



Reporter

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SCHOOLS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION, INC.

Rural Schools: Today for Tomorrow Division I Winning Essay

Amy Vierthaler
USD #332 — Cunningham

What do the late Pope John Paul II, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Oprah Winfrey all have in common? Other than influencing our country or world, they are also from a rural community like many of us in today's world. Consider where society would be without the contributions of people who originated in rural areas. Would technology, science, and the government be nearly as advanced? Would society be even more corrupted and twisted without the simple and sturdy base contributed by the small rural communities sprinkled throughout the nation? Small schools and rural communities are the backbone of the United States, providing a stable and safe education for the children of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

In many larger schools, such as inner city schools, the dropout rate is astonishing, starting at 10% at the age of 15 and drastically increasing to nearly 40% by the age of 17 in many cities. In contrast, in rural communities dropouts are practically unheard of. This statistic is probably due to the individual attention given to students in rural communities and the strong support and attention to detail in their education by all the community. If a student begins to fall behind, not only do teachers recognize this,

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Val DeFever, Public Relations Representative, Amy Vierthaler USD #332 - Cunningham and Lester Wuertz, 2004-05 SQE President

Congratulations SQE Essay Contest Winners

Winners have been announced for this year's Schools for Quality Education Essay Contest. Val DeFever, chairperson for the contest, reported that winners were selected from over 90 entries. These entries were submitted from SQE member school districts throughout the state. "A Strong Nation Needs Strong Rural Schools" was the title for this year's essays. Scholarship checks and plaques were presented to these winners at the joint SQE and 27th Annual Rural and Small Schools Conference Banquet on October 23, 2005. Thanks to all schools submitting entries. Please announce these winners to your participating students.

Division I 10th - 12th Grades

- 1st** — Amy Vierthaler
USD #332 — Cunningham
- 2nd** — Stephanie Temaat
USD #381 — Spearville
- 3rd** — Christy Stevenson
USD #273 — Beloit

Division II 7th - 9th Grades

- 1st** — Ann Clawson
USD #220 — Ashland
- 2nd** — Ashley Fitzsimmons
USD #332 — Cunningham
- 3rd** — Katie Lebeda
USD #360 — Caldwell

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but also classmates and even other faculty and administrators. They can then encourage and aid the student in improving their education habits and keying in on weaknesses and strengths.

When considering the options for education, many people regard rural schools as being a slow paced system completely devoid of technology and unaware of the modern advancements in education. On the contrary, rural schools of today are just as, if not more, advanced than even the wealthiest private schools. Only rural schools have the opportunity to teach with modern technology in a small classroom at a more comfortable and efficient pace. With the small class sizes, students are not only given more opportunities in the classroom but also in extracurricular activities. While students in larger schools are forced to dedicate all their time to one activity, rural students are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities and experience all types of social, academic, and athletic opportunities.

Not only do small schools strengthen students in academics and extracurricular activities, but also in areas more important: character and morality. Students from rural schools grow up in a nurturing but demanding environment, where they are given the attention they deserve and require but are also expected to excel due to the level of education that is provided for them. The qualities of leadership, teamwork, dedication, attention to detail, honesty, and social skills all vital in the struggle to become a successful adult with a thriving life are provided in the simple settings of a rural school.

In conclusion, small communities, though simple, prepare students for the complex lifestyle of today's society by instilling the characteristics for success that existed hundreds of years ago yet are still valid today. Rural schools have in the past and will continue to prepare students and provide the world with strong and influential leaders capable of guiding nations and making intelligent decisions.



A Strong Country Needs Rural Schools Division II Winning Essay

**Ann Clawson
USD #220 - Ashland**

"We are a nation of communities...a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky." - George W. Bush. What if thousands of these stars dimmed or died out? That is exactly what happens when small communities lose their schools. Rural schools and a strong nation have much in common. They both take pride in what they do, they work hard, and they both involve themselves in helping others.

