The purpose of the present study was to begin to close this knowledge gap. A first major study of rural dropouts in the United States has been done here in Colorado to help us plan for different kinds of programs and services needed in much of our state.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The former methods were used to compare dropout rates of rural and urban school districts and to select a sample of rural districts whose dropout rates were above and below average state dropout rates. The qualitative aspects of the study involved phone interviews with key informants in each of these rural districts.

The quantitative data analyses produced several interesting findings. Rural districts have the lowest median dropout rates in comparison to the five other state classifications of districts (e.g. urban, suburban). In addition, variables assumed to relate to dropout rates were not associated with dropout rates for the state as a whole and for rural districts in particular. Variables not associated to rural district dropouts included: percent homeless, migrant rates, percent of students from minority populations, percent English language learners, percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, percent of students in special education, teacher turnover rates, district revenue. Only two variables, number of students eligible to drop out (determined only by age and grade) and percent of students scoring proficient and advanced on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) math test were even moderately correlated with dropout rates.

We identified five school districts in Colorado that were judged to be performing the best with respect to dropout rates and five districts judged to be performing the worst. These districts were dispersed throughout the state with no obvious geographical pattern. We spoke to key informants in these districts about their districts' experience with dropouts.

We analyzed the interviews for themes. Involvement with drugs and alcohol, high poverty levels, family instability, uninvolved parents, and student behavioral issues were cited most frequently as reasons for dropping out. Conversely, provision of extracurricular activities by schools, extensive community based extra-curricular activities, high participation rates in these activities, and family stability were persistent themes regarding reasons for staying engaged in school.

Key informants from the districts with the fewest dropouts spontaneously expressed themes of high participation rates in activities, high parent involvement, and family stability as reasons for low dropout rates. Key informants from districts with the highest dropout rates spontaneously expressed themes of poverty, family instability and drug and alcohol abuse.

[1] http://www.ontheissues.org/Governor/Bill_Ritter_Education.htm

Conclusions

We learned from this study that rural school districts have the lowest dropout rates of the five categories of schools identified by the Colorado Department of Education. We also learned that these rates are not correlated with such demographic factors as race or ethnicity, first language; not correlated with factors such as migrant status, mobility, or homelessness, nor are they correlated to student variables such as special education status, free and reduced lunch, and unrelated to district data as teacher and administrator turnover rates, teaching experience, teacher salaries, school revenue, or district expenditures. Variables that correlated moderately with dropout rates were number of students eligible to drop out in grades 7-12 (This category of "eligible to dropout" is created by state law and regulations that require data gathering and reporting by school districts of students within this grade range who dropout), and percent scoring proficient or advanced on CSAP Math: the higher the number of students eligible to drop out, the higher the dropout rate with correlations between .4 and .6, and the greater the number of students who scored proficient and advanced on the CSAP Math the lower the dropout rates (correlations between.3 and .4).

According to key district informants, the rural districts with lower dropout rates provided an abundance of extracurricular and extended learning activities and experienced higher participation rates in these activities than districts with higher dropout rates. Moreover, the former districts reported greater family stability, fewer student behavioral problems, and more programs to support students with these problems than the latter. Rural school districts seeking to prevent dropouts should look into ways to provide more extracurricular and extended learning activities and to encourage greater participation in them. These after-school activities seem to help students engage at school and feel connected to the overall educational enterprise resulting in lower dropout rates.

Purpose of the study

There are many analyses of dropouts from urban schools. Over the past two decades, both nationally and in Colorado, we have learned much about urban dropout rates, the reasons behind them, and the plans by school districts to reduce these numbers.

Dropouts from rural school districts have not received the same scrutiny given to those from urban ones. The Colorado Department of Education classifies a school district as rural if it has fewer than 1000 students and is characterized by 'sparse widespread populations'. There are 86 rural school districts in Colorado which comprise about 5% of students who are enrolled in Colorado schools.

The reasons behind the lack of knowledge about the experience of rural school districts with dropouts are unclear. The purpose of the present study was to learn something about it.

Method

We decided that this would be primarily a qualitative rather than a quantitative investigation. We wanted to investigate dropout challenges as encountered by educational and community leaders in those districts with the highest and lowest drop out rates. We conducted phone interviews with these people (see Appendix).

