



Reporter

Volume 21, Number 3

February, 2006

SCHOOLS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.

Providing Rural Students with a High Quality Education

The Rural Perspective on the Concept of Educational Adequacy
by Gregory C. Malhoit

The Rural School and Community Trust (Rural Trust) believes that rural parents, students, community groups and grassroots people can add valuable information to discussions about educational adequacy and, therefore, they should be fully involved in the process of defining and costing out an adequate education. To explore this notion, the Rural Trust convened five leading state-level rural advocacy organizations. These organizations, collectively referred to as the Rural Equity Collaborative Group (REC Group), are geographically diverse and possess extensive knowledge about rural communities, grassroots people, schools and education in their states. The REC Group was asked to explore ten key questions:

1. Does money matter in the process of educating children?
2. How great is the need for accountability and capacity building in a high quality education system?
3. Are small rural schools cost effective?
4. What are the unique characteristics of rural communities that should be considered in discussions about education quality?
5. What fundamental principles underlie a high quality state education funding system?
6. Are there better ways to convey the concept of "educational adequacy" to rural people and communities?
7. How essential is community involvement in determining educational "adequacy"?
8. What are the component parts of a "high quality" or "first rate" rural education program and do they cost more than in other schools?

9. Do existing state supplemental funding programs sufficiently reflect the higher costs of operating rural schools?
10. How should state education funding systems be structured to reflect the higher costs of operating rural schools?

In examining these questions, the REC Group considered what is known about rural communities and schools, the results of education research, the views of leading school finance experts, court decisions, efforts in a number of states to define an "adequate education" and its cost, and the personal experiences of group members. A significant portion of the groups' analysis relied on the "evidence based approach to school finance adequacy" recently used by school finance consultants in Arkansas and Kentucky. This approach was used because it presents a set of component parts or educational strategies that leading education researchers have concluded impact student learning. It also enabled the REC Group to analyze the educational efficacy and cost of each component from a rural perspective.

By publishing the results of its work in this report, the REC Group hopes that those working in the school finance arena - school finance experts, educators, lawyers, state policymakers and rural advocates - will gain new information, insights, ideas, and guidance as they grapple with the urgent challenge of defining, costing-out, and providing all students with a high quality education.

The full report is available from the Rural School and Community Trust at <http://www.ruraledu.org>.

Public Relations Message

Initial Talking Points to Maintain Low Enrollment Weighting

As a society we are striving to find ways to avoid creating the setting in which Columbine occurred. To that end, we are attempting to create schools within schools. This is to say, we as policymakers are praising large schools for creating smaller units within our large school settings where students form a "family" and students are connected to a cluster for teaching staff for a long period of time. This is the setting you inherently find in our small rural schools.

Our society has also embraced the idea that No Child Be Left Behind. This is to say that instruction be designed to be sure every child reach a level of proficiency in order to allow him/her to become a productive adult. Test scores are recognized as an appropriate measure of such accomplishment. Schools that succeed at helping children learn to this level are often recognized by the Department of Education as schools that have attained the Standards of Excellence. If one goes to ksde.org and looks at the list of these schools, he will find a long list of small rural schools.

As school districts strive to reach higher levels of individual student achievement, reducing class sizes is more often than not a method sought to accomplish that outcome. The student teacher ratio is well recognized as an appropriate route to that end.

All of these goals are methods and outcomes found in our small rural schools. It seems amazing that these are the goals of our larger schools, yet those who are seeking to establish these school redesigns to reach the outcome of more affective delivery of instruction, are inclined to want to take these very things away from our small rural schools because of the cost factor.

The recent Post Audit Cost Analysis Study has identified a correlation between dollars spent and the level of achievement attained. We would suggest that the small rural schools model is being sought by larger schools at the same time efforts are continually being fielded to dismantle these same models in rural Kansas. It would seem to be a contradiction to those of us in rural Kansas who are well connected with our students and are achieving high achievement levels.

Val DeFever
Public Relations Representative

The Role of Education: Promoting the Economic and Social Vitality of Rural America

This special report issued in partnership with the USDA Economic Research Service and the Rural School and Community Trust explores the connections between rural education and local community well-being. The report includes three sections: Education, Human Capital, and the Local Economy; Links between Rural Schools & Communities; and Creating Successful Rural Schools and Students. Each section includes several articles and provides descriptive information, research data, and examples of promising programs.

Southern Rural Development Center, January 2005
This publication is available online at
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/ruraleducation.pdf>.

New Publication Encourages Entrepreneurship

A new publication, *Learning by Doing*, which promotes youth entrepreneurship in the Appalachian region, is now available for teachers and would benefit students in any part of the country. The publication highlights programs that teach students the basic elements of running a business.

Americans live in a nation where entrepreneurs create a high standard of living, but many rural communities find themselves lacking in entrepreneurial vision. *Learning by Doing* is a handbook full of ideas especially designed to encourage young people to risk venturing into the world of business and becoming successful businessmen and businesswomen.

The educational programs featured in *Learning by Doing* range from a high-tech service project in a northern Mississippi middle school that stresses dependability and a strong customer orientation to a faith-based effort in Nashville where children as young as second grade cultivate character and initiative while learning how to make an investment bear fruit. This publication underscores the importance of interpersonal and social skills in achieving success.

