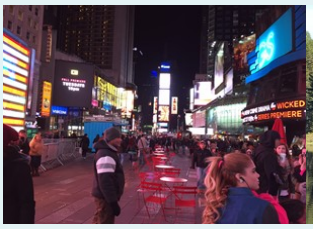
RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

RSA TODAY

News for New York State's Rural Schools

June 2019



I don't live in New York,

I live in New York

"Communities Committed to Educational Excellence"

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It's Quiet...Too Quiet

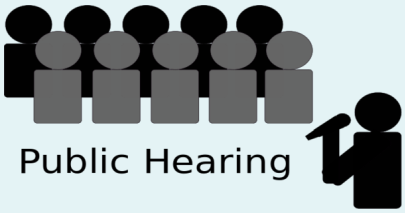
Last fall's change of Senate leadership posed practical issues for rural schools. It left most rural schools with minority representation in both legislative houses and gave state leadership a decidedly City-centric appearance. But it also offered the promise of change to the state education aid funding formula, as the new Senate majority had promised such change for years and in fact had used the issue to help gain their majority status.

Hope rose early in the legislative session as the legislature used its unified status to tackle some other longstanding campaign issues. With the same party holding the governor's office and both houses of the legislature, could educational funding equity be far behind? Sadly, it appears it could be very far behind, indeed.

Despite the political unity and years of promised reform, the enacted state budget offered no hint of improving what is universally acknowledged as the nation's most poorly distributed system of state education aid. The state did as it has always done; provided less than what was needed, rationed it out by geographic area and left communities to fend for themselves. Worse, it added new layers to the already convoluted formula, so that state leaders could individualize the distribution according to political, rather than local economic need. It's a tried and true approach. The local property tax levy cap was a little higher, schools generally had reserves on hand, retirement system contribution rates were a tad lower and it wasn't an election year. Leaders banked on districts being able to tax a little more, spend a little less and get just enough state aid to avoid wholesale defeats of local school budgets.

They guessed right. Once school districts knew what they were getting, they focused on minimizing the harm to programs, services and ultimately, children. Local budgets passed at record rates and there has been no clamor for change.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this annual rite is the fact that there is no evidence of planning for change next year. Maybe the new leadership could be forgiven for this year's lack of progress, recognizing that the state budget process was well underway even before they took control. New leadership meant staff turnover, leaving them at a disadvantage in negotiations. But if we can forgive them for not seizing their brief opportunity this past year, there is less cause for sympathy now. Changing a formula that no longer applies to half of the school districts in the state should be a high legislative priority and yet there is little evidence of the kind of effort needed to prepare to do that in next year's state budget.



Where are the public hearings? Where is the task force of experts? Where are the studies of what would be needed to effectively and equitably provide our schools with what they need? Effective reform will not materialize out of last minute negotiations, but from insightful and informed intention. So far, that's lacking. If our educational system is to rise above its middle of the pack state performance ratings, if our economy is to slow our state's mass exodus, then we must use our positions of local leadership to convince our state leaders of the reality of our crisis. Public education has always been our state's calling card and it can help us regain our position as the Empire State. The time for action by our state leaders will be next winter, but the time for us to act is now, if we are to remind them of their promises and the severe consequences of failing to fulfill them.

RSA Executive Director Dave Little presents SOAR Academy students of Madison Oneida BOCES with their certificates and prize as a Grand Prize Runner Up winner in the RSA-NYSIR Student Video Contest.

FCC Agrees With RSA...
Rural America Needs Broadband Access

For years there has been a tremendous gap between the internet access available to urban and suburban students and their rural counterparts. Even when a rural community is fortunate enough to have quality internet access in its "community hubs" like our schools, town offices or emergency services, getting it out to the homes of our students has been a struggle. The standard response to our requests has typically been that there simply isn't enough population density to warrant the investment by major carriers. As a result, some communities (like Watkins Glen) got creative and used their buses as internet hot spots to bring access to remote locations. Other areas have simply gone without, trying instead to have their students stay after school to get internet based homework done.

When RSA learned that T-Mobile and Sprint were seeking to merge, with the intent to build broadband access to rural areas, we investigated. We found that they needed support for their plan to (together) provide internet access to rural America, including New York State. This isn't RSA's usual kind of advocacy. We're obviously familiar with urging our state and federal leaders to pass or reject policies affecting our rural schools. But supporting private companies? That's really out of the ordinary. We needed to be convinced that allowing the merger of these two mega-carriers would have substantial benefits for rural education. Fortunately, we were!

After years of having legislative success without much actual improvement, RSA was anxious for real change. For years the federal government had been collecting surcharges on cell phone bills to create the E Rate fund that is helping build broadband capacity in rural areas. Add to that our own state's education technology bond act and you'd think we'd be in the midst of real progress. You'd be wrong. E Rate is a help, but its nationwide application spreads it too thin to be of real help. The Smart Schools Bond Act should have provided $2 billion worth of practical assistance, but years after statewide voter approval, only 25% of the money has gone out the door.

Combining T Mobile and Sprint had the potential to get affordable broadband access into rural communities much more quickly (and our kids don't have a minute to lose!) The real question was whether the newly formed company would follow through with universal accessibility and (just as important) affordability. After talking with company representatives, RSA was convinced that we needed to do everything we could to support the effort; as it appeared to be our best hope of getting real access in a timeframe that would actually help our kids. We went to work advocating at both the state and federal level for approval of the merger.

Now the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has received verifiable and enforceable commitments from T Mobile and Sprint that map out exactly what they will deliver, including the construction of a "world leading 5G network where rural Americans receive robust 5G broadband service." As a result, the FCC has announced its support.

RSA is pleased to have had a hand in bringing this much needed technology to our rural schools and communities. Four years ago your RSA governing board charged RSA staff with exerting greater influence on national policies affecting rural education in New York. We've carried out that charge in a number of very tangible and beneficial ways, but none more directly helpful than providing our students with the tools they need to build a bright future.

~Rural Schools Association Summer Conference ~

REGISTRATION is OPEN!

July 7-9, 2019

at The Otesaga Resort in Cooperstown

The Best Summer Professional Development in the Best Summer Location!

"The Hard Work of Staying: Rural Schools as the Heart of the Community"

Featuring RSA's Preconference Summit:
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Led by NYS Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Jason Andrews
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The 2019 Conference will spotlight top level state and national leaders!

MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner
NYS Education Department

Raymond McNulty
Senior Fellow and Past President, International Center for Leadership in Education

Jamie Meade
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Wade Owlett
National Rural Teacher of the Year

And FFA Statewide Student Oratorical Contest Winners

REGISTER NOW!

www.rsany.org/copy-of-summer-conference-2019

Included in your registration fee:

Private Reception at Cooperstown's own Brewery Ommegang, Pre-Dinner Beer and Wine Reception, Dessert Reception

THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO BE THAN COOPERSTOWN IN SUMMER AND NO BETTER PLACE TO LEARN THAN THE RSA SUMMER CONFERENCE!