We used an extreme sampling approach to identify the school districts on which we would focus. In cooperation with the Colorado Department of Education, we collected state dropout data for all Colorado school districts for the 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08 school years. These data bases included a variety of information about each school district (see Appendix A for a list of these variables). This information included data regarding dropout rates, mobility rates, graduation rates, percentages of students on free and reduced lunch, proportions of students representing various demographic groupings such as ethnicity, race, migration status, average CSAP achievement scores, proportions of students with disabilities and special education classifications, years of teaching experience, tax bases, etc. We collected data on 113 variables in all for each of three years of CDE data.

We examined these data bases for variables with substantial correlations with dropout rates. Our intention was to build a regression model that would predict rural district dropout rates and allow us to identify those districts that had lower and higher than expected rates. We planned to select five districts that consistently showed up in our better-than-expected rankings for the three years of data and five districts with a three-year presence in the worse-than-expected list.

Having identified the districts that fell within these extremes, our plan was to interview their school superintendents regarding the districts' dropout challenges and to contact other key informants suggested by the superintendent. Our study, with a few exceptions, followed this plan.

Results

Figures 1-3 display box plots of the dropout rates for school districts falling into the following five classifications: Denver Metro, Urban Suburban, Outlying City, Outlying Town, and Rural. Tables 1-3 present descriptive data for these figures.

CDE defines a dropout as a student who was enrolled in school at any time during the current school year but leaves school for any reason other than the following exclusionary conditions: (1) transfers (with official documentation) to another public school district, private school, home based education program or other state or district approved educational program; (2) temporary absence due to suspension or expulsion; (3) serious illness and does not complete their education. This would also include a student who was in membership the previous school year and who does not meet the above exclusionary conditions and does not return to school prior to the end of the school year. This exit status is only used for students in the 7th grade or higher.

An important consideration is that only students who drop out and do not return before the end of the school year are reported as dropouts by CDE. A student who "drops out" in January but returns in March would not be reported as a dropout.

Districts report dropouts to CDE via the mandatory End of Year (EOY) collection. This report runs from mid-May to mid-September each year. It has rigorous edit checks in place that prohibit districts from 'hiding' or failing to report dropouts. For example, all students reported as finishing the prior year in grades 7-12 must be accounted for in the current school year (they can't just disappear over the summer). Similarly, any student reported as transferring to another Colorado public school district during the year must be claimed or reported by another district. If not, CDE has post-collection edits that instruct the original district to code the student as a dropout unless they can verify the student's attendance in a valid educational environment after exiting the school district.

Students who drop out between school years (i.e. over the summer) are reported in the EOY report for the next school year. These 'no shows' or summer dropouts are typically reported as entering and exiting on the first day of the school year with an exit code showing them as a dropout. CDE requires that these summer dropouts be reported: all students reported as finishing the prior year in the district must be reported in the current year.

The dropout rate is computed by the dividing the number of students who were enrolled the previous year and not reported in the current year by the total number of 7-12 graders enrolled in the school district.

As can be seen in these figures and tables, rural school districts have the lowest median dropout rates of the five district organizational settings for each of the three years of data analyzed in this study.