The Appalachian Regional Commission and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation collaborated in producing *Learning by Doing* which can be obtained by downloading it from <http://www.ruralschools.org/news/meeting/html> and clicking on ARC's website or by calling its offices at 202-884-7750.

(Reprinted from OCRÉ - Organizations Concerned with Rural Education)

Letter from the President

As a local school board member, I am proud of the way my district conscientiously works for the education of each student we are responsible to teach. The bottom line for any district is the answer to the question, "Did we provide the resources for each child to be successful in learning?" However, as a school board member I am aware of the challenges small and rural districts in our state face with declining resources, and seemingly declining attention, from the legislature to our communities.

In the past weeks, the Docking Institute has been compiling a study at the direction of Schools for Quality Education which addresses the real costs of educating children in low-enrollment districts. Sponsorship of this study was gathered from interested businesses, Chambers of Commerce members, cooperatives, banks, insurance agencies – in other words, the businesses invested in these small communities. The need is still real for additional sponsors to cover the cost of running this study and perhaps your district or businesses in your district would like to contribute to this effort to get the message before our legislators and the court deciding school finance issues. Just recently school districts receiving low-enrollment weighting have been asked to contribute \$250 to this study's expense. Please support this decision at your local board meetings, and if you are aware of other entities in your district that would want to be a part of this endeavor, please contact them.

As complicated as the recent Post Audit study is, the largest finding in it regarding our schools is that low-enrollment weighting should be cut and not considered a factor in funding education because we are doing so well in achieving our goals. We, in low-enrollment schools, know that the secret to our success is caring and qualified teaching staffs and being able to retain them and provide them with the tools they need to do their job. Schools for Quality Education is working to provide that data to the appropriate people. Please talk to your friends, people in your workplace, neighbors, people you go to church with, and most especially, your legislator about the low-enrollment issue and how it affects not only your school budget, but ultimately, your community.

For talking points to convey your message, or for more information concerning the Docking Institute Study, please contact Schools for Quality Education at 785-532-5886.

*Glennys Doane, SQE President
USD #272 - Waconda
Cawker City, KS*

FY 2007 Budget Request by President Bush

President Bush is proposing the largest cut in funding in the Department of Education's history. In his FY 2007 (2007-2008 school year) budget, President Bush proposes cutting funding for education by \$2.1 billion or 3.8 percent. As the president proposes to cut funding to education, local school districts will be forced to cover the federal shortfall. This amounts to a local tax increase as school districts struggle to meet the funding cuts amid increasing fiscal pressures.

1. President Bush's budget proposal would reduce the federal commitment to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA).
2. Title 1 grants to school districts would not see an increase.
3. The FY 2007 budget proposal eliminates funding for successful K-12 programs that impact every school district.
4. Medicaid Reimbursement for school districts is eliminated.
5. The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) is level funded at FY 2006 levels.
6. The Bush budget disproportionately eliminates K-12 education programs.
7. The FY 2007 budget continues the decline in the federal investment in education.

Prepared by Mary Kusler, Assistant Director of Government Relations, AASA. For more information about each of these points go to the following website <http://coe.ksu.edu/CRESS>

2006 President of NREA

The director of Kansas State University's Center for Rural Education and Small Schools, Robert Newhouse, is the 2006 president of the National Rural Education Association.

Newhouse, professor of counseling and educational psychology, was inducted as president of the association at its recent 97th annual conference. A longtime member of the association, Newhouse has served on many of the group's committees, including the Executive Committee. Prior to becoming president, he served one term as the association's president-elect.

The National Rural Education Association is a leading national organization providing services that enhance educational opportunities for rural schools and their communities. The association serves as a national advocate and representative for rural education at the local, state, regional and national levels.

Mark Your Calendar

**NREA Federal
Legislation Forum
March 13-14, 2006**

Washington, DC
Contact: National Rural
Education Association
Call 405-325-7959 or
E-mail: bmooneyham@ou/edu



Contact: 785-532-5886 or go to our
website at <http://coe.ksu.edu/sqe>.

SQE Executive Board

President, Glennys Doane
USD #272 — Waconda
785-781-4328

Sec./Treas., Jeff Travis
USD #272 — Waconda
785-781-4328

President-Elect, Steve Watts
USD #292 — Wheatland
785-938-2253

Past-Pres., Doug Malay
USD #208 — WaKeeney
785-743-2145

Region #1, Robert Scheib
USD #208 — WaKeeney
785-743-2145

Region #2, Robert Goodwin
USD #306 — SE of Saline
785-885-4843

Region #3, Loren Lutes
USD #341 — Oskaloosa
785-863-2539

Region #4, Jerry Cullen
USD #220 — Ashland
620-635-2220

Region #5, Paul Kendall
USD #424 — Mullinville
620-548-2521

Region #6, Betty Raby
USD #288 — Central Heights
785-835-6650

Public Relations, Val DeFever
620-870-9698

Exec. Sec., Barbara Havlicek
785-532-5886

Schools for Quality Education
124 Bluemont Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506
(785) 532-5886

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #525
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Kansas State University
Schools for Quality Education
Bluemont Hall
Manhattan, Kansas 66506