RSA NYSIR Student Video Contest Winners Announced!

For several years, your RSA has worked to promote student creativity and expression through annual contests. First it was our Student Photo Contest. There was great participation, the photos were amazing and we used them in our publications and at our Summer Conference. Last year we held a Student Logo Contest. Again, great participation. Going to districts to present awards was particularly rewarding as we got to witness the support of fellow students when our winners were recognized. Then there's this year's Student Video Contest; which is at a whole new level.

We had 50 schools that participated and a couple of hundred student participants. Their work was phenomenal. Their chosen subjects did just what we'd hoped…highlighted the great things happening in our rural schools and communities! Our top winners are listed below. Each of them combined great writing, wonderful subject matter, student participation both in front of and behind the camera, great production quality and a sincerity that really showcased their love of their school and hometown.

As your RSA staff, it was heartwarming and a real morale booster as we work to support the value of our rural schools and their communities. As you check out the videos, look for local school efforts that benefit their communities, like Newfield's Fifth Grade Hunger Fighters and Lake Shore Central's Bald for Bucks that supports those battling cancer. And the Grand Prize Winner? Oh, that's more than special. Any of our First Place Winners and Grand Prize Runners Up more than deserved to be the Grand Prize Winner. There was only one difference between their videos and the one selected as the Grand Prize Winner and that was the fact that the **Grand Prize Winning video was done completely by three Fourth Graders. Written, filmed, acted and edited by Ally Draper, Henry Chase and Anna Rossner of Potsdam's Lawrence Avenue Elementary School.** Their teacher showed them the contest ad and they were off!

RSA is now traversing the state presenting award certificates and the accompanying cash prizes provided by the New York School Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR.) Students, school staff and community members alike all beam with pride when they see the video and recognize the efforts of the students who not only created it, but who obviously understand and love what it means to be from a rural school and community. Hey, Game of Thrones is over…old news! Check out the winners of the RSA Student Video Contest (sponsored by NYSIR)!

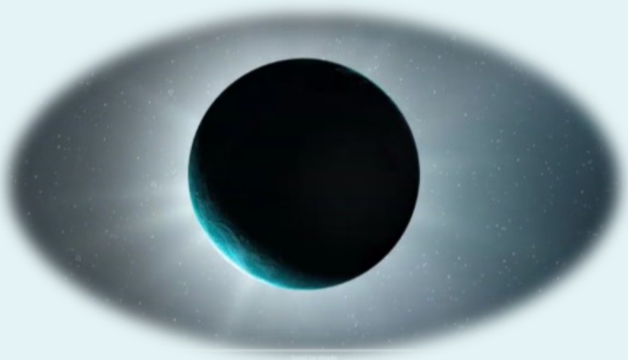
Grand Prize Winner - Potsdam Elementary

Grand Prize Runner Up - Madison Oneida BOCES

Grand Prize Runner Up - Williamson CSD

First Place - Newfield CSD

First Place - Pine Plains CSD



Dr. Gretchen Rymarchyk, Deputy Director RSA

Deputy Directors Corner
Research News from Cornell

On May 28 & 29 I attended the Program for Research on Youth Engagement (PRYDE) Ninth Annual youth Development Research Update: Diversity and Inclusion in Youth Development.

PRYDE is a research program out of the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research (BCTR) at Cornell University.

The program this year was rich. What follows are some notes and resources from the presentations:

1. **Dr. Maureen Craig from New York University presenting *The Pitfalls and Promise of Increasing Racial Diversity: Threat, Contact, and Race Relations in the 21st Century*.**

   Dr. Craig studies how people react to increasing racial diversity, both experienced and imagined. She asked white people a couple baseline questions about their feelings about being around other white people, and about being around people of color. Then she asked about the prediction that whites will consist of less than 50% of the population in about 20 years (this is imagined, since it's in the future). On average respondent increased sympathy toward whites, and anger and fear toward others after imagining a world with increased diversity. Further questioning reveals this appears to boil down to status or influence in society – when whites fear losing this due to being in the minority, they express negative emotions about this.

   Dr. Craig studied this further and found that significantly, white people who can articulate a solid sense of purpose did not demonstrate feeling threatened by white minority status.

   When she did compared responses between white people who lived in mostly white neighborhoods to white people who lived in more diverse neighborhoods, some of the same things happened, but to a much lesser extent. People still expressed some fear and bias, but far less, and sometimes not at all. So we might think of experiencing racial diversity as a means to help reduce the negative reactivity. It is difficult to think about how we might achieve this however, as people may imagine a negative impact from increased racial diversity, then act to remove themselves from the experience before it happens (think about how white people tend to live in white neighborhoods and black and brown people tend to live in black and brown neighborhoods. Yes, they do – we will get to that later in this conference…).

2. **Dr. Sarah Young from Binghamton University presenting *Support and Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Youth in Our Work*.**

   It can be difficult to be different in a rural community. Young people are coming out at younger ages. As we know for all young people, it is important to listen to them about what their experiences are. This is especially true for LGBTQ+ youth. We might think things are getting better due to policy changes, etc, but their lived experience might not reflect this. Different people experience things differently in the same context too. Think about how you and your colleagues experience meetings differently – you were all in the same meeting, but some are seething afterward, some seemingly indifferent, and others excited.

Dr. Young recommends reading the report: Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America, which has a section with recommendations just for educators and schools.

Overall, in rural areas LGBTQ+ people face increased visibility along with fewer resources including political power and housing. As a result, these youth are more likely to be dealing with mental illness, bullying, and dropout.

Schools can take steps to create safe environments. You don't have to know whether you have any LGBTQ+ students in the room to do this. This is similar to what we heard from Dr. Anna Haskins at the winter conference about creating a safe environment for kids who have incarcerated parents – you don't have to know if you have any in your room – just create a safe, welcoming, respectful space, where we understand that when people have difficult behavior, it's because they are struggling with something and need support. And we understand that there are lots of things going on in the world, and we have lots of feelings about them that can sometimes get in the way of other things we need to do. We need an offer of support, not a referral to the office, not a point-and-laugh.

Here are some resources she shared that you might find useful:

* Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America (book)
* GLSEN (LGBTQ+ youth in education) www.glsen.org
* GLAD (media guide for vocabulary): www.glaad.org/reference
* The Family Acceptance Project: http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/
* PFLAG (support group for families): www.pflag.org
* Mississippi: I Am (movie)
* Out Here in America (podcast)

3. Dr. Peter Rich from Cornell University presenting *Beyond Intentions: Addressing Racial Inequality with Public Policy*.

Dr. Peter Rich started by reminding us that race is a social construct that brings rights, laws, history, etc. with it, and is thus a structural problem - everyone's problem. He points to an episode of This American Life that asks why our schools are still segregated: The Problem We All Live With. Today there is more school segregation in the North than in the South, and there has not been much change in the past 30 years on this, in spite of legislation and programs designed to counter this. Dr. Rich decided to figure out why, keeping in mind:

* one's residence determines access to public education due to the ties between property taxes & educational resources and opportunities, and
* busing can only happen within districts, not between.