Figure 1: Boxplots of Dropout Rates

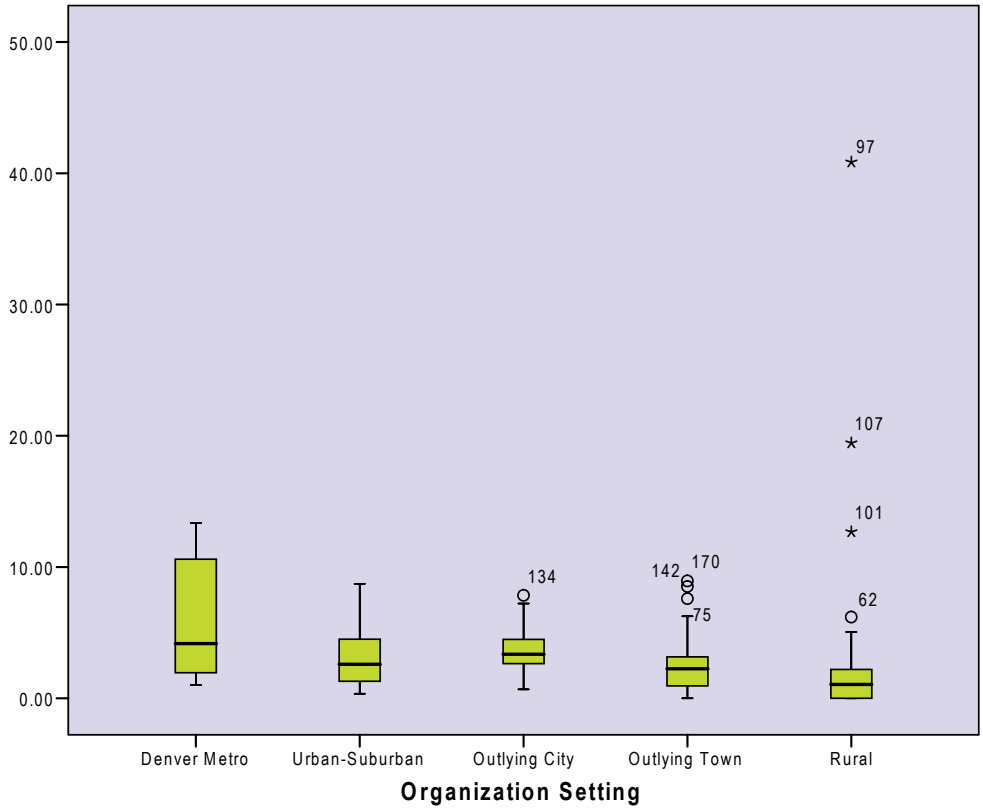

Figure 2: Boxplots of Dropout rates

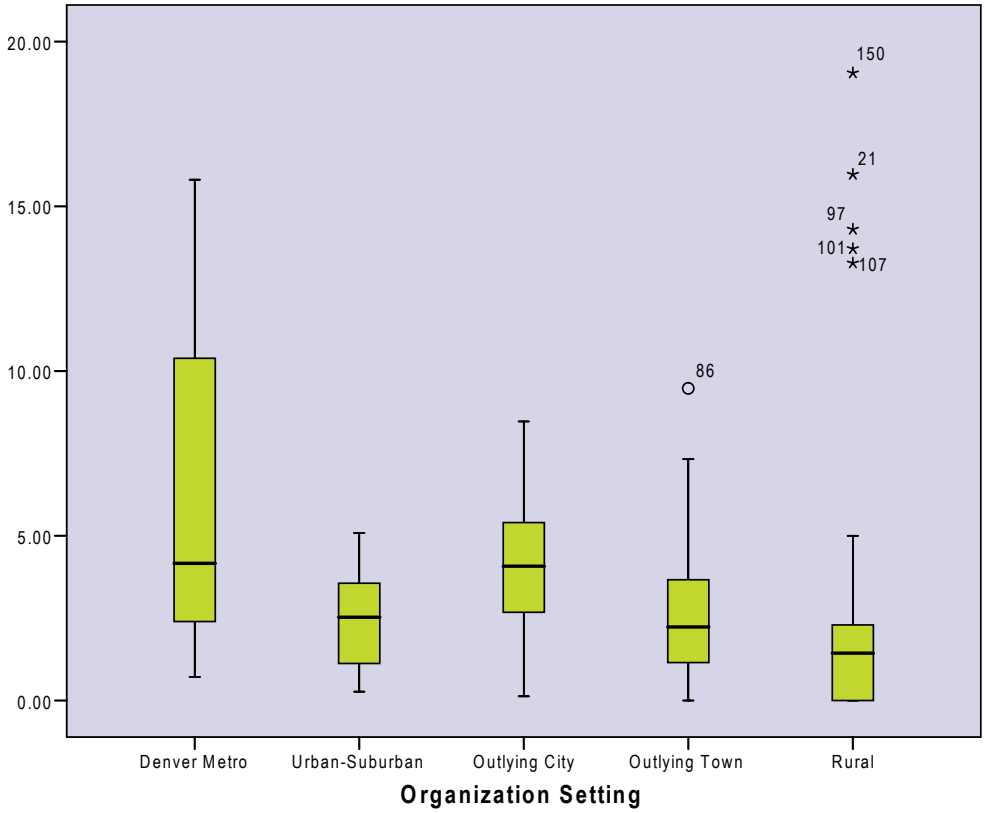

Figure 3: Boxplots of Dropout Rates

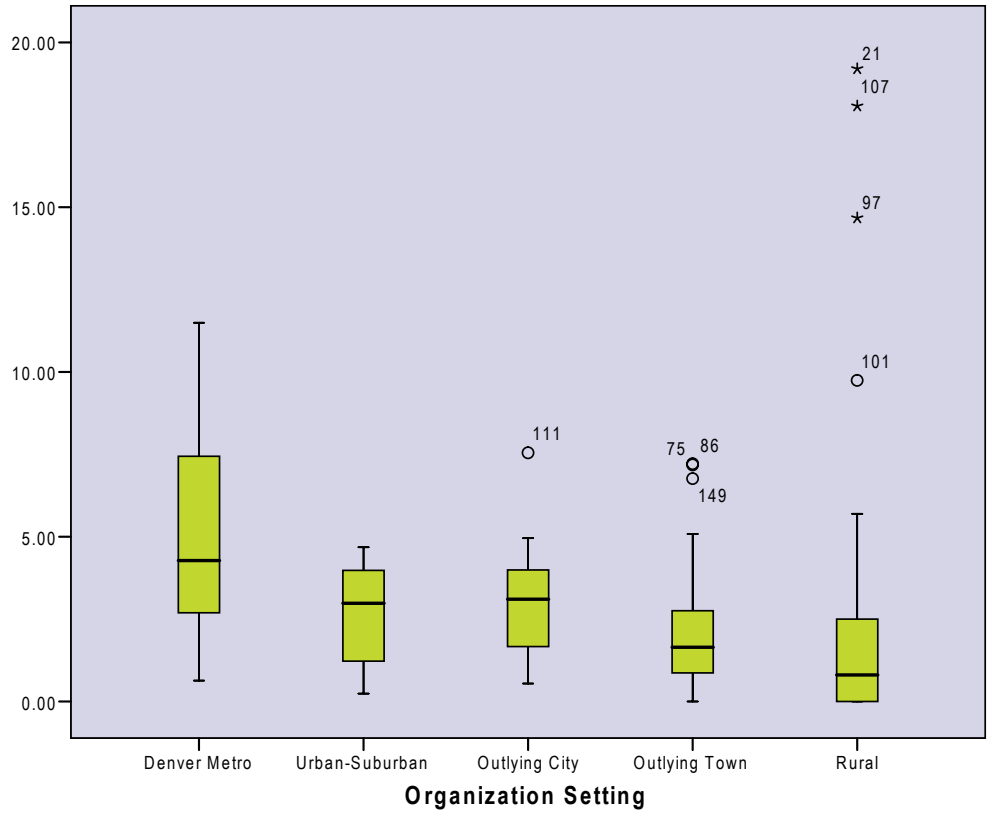

Table 1: 2005-2006 Drop Out Data In %

	Denver-Metro	Urban-Suburban	Outlying City	Outlying Town	Rural
Median	4.16	2.59	3.35	2.25	1.06
Mean	5.9	2.98	3.86	2.53	2.17
Trimmed Mean	5.7	2.81	3.81	2.34	1.37
Range	12.36	8.38	7.17	8.94	40.85
Minimum	1.00	.34	.68	.00	.00
Maximum	13.4	8.72	7.85	8.94	40.85

Table 2: 2006-2007 Drop Out Data In %

	Denver-Metro	Urban-Suburban	Outlying City	Outlying Town	Rural
Median	4.16	2.53	4.07	2.23	1.43
Mean	6.15	2.54	4.05	2.59	2.15
Trimmed Mean	5.92	2.52	4.03	2.43	1.53
Range	15.09	4.81	8.34	9.47	19.05
Minimum	.72	.27	.13	.00	.00
Maximum	15.8	5.09	8.47	9.47	19.05

Table 3: 2007-2008 Drop Out Data In %

	Denver-Metro	Urban-Suburban	Outlying City	Outlying Town	Rural
Median	4.27	2.98	3.10	1.64	.80
Mean	4.82	2.64	3.14	2.08	1.98
Trimmed Mean	4.68	2.66	3.04	1.92	1.30
Range	10.86	4.44	7.00	7.22	19.2
Minimum	.64	.24	.55	.00	.00
Maximum	11.5	4.68	7.55	7.22	19.2

We used two methods to select those districts with the lowest and highest dropout rates. The first method involved ranking all districts from lowest to highest based on their reported dropout rates for the 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08 school years. We eliminated from consideration districts that reported zero dropout rates for these three years. We identified five school districts that appeared consistently in the top quartile of these districts and five school districts appearing consistently in the bottom quartile of the distribution of dropout rates for three years of data.

The second method involved developing a regression model that allowed us to identify districts whose dropout rates were higher and lower than predicted for each of the three years of CDE data included in the study. We identified potential predictor variables of dropout rates by correlating all variables included in the variable list found in Appendix A.. There were surprisingly few variables with moderated correlations with dropout rate. The highly positively skewed nature of dropout rates as well as their restriction in range contributed to the lack of moderate correlations (see figures 4-6 below).