Americans take pride in living in a free, strong country. Small communities take pride in having a quality school that achieves in athletics and academics. The whole town supports the students and helps to instill rural values, such as family and cooperation.

Rural schools have to be hard working to stay open and achieve in academics and sports. Having fewer people makes it more difficult because everyone must do more — students, parents, and teachers. Similarly, a nation has to be hard working to retain its high status and profitability.

Finally, both strong countries and rural schools help others. Through numerous service projects, schools help to make their community a better place. The nation is involved in helping rebuild other countries or supporting democracy. Though involved in different ways, they are both involved in helping others.

We are a nation of communities. What would our country be like without the small communities and rural schools? Would we shine as brightly and be as peaceful?



*Val DeFever, Public Relations Representative,
Ann Clawson, USD #220 Ashland and Lester
Wuertz, 2004-05 SQE President*

Raising Local Funds to Support Low Enrollment Weighting Study

The ruling of the Kansas Supreme Court in the case of Ryan Montoy, et al., v. The State of Kansas pointed out the need for actual cost data for funding public schools. A meeting was held in WaKeeney this summer that was attended by Bernie Giefer the attorney representing 90 low enrollment school districts in Kansas that filed a Brief of Amicus Curiae to the Supreme Court. He pointed out the importance in having a study that would provide actual cost analysis. The consensus of those in attendance was to pursue such a study under the design of the Amicus Brief Committee.

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University has agreed to proceed with such a study and produce the final draft after the Legislative Post Audit study in early January 2006. They will use an input-based cost analysis to determine the cost of providing the state mandated curriculum, the KSDE required curriculum, and the Kansas Board of Regents scholarship requirements curriculum in the Kansas school districts receiving low enrollment weighting for FY 04-05. Each district that qualifies for low enrollment weighting will be asked for raw data to be interpreted in this manner by the Docking Institute. The additional data will be gathered starting in mid-November in an easy to use online format, or district office personnel will have the option to submit the data on Excel spreadsheets.

The goal of the Amicus Committee was to produce a study that is only partially funded by public low enrollment schools. It is hoped that the remainder will be gathered through fundraising activities directed toward those businesses and organizations with a vested interest in preserving low enrollment district communities and economies. It will be difficult for the legislature to "shelve" a study that is partially funded in this manner.

The up front cost of the study is \$12,000 that would be paid with the remaining funds gathered for Amicus Brief activities from 90 school districts. At the conclusion of the study in early January 2006 a final payment of \$17,500 will need to have been raised. Your help in raising these funds in your local community would be appreciated. For additional information or for brochures to use as a tool in fundraising with your local community, contact the SQE office.

This input cost analysis research study is yet another opportunity for low enrollment schools to band together as they did in supporting the Amicus Brief to the Kansas Supreme Court by supplying data needed to fuel the research.

Robert Scheib
SQE Amicus Brief Committee Chair



Congratulations to Rural Education Award Winners

Awards were presented by G. Kent Stewart, Awards Chairperson, at the 27th Annual Rural and Small Schools Conference on October 24, 2005 to the following individuals for outstanding contributions to rural education and small schools in Kansas.

Kansas Rural Education Outstanding Administrator Award

Steve Adams
Superintendent
USD #425 Highland
USD #433 Midway

Kansas Rural Education Service Award

Janet Seehafer
Music Director
USD #299 - Sylvan Grove

Kansas Rural Education Exemplary Practice Award

Justin Schrag
Vocational Agriculture Instructor
USD #411 Goessel

Outstanding Service to Rural Education Award

G. Kent Stewart
College of Education
Kansas State University



Steve Adams, USD #425 Highland and USD #433 Midway



Janet Seehafer, USD #299 - Sylvan Grove



Jan Wissman, Associate Dean, College of Education, Kansas State University, Barbara Stewart, and G. Kent Stewart, College of Education, Kansas State University

Mark Your Calendar

SQE Issues Caucus
Saturday, December 3, 2005
7:30-8:45 a.m. Breakfast
Sheraton Overland Park Hotel

Reservations Required
Call 785-532-5886



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

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