He was able to examine data on where people live in a nationally representative sample, over 3 generations, where they live each year. He uncovered 3 key insights:

1. White households play pronounced role in reinforcing segregation. Over twice as much as black families.
2. Neighborhood self-selection explains about 12% of total metro segregation (across races – we tend to choose to live where people look like us).
3. The most relevant behavior seems to be recirculating within the same school district. In other words, when people move, they stay within the same school district, and this is one of the largest contributing factors to current school segregation.

Not much change since 1970.

Distance from previous home accounts for 31% of segregation. White people doing this explains 19% of segregation in the 70s, but 25% of the segregation in 2000. Why? In the 40s housing subsidies went to predominantly white areas. So more white people moved there. If people tend to stay within the same school district year after year, move after move, then they remain somewhat insulated from integration.

This is a reflection historical patterns and policies, and the tendency for people to move to be near parents, or to a place where they already know some people.

This creates a narrative implying racism is not a reason, however it is upholding systemic racism. Economics and housing differences don't really explain it better.

What does this tell us about race & public policy in US?

1. Race neutrality is ineffective. School & housing policy cannot achieve integration in a race-neutral market-based theory of change.
2. We have inherited the geography of racism.

Conclusion: Race-neutral policy does not work – we need **anti-racist** policy. This would acknowledge the inherited racial inequalities, and offset them, and create structural change that disrupts the way race determines access to resources and opportunities.

Recommended resource: GreatSchools

4. **A panel of 4H educators from *the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Cohort*, consisting of Asia Ambler from Broome CCE, Sara Jablonski from Erie CCE, Andrew Randazzo from Columbia and Greene CCE, and Rachel Williams from Seneca CCE. The panel was moderated by Jamila Walida Simon from NYS 4H at Cornell University talking about their experience being in this cohort on this topic.**

   This group seems to have formed to talk about and practice creating safe, inclusive spaces in 4H programs for youth. In the process, they had to do a lot of critical self-reflection about their own identities and behaviors that do and do not contribute to safety for others. This was highlighted by each participant repeatedly as a transformative experience for them. I can second that – having been a part of a group of supportive people in thinking and learning about my own participation in racism and other oppressions, how what I think might be helpful can actually be perpetuating the system, and how I can do a better job at helping dismantle these systems so everyone can thrive, is a really unique and rich experience. I highly recommend it if you ever have an opportunity to do so!

5. **Mary Kate Koch, a PhD student from Cornell University presenting *Individual Differences in Puberty*.**

   Ms. Koch studies youths' social experiences of puberty. Overall, the timing and expression of puberty differs from person to person, as we know. But it impacts all sorts of social outcomes. On average, puberty is stressful, so if the youth has helpful coping strategies, they are likely to make it through ok, if not, they are less likely to be ok. Children who tend to ruminate (over think, pessimistic) about things, are at risk for depression, and the more stressful puberty is, the more at risk they are for depression.

   Also, children who are sensitive to rejection, and tend to expect or interpret rejection more often, are at greater risk of anxiety and anger and disrupted peer relationships. The physical changes of puberty will lead these children to expect to be made fun of, for example, or interpret ambiguous actions as being made fun of.

The children who go through puberty earliest are at the biggest risk, perhaps due to having no one "paving the way" for them within their peer group. While "late bloomers" also struggle with the notion of not keeping up, the earlier developers are at a higher risk for psychological issues, maybe because no one knows how to respond.

6. **Dr. Lorraine Maxwell from Cornell University presenting *Adolescents' Perception of Neighborhood Quality: Relationship to Self-Concept.***

   Dr. Maxwell studies the impact of the physical environment on youth. She spent some time with urban youth asking them what about their environment impacts them.

   They identified noise, safety, and resources – or affordances - as the most common themes. She defined affordances as a combination of the physical environment and what the person brings to it. So for example, a table might be too high for me to comfortably type at, but my toddler might find it great to play underneath.

   She also asked how these elements of the environment impact their daily routines.

   As you might expect, low income neighborhoods tend not to be comfortable places for youth for lots of reasons: lighting (too harsh, inadequate), safety, noise, the way the buildings look (scary, inviting), the number of liquor stores (one youth related this to safety due to the people hanging around them). Kids are very aware of, and sometimes agree with, the stigma associated with these things.

   Her work has been in urban areas thus far, and she wants to look at other communities AND get youth involved in acting on this. However, there needs to be supportive adults in the community who can be involved, support them, and see it through. Sounds like a great project for a community school type arrangement! If you have any interest in learning more, please contact Gretchen (gkr1@cornell.edu) and she can get in touch with Dr. Maxwell!

   You should know that she did pay the youth for their time in her work, but you have to find your own money to do this. If you have relationships with local businesses who might also benefit from this study, they might pitch in on this part.

   We posted an article on Dr. Maxwell's work on Facebook on May 20. Find it here.

7. **Dr. Kendra Bischoff from Cornell University presenting *The Segregation of Opportunity in U.S. Public Schools*.**

   Dr. Bischoff has been studying residential income sorting, or uneven distribution by income. Since the 1970s we have seen a steady decrease of mixed income neighborhoods. This is important, because where you live largely determines who you socialize with, what opportunities you have, who your role models are, your exposure to harm, etc. There is a lot of evidence that neighborhoods have intergenerational impacts on income, educational achievement, child development, and … neighborhood attainment (e.g. where you live now probably looks a lot like the neighborhood you grew up in).

   There is a strong, positive relationships between income inequality and (neighborhood) income segregation.

   This has implications for the unequal distribution of resources and harm, and concentrations of political power. There is also a lower probability of diverse interactions (think about what Dr. Craig said

above about how diverse interactions can reduce biased and fear-based reactions to racial diversity).

Generally, kids go to school where they live. Schools are socially and financially embedded in neighborhood and political jurisdiction. Segregation is much higher among families with children. This results in social and financial inequality.

Knowing all of this, Dr. Bischoff wanted to see how social resources (defined as adult educational attainment, adult employment, and 2-parent families) and financial resources (defined as the per pupil expenditure) compared for kids in the first and 10^{th} deciles of income distribution using Census data.

She found the wealthier kids tended to live in neighborhoods with more adults with bachelor's degrees, lower unemployment, and fewer single parent households… and a bit ***less*** funding per pupil because we do have compensatory funding where lower income districts get more aid.

However, wealthier districts have lots of other means to raise funds. And the gaps in social resources are still dragging the lower income districts down.

States with county-based school districts have nearly no income segregated districts.

As income segregation increases, we get bigger gaps between the rich and poor, and these gaps are growing over time.

Public opinion about economic integration in schools: A little over half think it's important to integrate but are not supportive of integration policies, either assigned or voluntary.