We selected two variables that correlated moderately with dropout rates to incorporate into our regression model: percent scoring proficient or advanced on CSAP Math and Total Dropout Eligible. We constructed a model for each year of the study. For 2005-2006, our model accounted for 49 percent of variance in dropout rates, 52 percent for 2006-2007 and 66 percent for 2007-2008.

Using these regression models, we calculated predicted dropout rates for each of the 86 school districts and ranked these districts in terms of their discrepancies between actual dropout rates and predicted rates (i.e. we ranked the residuals). We thus had a list of districts whose actual rates were higher, in line with, or lower than predicted. We selected districts that consistently showed up in our 'better than predicted' and 'worse than predicted' top 10 list for the three years of the study. The districts highlighted in this method closely matched the districts that we identified using the first method.

Based on the above analyses we felt confident that the 10 school districts which we identified represented extremes on a continuum that described rural school district dropout rates.

Table 5 displays the three-year average drop out rate for each of these districts. Our top five districts averaged a three-year dropout rate of .39 percent while the bottom five districts averaged 8.01 percent. The three-year rural district average was 2.10 percent using all districts and 1.40 percent using a 5% trimmed mean. Thus our top five districts had dropout rates substantially below the urban district average while the rates of the bottom five districts were substantially above average.

Table 5: Three Year Average Drop Out Rates in %

Districts (Top 5)	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	3 Year Average
A	.00	.00	.40	.13
B	.00	.00	.56	.17
C	.96	.00	.00	.31
D	.50	.60	.63	.58
E	.00	1.48	.81	.76
Districts (Bottom 5)	**2005-06**	**2006-07**	**2007-08**	**3 Year Average**
F	2.37	2.64	.86	1.95
G	5.0	4.53	4.04	4.52
H	6.19	3.33	4.27	4.59
I	12.68	13.28	9.75	11.9
J	19.45	13.71	18.07	17.1

Interviews

A staff member from the Partnership for Families and Children (PFFC) called the superintendents of each of these school districts. The superintendents were not told whether their district fell into our 'highest' or 'lowest' performing group. The staff member simply explained that, in conjunction with CDE, we were gathering information about how rural school districts dealt with school dropouts.

There were 10 district superintendents contacted first by e-mail and secondly by telephone. Nine superintendents responded to messages left by the PFFC staff member and were interviewed by phone. A questionnaire had been compiled before contacting

the superintendents, which was used as a guide during every interview. (See Appendix B) The staff member also asked each superintendent to provide names and phones numbers of other individuals that would be knowledgeable about dropout issues in their district. The staff member spoke with three principals, an athletic director, a regional manger from the Colorado Department of Education, a new superintendent starting the 2009-10 school year, a director of a community non-profit organization, a grant coordinator for a school, and the director of an online school. There were more individuals contacted, but only nine current superintendents and nine other referrals responded to messages left by the staff member. The phone interviews took between 15 and 25 minutes to complete for each person contacted. The following questions were posed to the superintendents and the other individuals that were referred to the staff member.

Question One: *Tell me about any drop-out issues in your school district?*

The staff member followed this question up differently for every person interviewed depending on how he or she responded. The staff member would ask questions such as, 'how did you respond to that particular problem' or 'why do you think that you have so few issues surrounding students dropping out'? The majority of superintendents reported that they had very few students dropping out, because they had such low student populations to begin with. The factor that was reported most often leading to students dropping out was drug use and alcohol abuse by both parents and the students. Both superintendents and other referrals reported that drug use and alcohol abuse was leading to instability and eventually to the student dropping out. Eleven out of the 18 people interviewed reported this to be an issue. Ten out of the 18 people interviewed reported that abuse and neglect within the family was contributing to students dropping out. Eight people reported that low parent involvement was a factor in why students were dropping out. There were many other possibilities stated for why students could be dropping out, but the last factor reported most frequently was high poverty levels and/or homelessness. (Percent homelessness did not correlate with dropout rates in our quantitative analyses) Seven out of the 18 individuals reported this to be an issue and some of these people also reported that students had to work to help support the family, so their education became a low priority.

