

# The Value of Rural Schools/Community Partnerships

Presented by

Dr. Steven L. Johnson

Twitter [@johnson557377](https://twitter.com/johnson557377)

Superintendent of Schools

# Agenda Overview

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- Rural teacher corps
- Place-based education
- Rural School Leadership
- Community/school based philanthropy opportunities

# Rural Education

- Did you know that 1/3 of the United States' approximately 100,000 public schools are in rural areas?
- Did you know that 25% of the United States public students are educated in rural schools?
- Did you know that our rural schools have an increasing number of students living below the poverty line?
- Did you know that the US rural schools are seeing the greatest increase in racial and ethnic diversity?
- Isolation and lack of broadband
- Administrative burden of mounting requirements with less staff
- Teacher recruitment and retention on limited funding and other rural issues

# Despite Challenges Rural Schools Thrive. Why?

- Smaller, more personalized learning environments
- More community support with potential of more partnerships with rural development
- Students participate in more activities
- History of doing more with less
- Rural economic values – work, thrift, community, generosity, & honesty

# “A Square Deal for the Country Boy!”

1916, Neil C. MacDonald, ND Superintendent of Public Instruction

- 4,700 school districts 1918 – 175 school districts 2017
- Less than 25% of rural children finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade compared with less than 10% enrolling into HS to 75% of city children with 60% enrolling into HS – 86.9% graduation rate
- Less than 30% lived in cities – 86.5% attend schools with less than 600 students
- How do we maximize the opportunities for our students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century when we are stuck in the industrial model of 1916?

# Our Biggest Issues in being rural?

- Preparing kids for careers and college readiness
- Special needs students
- Staffing shortages and retention
- Housing issues
- Building issues
- Transportation
- Technology

# Educating Students in Rural America:

- Technology Access and Training
- Partnerships and Collaboration – careers and extracurricular activities available in urban centers (Can we be everything for everybody?)
- Flexible Funding
- Capacity Building – Comprehensive strategy to recruit, train, and retain teachers, principals, and educational support staff to ensure all students have access to a world-class education- Rural teacher Corp

# Rural Teacher Corps

- Recruiting and Retaining Staff – persistent shortages especially in specialized fields
- Nurture local talent and collaborate with Higher Ed
- Improve recruitment experience by reducing duplicative paperwork – Community effort
- Direct incentive programs – Salaries/benefits are a barrier but not the only barrier – housing, spouse employment, culture, community
- Provide comprehensive induction experiences – residence program, mentoring, peer support, etc.
- Administrative support
- Professional learning opportunities



# Roles & Characteristics of Outstanding teacher-leaders

- Active in community & school events
- Mentors both in and outside the school
- Possess passion for people and their work
- Innovative – They see things differently and possess the skills that enable them to lead
- Build trusting relationships with students, parents and community members

## What are you noticing about the recruitment, placement and retention of outstanding rural teacher-leaders?

- Teacher pay is a major issue but not the **only** answer
- Shortage of qualified candidates (national trend of young moving to urban areas)
- Communities need to do a better job of marketing their assets
- Retention is often difficult if teachers do not develop a relationship with community
- Need to look at alternative forms of attracting and developing and alternative forms of certification

# How do we work together on placement and retention issues?

- Communities must convey to new teachers that they are a valued part of the overall community
- There must be intentional efforts to connect new teachers to the social fabric of a given community
- Mentorship programs that pair new teachers with true teacher-leaders
- Explore collaboration with community foundations and private foundations to provide incentives for new rural teachers to move into graduate education
- External evaluations on why teachers leave rural settings

# Three Exemplary Examples of Rural Teacher Corps

- Missouri's Ozark Teacher Corps
- California State University Chico's RiSE Program
- Alabama's Black Belt Teacher Corps
- Characteristics of these programs – Financial support from local school district, private funding, higher education, and federal or state grants; residency scholarships with advanced degrees including commitments of time; mentorships with committed rural teachers/leaders/community members

# Place-based education

- Place-based education encourages teachers and students to use the schoolyard, community, public lands, and other special places as resources, turning communities into classrooms.
- Students learn about local heritage, culture, ecology, landscapes, opportunities and experiences as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects.

# Place-based education

“All students will learn, experience success and be good citizens”

- Research – exposure to a strong place-based education outperformed their peers
- Research – students become more engaged and enthusiastic about learning
- Research – invites students to become active citizens
- Research – energizes teachers
- Research – transforms school culture
- Research – connects schools and communities
- Research – encourages students to become environmental stewards

# Place-based education

## Teaching Models

1. Local cultural studies
2. Local nature studies
3. Community-issue investigation
4. Local internship and entrepreneurial opportunities
5. Induction into community decision-making

# Place-based examples

- HS Economics YouTube Videos promoting local business
- Art Project with Veterans Home
- STEM projects with fourth graders at senior citizen center
- Science project look at the life-cycle of fish that live in Sheyenne River
- Community Garden
- HS Community Mentorships including teacher, Civic & Commerce, and Director of Economic Director
- HS Coding class teaching Angry Birds ® to elementary students
- HS Computers – Tech work on campus



# Place-based education

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## Grant Opportunities

- USDA
- DOE
- ND Community Endowment
- Lisbon Community Endowment
- Local Partnerships
- Others

# Successful Rural Superintendent Leadership

- Establishes Goals and Expectations and drives reform
- Builds Communication through direct and personal conversations
- Constructive Confrontation
- Removes low performing teachers and principals
- Close working relationships with principals
- Aligns financial commitments with districts priorities
- Sense of Community and Strong Belief in Local Control

# Rural schools/community partnerships

- Bring back the Pioneer Spirit – Survey Ordinance of 1785!
- Public education is the linchpin issue in rural community economic development
- Public education has always been the starting point of meaningful change, both rural and urban
- Public education systems are the reasons many small rural communities exist

# Rural schools/community partnerships

- Public education is a reason people move to a community
- Public education systems are usually the largest employer in rural communities
- **Public school systems must be at the forefront of rural economic development!**

# Stand Up for our School and Community

- Advocacy Groups – We need passionate individuals and committed organizations to stand up for our school and community. We need to invest in our future.
- Superintendent’s Student Advisory Committee – Build Youth Leadership – What is the role of youth in your rural community?
- Positive Message – Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

# Community/school based philanthropy opportunities

- Local assets for local solutions to local problems --
- Foundations need vision, commitment, and planning based on long term and short term strategic planning with data to support
- Community Foundation
- School Foundation
- Others

If a rural school/school wants to grow and prosper, the people who live there have to invest in the community.

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# Q & A