That's it. I got a lot out of the conference, and liked how the presentations related to each other. I've invited some of these folks to the conference to talk with you about your ideas, but have not yet finalized any plans. Keep an eye out!

To Improve Rural Schools, Focus on Their Strengths

Facilitate real school choice, charter conversions, and individual solutions for specific regions

By Michael Q. McShane and Andy Smarick

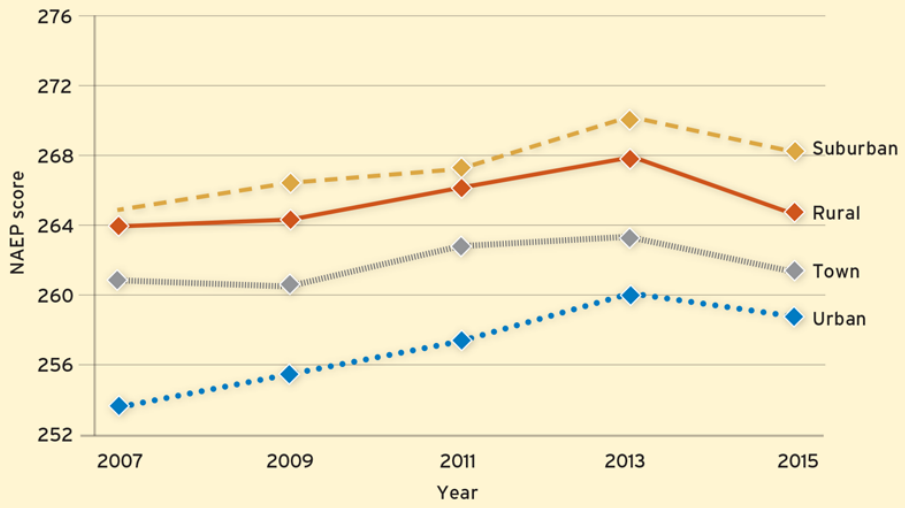
Education Next 04/08/2019

A consistent criticism of education reform is that much of the agenda has been based on what some call a "deficit mindset." That is, reformers saw individuals, institutions, and communities as broken and in need of fixing (or worse, saving), not as individuals, institutions, and communities with culture, history, and potential that could be cultivated and built upon. As education reform enters rural schools, it can learn from this mistake and not make it again.

Most rural schools and the communities that they serve are not broken. These communities are often home to deep wells of social capital, tradition, and values that educators can build upon to improve schools. In fact, survey data from rural communities shows higher levels of social cohesion, stronger beliefs in community safety, and stronger opinions that people in the community look out for each other. Rural communities also see the largest percentage of two-parent families raising children (and those families are more likely to read to their children regularly). When it comes to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores, rural 8th-grade students outperform their counterparts in towns and urban communities (Figure 1).

Rural Students Outperform City-Dwelling Students
(Figure 1)

Since 2007, eighth-graders living in rural areas have done better on the NAEP reading exam than eighth-graders living in towns or cities. Patterns are similar in other grades and subjects.



SOURCE: Nat Mallkus, "A Statistical Portrait of Rural Education in America" in *No Longer Forgotten: The Triumphs and Struggles of Rural Education in America*

That said, rural schools have problems. They struggle to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and leaders. This problem becomes particularly acute when state- and Washington-driven turnaround strategies hinge on replacing large amounts of staff, or when teacher-quality policies prioritize firing low-performing teachers. Where will hard-to-staff schools find replacements? Rural schools also struggle to offer diverse courses for their students. Rural schools lag behind all others when it comes to offering AP classes, foreign language classes, and other dual-enrollment classes.

Rural communities have problems, as well. We suspect that many education reformers are unaware that, for more than 50 years, the poverty rate in non-metropolitan areas has exceeded the poverty rate of metropolitan areas. Rural communities have higher rates of idleness (individuals neither working nor attending school), particularly for younger people. Forty-five percent of rural 18- to 24-year-olds without a high school diploma are idle. This demographic is particularly at risk for substance abuse, the effects of which have been tearing rural communities apart for some years now.

Something should be done. This is not because city-dwelling education reformers know more about what is best for rural students than their own families and communities, but because uniting urban and rural communities is better for our polity than dividing them. Finding educational reforms that work for both rural and urban communities (or at least don't help one at the expense of the other) is a worthy pursuit.

There are two primary areas where these policies are important: improving the pipeline of teachers and leaders into rural schools and broadening the options available to rural school students.

Getting Great Teachers into Rural Classrooms

There are many ways in which the challenges facing urban and suburban schools are similar to those facing rural schools. Every school is looking for great teachers and leaders, trying to find a curriculum that is rigorous and appropriate, and working under budget constraints to maximize offerings. But there are distinct challenges that rural schools face, and they are worth thinking about.

The last decade has seen a tremendous amount of effort put into teacher-effectiveness reform. Most of these have been "demand side" reforms, focusing on how schools and districts attract, retain, and evaluate their teachers. One high-profile part of this reform agenda has been identifying minimally effective teachers and removing them from the classroom. This strategy does not fit so well in labor markets that struggle to attract many teachers. If a school cannot find a better teacher to replace the one that it is letting go, it will be worse off. Research from the School Improvement Grant program highlighted the particular struggles of rural schools in finding effective teachers. In fact, some of the potential school turnaround plans that required an overhaul of the school's faculty had to be taken off the table, because the schools could not find alternative teachers.

So what can rural schools, and the policymakers who oversee them, do about this? Four things:

First, rural schools can heavily recruit their own graduates to come back to teach. Nationwide, most teachers end up working close to where they grew up. Whereas a prospective teacher in a denser urban community might have scads of schools within a few miles of her childhood home, a rural teacher has far fewer options. While this presents challenges for both rural schools (with a limited supply of prospective teachers) and prospective teachers (with a limited number of possible employers), there are great social-capital and social-cohesion advantages associated with a school's employing a significant number of its own graduates.

Second, as Daniel Player and Aliza Husain of the University of Virginia have outlined, states and rural districts can create programs to help paraprofessionals become full-fledged and certified teachers. This can increase the supply of teachers and staff with knowledge of the school and connections to the community.

Third, when drafting school turnaround programs or identifying strategies for improving chronically low-performing schools, state and federal policymakers must remember the wide variety of labor market conditions that different schools face. Incentivizing or requiring schools to replace large numbers of their staff is not

a viable solution in many rural areas. Flexibility must be built into these programs to take this fact into account.

Finally, states can rework their funding formulae to help rural schools offer better wages for their staff. In many states, legislatures have made the protection of agricultural land a policy priority and written property-assessment rules that, as a result, inadvertently make raising local funds more difficult. It is often assessed at a lower rate than residential or commercial property and thus generates less revenue for local school districts. Even if rural districts vote to raise their property tax rates, the base can be too small to generate the revenue schools believe they need. There are important tradeoffs to be made when it comes to changing property assessment rates, but hamstringing communities based on the industries in their geographic catchment areas deserves reconsideration.