There were many positive factors reported as well. Sixteen out of 18 people reported that extracurricular activities (athletics, music, clubs, etc.) provided by the school helped to keep kids engaged in school. Seven out of 18 individuals reported that community based programs; such as, non-profit organizations or churches (providing support to the individual students and/or support to the family unit) contributed to lower levels of students dropping out. Seven out 18 people stated that high parental involvement helped to minimize student drop-out rates.

Question Two: *Do you notice a difference in dropout levels when there are problems in the home with parents/guardians?*

The most common family dynamic that created instability for students came about when there were single-parent households. People reported that the single-parent family units usually struggled to provide the necessary support to keep kids engaged in school. Five out of the 18 people interviewed reported that single-parent households led to students dropping out. Some personnel interviewed reported that "divorce and deaths in the family have contributed to a few students dropping out," but the other parent/guardian issues came up much less frequently.

[3] See Section 9 for a more detailed description.

Question Three: *Do you notice higher dropout rates for children that have been knowingly abused and/or neglected?*

As previously stated under question one, there were 10 individuals that reported abuse and/or neglect leading to higher instances of kids dropping out. One superintendent reported "hearing a lot about abuse and neglect issues in the students" home, but did not know how much of it is accurate. Many superintendents reported that they believe abuse/neglect to be an issue, but would not give the staff member any further details.

Question Four: *Do you have families that are frequently mobile in your district?*

There were three different individuals from three different districts that reported having a high number of transient or mobile families. The director of the online school reported that "It is not a problem for families to be mobile because they are enrolled in the online school and they can do their work as long as they have internet access. The only population that is affected by the mobility is the special needs children, but there are very few of these students in the district." (Our quantitative analyses showed very low correlations between percent mobility and percent migrant and dropout rates.)

Question Five: *Do students involved with the justice system seem to drop out more frequently?*

Three individuals reported that students appear to drop out more frequently when they are involved in the justice system. The director of a non-profit organization reported that "boys seem to get involved with the justice system frequently in our district because of drug use and truancy." Other individuals did not report that it was primarily males becoming involved with the justice system. Six out of the 18 people interviewed actually reported that they would like more assistance with the troubled youth (male and female), but law enforcement is either under staffed in their district or just non-responsive to the problems in general.

Questions Six: *Do safety concerns in the community seem to contribute to kids dropping out?*

One district had two individuals reporting that community problems were drawing kids out of school more than any other factors. These issues included "heavy drug use, alcohol abuse, poverty, gambling, and an unstable job market." Another district also had two individuals reporting that "students would rather work in the oil fields because they could make more money then their teachers did." Besides these two districts, most individuals did not believe that safety problems or other community problems contributed to students dropping out of school.

Question Seven: *Do students seem to drop out more when they have displayed significant behavioral problems?*

As previously stated under question one, nine out of 18 people reported that students that displayed behavioral problems were more likely to drop out of school. One superintendent reported that "students that I see with behavioral problems usually came to her school with these issues and they were placed with extended family members in the district as a last resort." After reviewing the interviews, it appears that there were very few students with behavioral problems in each district and if there were significant numbers of troubled youth they came reportedly moved into the district with these issues.

Question Eight: *Do students seem to drop out more when they perform poorly in school?*

Four individuals interviewed reported that students' academic performance affected whether they dropped-out of school. A secondary principal reported that "a lack of academic preparedness" was one of the top three reasons she saw students dropping out of school. (Our quantitative analyses showed correlations of .3-.4 between percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on CSAP math and district dropout rates.) The majority of people interviewed stated that academic failure was not a large issue because parents and/or staff were very diligent about assisting kids when they were struggling.

Question Nine: *Do students seem to drop out more when they have experienced bullying or sexual harassment?*

Three people interviewed stated that bullying seemed to be an issue that led students to dropping out. One superintendent reported that "victims seem to be more likely to drop out than the aggressors, but both are at high risk for struggling in school."

Question Ten: *What has the district done to diminish the number of students dropping out?*

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Four individuals reported that they provided struggling students with some type of counseling to get them back on track when they were at risk for dropping out. Two individuals reported that they developed work study programs because they had numerous students that needed to work to provide for the family and this interfered with their school performance. Sixteen people reported that they encouraged student involvement in athletics and other extracurricular activities, because it led to continued school engagement. Several district staff members reported that they were developing alternative schools for struggling students to aid in lowering their dropout rates. Finally, there were seven individuals that reported that high parental involvement was what kept kids from being at risk for dropping out at any point.