Offering Real Choices for Rural Students

Deindustrialization and lack of economic opportunity breeds a vicious cycle for rural communities. There are fewer good jobs for young people in rural areas, or the good jobs that exist require middle-skills training they don't have. As a result, employable young people often move to cities with better opportunities, draining the local labor market and decreasing the number of talented potential employees available to the businesses (and schools) that remain. Fewer businesses are eager to move in and existing businesses close, further exacerbating the problem. This then hurts the tax base for schools and makes it difficult to recruit great teachers and leaders.

Preparing students for a changing workforce is important, so schools need to be able to offer a wide variety of potential courses, from advanced math and science to career and technical education. Rural schools often struggle to run this gamut due to limited manpower, resources, and demand. It's tough to justify hiring an AP Physics teacher for a class of two or building an entire woodshop for a single student interested in carpentry.

Students need choices, but school-choice advocates should look at how funding flexibility can improve what schools are already doing rather than centering their arguments on closing schools, replacing schools, or starting new schools. Efficiency-minded approaches based on school consolidation and closure have been applied to rural communities for some time now and have, understandably, generated resistance and resentment.

One potential solution is course access. Course-access programs allow students to take two or three courses per day from outside providers instead of their public school. If a student wishes to take calculus, for example, but her school only offers math up to Algebra II, she can go to the library to take an online Calculus I course offered by a university or other provider when her classmates head to math class. Rather than pushing schools to invest in costly technical education facilities, states can certify courses in carpentry, welding, or a host of other skills offered at community colleges or at trade unions' apprenticeship centers. Students can take the one-sixth or one-seventh of their funding that would otherwise pay for an in-school class to these outside providers. They would then get credit for the class, just like if it were offered within the four walls of their school. This approach can combine the best of school choice without sacrificing the cohesion of the school community or the operations of an existing school.

There is also, as Juliet Squire of Bellwether Education Partners persuasively argues, potential for charter schooling in rural communities, though this potential differs from that in urban communities. (In fact, there are already some 800 rural charter schools across the country.) Charter schools can help solve two problems that rural schools have: compliance burdens and specialization. This can, in turn, stave off calls for closure or consolidation.

A rural district-run school could choose to convert to charter status. Numerous states around the country have language in their charter-school laws that allow for existing public schools to become charter schools. When district schools convert to charter schools, they are often freed from the state or district regulations and compliance decrees that sap the time of their generally smaller staffs. Charter-school regulations are written with independently operated schools in mind; traditional public school regulations often aren't. Whereas larger urban and suburban districts have the central-office staff to comply with state requirements, rural schools are often stretched too thin to do so. Chartering could solve this problem and allow the school to be more nimble,

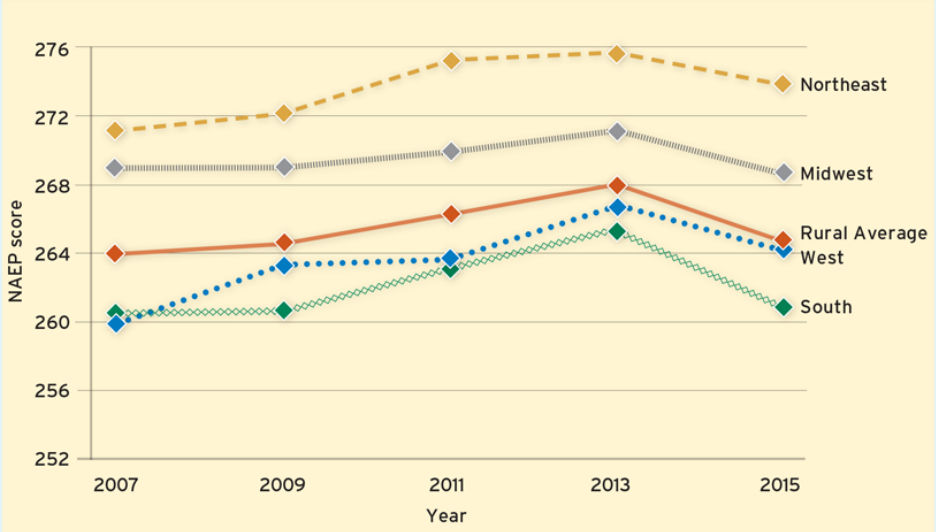
agile, and student-focused.
Chartering can also help create smaller, specialized schools in rural school districts. If districts want to target particular populations, such as English-language learners, students interested in jobs in a particular local industry, or students who are suffering from substance abuse or whose families are struggling with substance abuse, they could use chartering to create tailored school environments. Schools would then have fewer burdensome compliance mandates to address and more freedom to recruit staff and offer nontraditional calendars or schedules. They could also access federal funds for charter schools to help provide their offerings.

The Path(s) Forward

Given that most statistical definitions simply define rural as whatever is left after we have classified everything else, rural communities and the schools that serve them are vastly different from one another. Some rural areas are affluent, some are incredibly poor. Some are flat farmland, other are rugged mountains. Any category that groups a town in the thick forests of Vermont with towns in the cotton fields of Mississippi and the high desert of New Mexico and the chaparral of California leaves out as much as it explains. Demographically, rural schools vary widely as well, with rural schools that are predominately white, rural schools that are predominately black, rural schools that are predominately Hispanic, and rural schools that are predominately Native American. When it comes to performance, there is more variation *within* rural schools than *between* rural schools and other locales. Rural schools in the Northeast and Midwest, for instance, outperform their urban counterparts, while rural schools in the South and West lag behind (Figure 2).

Rural Students' Achievement Varies Based on Locale
(Figure 2)

Rural students in the Northeast do the best on the NAEP eighth-grade reading exam, while those in the South tend to do the worst. Rural students in the Midwest are above average, while those in the West are below average.



SOURCE: Nat Mallkus, "A Statistical Portrait of Rural Education in America" in *No Longer Forgotten: The Triumphs and Struggles of Rural Education in America*

If we want these schools to perform better in the future, education reformers will have to put a finer point on their analysis than statisticians. What rural schools do share are families' pride in their schools and trust in those running them, and the widespread belief that these schools are linchpins of their communities. Reforms built on this understanding have promise. Likewise, reforms that are seen as efforts to villainize schools, undermine social cohesion, or force schools to compete for limited resources will almost certainly be met with resistance.

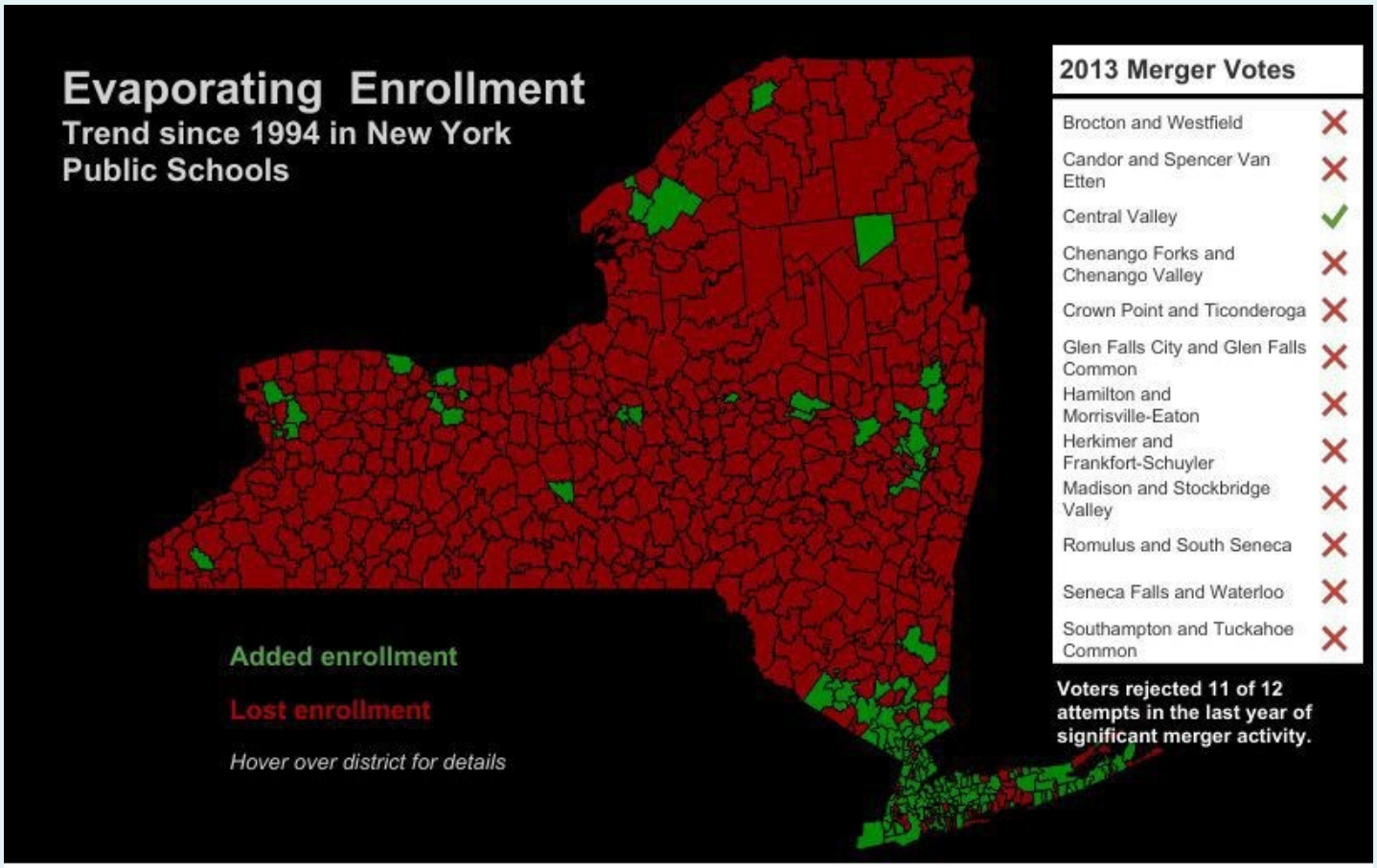
There is no single policy that will help all rural schools, given the incredible variation in the needs of these schools. Some schools are thriving and need help to get even better. Some have fallen far behind and need substantial support to get their heads above water. Within a given state or region, let alone the entire country, different schools will have different needs with respect to staffing, infrastructure, and more, and they will need bespoke solutions. One size will not fit all.

Rural schools also have a strong foundation upon which school improvement can be built. Cohesive communities built on strong families provide schools with ample social resources to educate children. Policy, whether school funding, teacher recruitment and assignment, or school choice, needs to build on this foundation, and policymakers need to understand where there are unmet needs and then tailor solutions to individual commu-

Located in beautiful Potsdam, NY. Home of the RSA / New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal 2019 Video Contest Grand Prize Winners. Ally Draper, Henry Chase and Anna Rossner, all 4th grade students at Potsdam Lawrence Avenue elementary school.

As New York School Enrollments Drop, Districts Get Creative to Provide Opportunities

Lori Duffy Foster Rural Data Journalism Project



Source: New York State Education Department http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/home.html

The Ripley Central School District, tucked away in a quiet corner of Western New York State near the banks of Lake Erie, served more than 500 students in 1994. Today, only 137 students are enrolled in the district, a loss of about 73 percent.

Some of that loss was intentional. Ripley pays to send its 100 high schoolers elsewhere so they will have more and better opportunities. It is a solution that is attracting attention in a state where enrollment in rural districts has declined steadily over the past 25 years.

"They are still our kids, so we are still invested in their successes," said Paul McCutcheon, president of the Ripley school board. "It works like a regional high school probably would."

Rural migration is a disturbing trend for those concerned about equality in education in New York state.

Declining enrollments have certainly affected school districts in the Cayuga County-area, which is largely rural. Data from the state Department of Education for 1994 through 2017 show an average 30.2% enrollment drop for the nine districts that are components of the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES region. Click Link here.

The smallest decline, at 19.74%, belonged to the least rural district: Auburn Enlarged City School District. Southern Cayuga Central District, by contrast, experienced a 48.61% decrease, the largest among the nine local districts.

The lower student populations have driven decisions to close several school buildings locally over the years, including Auburn's West Middle School in 2011, Southern Cayuga's Emily Howland Elementary School in 2012 and Union Spring Central School District's Cayuga Elementary School in 2018.

New York stands out

Economics and natural change are to blame for the decrease in rural populations nationwide, according to an analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. But in New York's school districts, where two-thirds of non-federal funding comes from local property taxes, the impact is particularly intense.

Even the brightest students in rural schools find it hard to compete for employment and college admissions with students from more populated areas, where advanced classes and electives are plentiful, experts say.

"The kind of educational programming and the breath of curriculum you get is far too dependent on what the community itself can afford," said David Little, executive director of the Rural Schools Association of New York State. "That’s exactly the opposite of the way it is in virtually every other state in the union. Most states pay two thirds the cost of education, and the one third that locality pays for is really kind of curriculum enhancement."

When economies decline, so do property tax revenues. Fewer students and less local money means fewer opportunities. While their peers in urban and suburban school districts can choose from full menus of advanced placement, honors and college courses, many rural school districts can offer only a select few.

Foreign language courses are often limited to one or two choices. Classes like dance, theater and photography are nearly unheard of. Those limited options can make students less appealing to colleges and universities, Little said. His own son was rejected by his dream college because his high school did not offer the electives they were looking for.

"It is kind of this downward spiral that we are only now economically starting to get out of," Little said. "And until the state recognizes that these communities have a burden that’s far too dramatic for them to overcome on their own and the state agrees to alter the way that it funds public education, we won’t stop the spiral."