There were several other subject areas that superintendents and other individuals brought to the PFFC staff member's attention. Twelve out of 18 people interviewed reported that they could not see any gender differences when it came to students dropping out. Thirteen out of the 18 individuals interviewed stated that they could not see any differences among ethnic populations when it came to students dropping out. Many districts had very little ethnic variability, so they were unable to say whether ethnicity was a factor in their drop-out rates.

Differences between districts with low and high dropout rates.

We compared the comments of our key informants from districts with lower dropout rates to those comments from districts with higher rates. For the most part, there were no prominent differences between the two groups to the questions posed above. However, we did notice several areas in which the themes that we detected distinguished these two extreme groups.

Almost every individual contacted from the five districts with lower dropout rates spontaneously reported that they had high parental involvement and high participation in extracurricular activities. Seven out of 12 informants reported that they had high parent involvement. Nine out of 12 people reported that athletics and other extracurricular activities kept students engaged in school. Two of the districts with lower dropout rates reported having many families that are struggling financially, have many parents with low education levels, have higher rates of drug use/alcohol abuse, and abuse/neglect. All the other districts reported having very low instances of family instability in any form. All five districts appear to have school programs that provide sufficient support for their struggling students. Ten out of 12 individuals reported that they gave some kind of extra assistance (counseling, mentoring, alternative school, etc.) to students when they need it.

In contrast, almost every person contacted from the four districts with higher dropout rates spontaneously emphasized that their school(s) had many students/families that were experiencing instability in some form (drug use, alcohol abuse, abuse/neglect, behavioral problems, involvement in the judicial system, single parent households, students that have moved in with extended family, poverty, etc.). Five out of six informants reported that family instability was the main factor leading to students dropping out. Five out of the six people reported that they have low parental/guardian involvement. Two of these districts reported that it was their online school and their federally run job corps program that had the high dropout rates and this was because the students that were there came to the district with an already troubled history. Finally, three out of six individuals reported that extracurricular activities do help to keep students engaged in school, but the troubled students are not usually involved in them.

Thus it appears that rural districts with lower dropout rates have more stable families, more programs to support struggling students, and more involvement in extracurricular activities than those districts with higher drop out rates.

Conclusion

We learned from this study that rural school districts have the lowest dropout rates of the five categories of schools identified by the Colorado Department of Education. We also learned that these rates are uncorrelated with such demographic factors as race or ethnicity, first language, uncorrelated with factors such as migrant status, mobility, or homelessness, unrelated to student variables such as special education status, free and reduced lunch, and unrelated to district data as teacher and administrator turnover rates, teaching experience, teacher salaries, school revenue, or district expenditures. Variables that correlated moderately with dropout rates were number of students eligible to dropout (7th-12th graders) and percent scoring proficient or advanced on CSAP Math: the higher the number of students eligible to drop out, the higher the dropout rate with correlations between .4 and .6, and the greater the number of students who scored proficient and advanced on the CSAP Math the lower the dropout rates (correlations between.3 and .4).

According to key district informants, the rural districts with lower dropout rates provided an abundance of extracurricular activities and experienced higher participation rates in these activities than districts with higher drop out rates. Moreover the former districts reported greater family stability, fewer student behavioral problems, and more programs to support students with these problems than the latter. School districts seeking to prevent dropouts should look into ways to provide more extracurricular activities and to encourage greater participation in them.

Implications and Recommendations

Overall, Colorado's rural schools have the lowest dropout rates and the highest graduation rates. The implications are many but size and engagement stand out. In smaller schools located in smaller communities, it is much more difficult for students to slip through the cracks and hide from school. If a student is not in school, people notice. Accountability is clearer and easier than in larger systems. Lack of distracting social alternatives in the rural community may also contribute to students making the choice to go to school each day.

The recommendation to rural schools that see too many dropouts is to expand after-school and extended learning opportunities. This factor seemed to differentiate the rural school that had a higher dropout rate from those with a low dropout rate. Ongoing academic support and good attendance during regular school time are also critical factors to keep students engaged.

Recommendations for the urban and suburban school districts from what we have learned from rural schools really has to do with the urban schools abilities to "know" their students the way that rural schools do. School engagement is easier when the populations are smaller and when the community is smaller. Urban experiments like the Harlem Children's Zone or the Knowledge is Power Programs (KIPP Schools) are examples of these rural success factors at work; smaller classes, extended learning, staff who know and attach to the students because the scale is manageable. Even though these urban schools are located in large low-income neighborhoods, they create many of the benefits of the rural school.