The state Education Department declined interview requests for this story, instead issuing a statement that says it is committed to ensuring all students thrive and succeed. The state received $1.6 billion in federal funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act to work on such strategies beginning in the spring of 2018, according to the statement. Of that money, $80 million is earmarked for improvements and programs in the state's lowest-performing districts, which includes rural schools.

"Above all, our ESSA plan emphasizes the importance of fostering equity in education for all of New York’s students. And one of the most important ways we do this by incentivizing districts to provide opportunities to all high school students to engage in advanced coursework that is often unavailable in smaller, rural school districts," according to the statement.

Little said the state's plans for the federal grant money give him hope, but he noted that New York City, as a high-needs district, will likely get half of the $80 million designated for program improvements, leaving only $40 million for the 320 rural districts that need it. Even if the money is well-used, the impact will not be great enough, he said.

"It's not a panacea," Little said. "It’s an indication that they recognize the need and are willing to begin to target resources for it. So, we are happy about that, but I hope that they don't think it fixes the problem."

Seeking creative solutions

Like Little, many experts agree that the long-term solution is to change the way public schools are funded in New York State. In the meantime, however, rural communities are getting creative. They are experimenting with regional high schools, community school districts and distance learning programs that offer students more options. They are working with local colleges and businesses to provide more jobs and train students for existing jobs.

They are evolving in order to survive, and Ripley has taken the lead.

"We had reached a point where we couldn't sustain what we needed to for a high school in terms of giving students educational options," McCutcheon said. "We had the bare necessities, but it was really difficult to have any kind of electives programs because we didn't have enough student body and enough tax base really to have a successful high school program."

In 2013, Ripley eliminated its high school classes and began paying tuition for its students to attend nearby Chautauqua Lake Central High School. Its students now have access to college courses, electives such as Mandarin Chinese and television production, and a variety of STEM classes. The two districts share administrative services as well, such as a transportation supervisor and a building manager.

Despite the enrollment loss, Ripley's halls are far from empty. To fill the void, Ripley leases office space to the town at cost. The district has also opened up its building to the community, housing a local food pantry and maintaining a fitness center that is free to residents.

"We are always keeping our ear to the ground to see what is out there for opportunities," McCutcheon said.

The USDA's Department of Economic Research studies population migration. Their research reveals two major forces behind population decline in rural areas. The economy is one factor. Jobs are harder to find in rural areas, making urban and suburban areas more attractive, especially to recent college graduates.

The second reason is natural change. Elderly residents are dying at typical rates, but young people are having fewer babies. Recent statistics show slight increases in natural change in the past two years, offering some hope that losses overall will at least slow down.

Little said New York's rural districts have been particularly hard hit in the past seven years. He believes the state's high taxes are not only driving people out of rural areas but out of the state as a whole, worsening the problem.

"If I come out of college, and I am in a rural area, I not only have very few economic opportunities within a rural area to come back home to, but I also have to be willing, in addition to my student loans, to accept higher taxes and the higher debt load that will ensure that my taxes are higher going into the future," he said.

Little's organization is lobbying for an overhaul in the state funding system, but that will not help today's students. So, districts are exploring and implementing short-term solutions.

Attempts at consolidation

Mergers, once a popular answer to the problem, have mostly failed in recent years. Bob Lowry, deputy director of the state's Council of School Superintendents, says higher taxes for the smaller districts in proposed mergers and loss of identity for both districts are factors.

While mergers are failing, proposals for regional high schools, community schools and distance learning program are gaining popularity.

The concept of regional high schools has been tossed around for years, but the state has done little to promote it, Lowry said. Under a regional high school system, participating districts would retain their elementary and middle schools but would pick one building to serve all the area's high school students.

Such systems are popular in other states and have been successful in parts of Long Island, Little said.

"It really has the opportunity to transform rural New York. The ideal of regional high schools is very much the forefront of what I think needs to be done for our rural schools," he said.

Regional high schools would be supported by all involved districts. The concept is similar to that of the state's Board of Cooperative Educational Services, which provides shared educational services and programs to school districts, mostly in special education, and career and technical education. Each region has its own BOCES and each participating district has a representative on the BOCES school board. Districts decide each year what services they need, and then pay for those services out of their annual budgets.

Ripley's solution differs from the regional high school concept in that district residents have no representation on the Chautauqua Lake school board. The district pays nearly $8,000 per student each year. It pays less for students who attend BOCES half time and nothing for those who attend BOCES full time. Ripley has no official say in class offerings, policy decisions or any other issues related to Chautauqua Lake High School.

It is not practical or economically wise for every district to tuition-out all its students, but the state's teachers union has traditionally opposed the creation of regional high schools, Lowry said. Teachers fear that merged high schools will lead to job losses, he said.

"We've already had the loss of jobs," Lowry said. "Now we are trying to save jobs and expand the curriculum. We need every teacher we can get."

Matthew Hamilton, spokesperson for New York State United Teachers, declined to comment specifically on the union's position on regional schools.

Don Carlisto, dean of students for Saranac Lake's middle school, sits on the NYSUT board of directors and is president of the Saranac Lake chapter. He said mergers and regional schools can succeed when all parties work together to do what is best for kids, teachers and residents. Carlisto pointed to a recent merger of the Elizabethtown-Lewis and Westport central districts as an example.

"I think that we would be doing a disservice if we just sort of had this reflexive kind of knee-jerk reaction that the teachers union are obstructionists," Carlisto said. "There are always going to be obstructionists. There are plenty of examples that I can cite where teachers unions are at the table with communities sort of moving issues forward."

Saranac Lake's enrollment has dropped almost 35 percent since 1994, forcing the closing of all but one neighborhood elementary school. The district is already the state's largest at more than 600 square miles. Some students sit on buses for more than an hour each way. Merging with another district would be impractical.

Saranac Lake has instead adopted the community schools concept with the support of the teachers union, the superintendent and the school board, Carlisto said. Community schools attempt to stave off migration by making rural life more appealing and more feasible. Schools become community centers, offering everything from medical services to day care to wellness centers.

"The community schools model basically says, let's make the school the hub of the community and house the services that kids need in the school building, where we have them for eight hours a day instead of making them travel to Glens Falls for a dentist appointment because that is the only place that they'll be able to have their Medicaid accepted," Carlisto said. "We are trying to bring the services that they need into the school because, ultimately, if you are able to provide the resources and have a student be made whole, it leads to better educational outcomes."

The concept originated in McDowell County, West Virginia, ranked as one of the poorest counties in the nation.

In 2011, the local teachers union spearheaded the launch of Reconnecting McDowell, an effort to improve educational outcomes by addressing poverty and its impact on students and families. The effort has evolved into a partnership among Fortune 500 corporations and labor unions; national, state and local nonprofits and agencies; parents and pastors; school personnel and students, and local residents, according to a press release from the American Federation of Teachers.