The most important implication we take away from this first ever study of rural dropouts is that we have only scratched the surface of what we still need to learn. We are left with many questions. The idea that size matters is evident, but what of small schools with big classes? Are students attached better to school because of size alone or is the quality of the experience different? What is it that gets students up in the morning to travel long distances on school buses in order to get to school? Is the quality of teaching different in rural schools? If we did correlational studies at the school building level rather than the district level, would we see more relationships to those variables that determine dropout behavior in urban schools?

These findings continue to convince us that school engagement helps students overcome the effects of poverty and their families' stressors. Smaller schools and smaller classes allow for more attachment to school, better accountability for learning and discipline, so that students learn that most important lesson that they count in someone else's life and their own.

Appendix A_ School Variable studied (Source: Colorado Department of Education)

	Label	Values
1	Organization Size	{1,>25,000st
2	Organization Setting	{1,Denver Met
3	Square Miles	None
4	Total District Enrollment (PK-12) Fall 2005-2006	None
5	American Indian or Alaskan Native Enrollment 2005-2006	None
6	Asian or Pacific Islander Enrollment 2005-2006	None
7	Black (Not Hispanic) Enrollment 2005-2006	None
8	Hispanic Enrollment 2005-2006	None
9	White (Not Hispanic) Enrollment 2005-2006	None
10	Total Minority Enrollment 2005-2006	None
11	Percent American Indian or Alaskan Native 2005-2006	None
12	Percent Asian or Pacific Islander 2005-2006	None
13	Percent Black (Not Hispanic) 2005-2006	None
14	Percent Hispanic 2005-2006	None
15	Percent White (Not Hispanic) 2005-2006	None
16	Percent Total Minority 2005-2006	None
17	Total Female Enrollment 2005-2006	None
18	Total Male Enrollment 2005-2006	None
19	Percent Female 2005-2006	None
20	Percent Male 2005-2006	None
21	Gifted and Talented Enrollment 2005-2006	None
22	Special Ed (PK-12) Enrollment 2005-2006	None
23	Independent Study Enrollment 2005-2006	None
24	Online Enrollment 2005-2006	None
25	Percent Gifted and Talented 2005-2006	None
26	Percent Special Ed (PK-12) 2005-2006	None
27	Percent Independent Study 2005-2006	None
28	Percent Online 2005-2006	None
29	Total Homeless 2005-2006	None
30	English Language Learners (ELL) 2005-2006	None
31	Percent Homeless 2005-2006	None
32	Percent English Language Learners (ELL) 2005-2006	None
33	Expelled 2005-2006	None
34	Section 504 2005-2006	None
35	Migrant 2005-2006	None
36	Immigrant 2005-2006	None
37	Title I 2005-2006	None
38	Percent Expelled 2005-2006	None
39	Percent Section 504 2005-2006	None

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Rural Colorado: School Dropout Questionnaire

General:

1. Tell me about issues related to dropouts in your school district?
   - Follow this question with responses to their answer: How do you respond to that particular problem? Are there unique issues that make dropout rates higher or lower in your district? How have the solutions worked in your schools?

Pull-Out Factors: (Ask the follow if the informant has not already answered them in Question 1)

2. Do you notice differences in dropout rates when there are known troubles in the home? (unemployment, divorce, two-parent vs. single parent, biological parent(s) vs. other guardian(s), etc.)

3. Do you notice higher dropout rates for children that have been knowingly abused and/or neglected?

4. Does the district have families that are frequently mobile? If yes, what are the reasons they are mobile (seasonal occupations such as farming, etc.) What does the district do to work the children from these mobile families?

5. Do students involved in the justice system seem to drop out more frequently?

6. Do safety concerns in the surrounding community seem to contribute in kids dropping out?

Push-Out Factors: (Ask the follow if the informant has not already answered them in Question 1)

7. Do students seem to drop out more frequently when they have exhibited significant behavioral problems?

8. Do students seem to drop out more frequently when they are performing poorly in school? (failing classes, low number of earned credits, high absenteeism, etc.)

9. Do students appear to drop out more when they have experienced bullying or sexual harassment? If their school(s) does experience some bullying issues, are the bullies or victims more likely to drop out of school?

Other: (Ask the follow if the informant has not already answered them in Question 1)

10. What has the district done to combat student dropouts?

Ask ONLY of District Superintendents:

11. Who else in your district would be knowledgeable about issues surrounding students dropping out of school?