Together, the groups have created community schools that have seen graduation rates increase from 74 percent in 2010-11 to 88 percent in 2015-16, and drop-out rates decrease from 4.5 percent to 1.6 percent during that same period, according to the union. Test scores increased overall and the number of students attending college jumped from 24.6 percent to 40.3 percent.

This spring, Reconnect McDowell will break ground on an apartment complex with amenities designed to attract new teachers and other young professionals to the area.

Carlisto gets excited when he talks about the role teachers unions can play in improving education and economies in rural areas. In Massena, the possible closure of an Alcoa plant, the area's biggest employer, in 2015 led to the creation of The People Project, an initiative of the Massena Federation of Teachers. The People Project focuses on economic development, health and wellness, and community schools. It's latest effort is the creation of a regional chamber of commerce.

"Teachers unions are engaging with communities in ways that maybe we haven’t before to defend the communities when their economic vitality is threatened," Carlisto said. "I think ultimately that’s one of the strategies going forward to kind of start to mitigate and, hopefully, reverse this trend in declining involvement— enrollment. Making sure that communities are viable and sustainable and brimming with opportunity for folks."

Though some state funding is available for community school initiatives, Saranac Lake gets none. The school board carved money out of the budget to hire a coordinator in July and formed an advisory council made up of parents who are traditionally unable to become involved in school issues. Already, the district is seeing results. The parents group noted that a bus driver shortage could be rectified by offering training and licensing locally, so unemployed residents can apply for the jobs. The district is working to provide free eye care and to coordinate services with the United Way.

"It is just a matter of getting all of the moving parts moving in the same direction ... under the umbrella of the school district. That is not something that has happened before, and it is now starting to happen with the community schools model," Carlisto said.

Like many other rural school districts, Saranac Lake is also integrating distance learning as a way to expand its offerings for students.

The teachers union has been careful to ensure that computers do not replace teachers. The district offers online classes only if students demand them and no current staff is qualified to teach them. A teacher or a teacher's aide is always in the room to help students when they need it.

Little said distance learning is much more appealing than it was in the past.

It is more interactive, thanks to advances in technology that offer video conferencing, 3D printing, simulators and individualized learning. He compares the impact of the digital technology on schools to that of the school bus when it was first introduced. Though school buses have been transporting children since the days of the horse and carriage, they did not become widely popular until the 1940s, after new manufacturing standards were developed to make them safer.

"Before the school bus, we didn’t teach kids in an age-appropriate fashion and we didn’t even really teach them sequentially for education. They were in much smaller, if not one-room schools," Little said. "The school bus allowed us to put enough kids of a certain age at one time in one place. To be able to teach them all like that. Well, the computer has changed time and place again."

Still, Little said, efforts to create regional schools, community schools and distance learning programs are not enough.

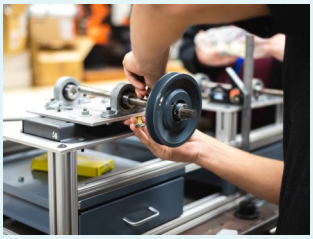
The state's funding formula is unconstitutional in that it results in less competitive diplomas in districts with low property taxes, he said. Though education is not a fundamental right, the 14th Amendment requires equal access to schooling in states that provide it.

"As important as all of those other things are and as impactful as all of those things could be, actually getting an accurate and equitable state funding formula trumps them all," Little said. "It is a really simple concept."

Reprinted from https://auburnpub.com/

With Unfilled Jobs, Businesses Push Rural Residents Toward College

By: Matt Krupnick, The Hechinger Report



When the Chemours chemical plant in New Johnsonville, Tenn., needed workers to maintain its high-tech machinery, it advertised for them as far as 90 miles away in Nashville in one direction and 150 miles away in Memphis on the other.

It still couldn't fill the jobs.

"You just can't find anybody because people don't want to come that far," said Gregory Martz, manager of the facility, which makes a quarter of the nation's supply of titanium dioxide used in everything from paints to plastics and paper.

The problem isn't just that the plant is in a rural town with a population of less than 2,000. It's that fewer than one in five adults in the entire surrounding Humphreys County have at least an associate degree, according to census data analyzed by the nonprofit advocacy organization Complete Tennessee.

Educators and policymakers started raising alarms about low levels of college-going among people in places like this after frustration from rural Americans spilled over into national politics in 2016.

Now, growing demand for college-trained workers has brought a powerful new voice to the chorus: businesses desperate to fill increasingly complex jobs at a time of almost nonexistent unemployment. With worker shortages hitting industries nationwide, their companies — and many states' economies — depend on it.

"No employer wants to locate where it has to bring in outside labor or train its staff from the ground up," editorialized one newspaper in Tennessee's rural Washington County. That area was short-listed for a new factory planned by a South Korean auto parts manufacturer that would have provided 1,000 jobs, but the company pulled out because of the low proportion of skilled workers available.

As this gap becomes more critical, Tennessee is trying to prod working adults to go back to school. Starting this fall, it extended its groundbreaking promise of tuition-free community college to all residents.

Business leaders have joined with elected officials and educators on "completion councils" in a dozen rural counties where the proportion of adults with postsecondary credentials hovers in the 20 to 25 percent range.

"We said, 'Okay, well, we've got to build our own'" employee base, said Martz, who manages the Chemours plant in New Johnsonville and was also the former chairman of the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce.

In Humphreys County, Chemours and nine other area manufacturers have struck a partnership with the local campus of Nashville State Community College to train and certify factory workers, creating a new employee pipeline from scratch. Graduates, who receive an associate degree in industrial process or mechanical maintenance technology, can expect to earn around $60,000 annually within a few years, the college and its partners say.

This kind of business-led approach is driving a statewide effort to increase the proportion of Tennesseans with degrees, from its current level of about 40 percent — sixth lowest among the 50 states — to 55 percent by 2025.

And it isn't happening only in Tennessee. In other parts of the country, where fewer rural high school graduates and older workers go to college, there is concern that people don't have the right skills. Illinois, Oklahoma, North Carolina and Florida are among the states looking for solutions.

In Colorado, one of the state's top higher education priorities is to boost the proportion of adults with degrees from 55 to 66 percent by 2025. The challenge is in changing the attitudes of people in areas where there's not a tradition of going to college, said Dan Baer, executive director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

About three-quarters of Colorado jobs will require some education beyond high school by 2020, Baer said.

"Never before have we had a conclusion that the majority of the population should have a postsecondary credential," he said. "Postsecondary has always been for a minority of the workforce. This is a true inflection point."

That's easier said than solved. With jobs of all kinds in good supply, many people don't see a reason to spend time and money getting a degree or certificate — despite the likely eventual financial payoff. Enrollment in Tennessee has actually declined among adults aged 25 to 64 since 2011.

In rural places in particular, educators say, higher education still conjures visions of a four-year campus that pumps out humanities degrees rather than a community or technical college from which graduates can go straight into high-paying positions.

But where generations of rural Americans could once get good jobs with just a high school diploma, employees in many types of industries now need further education.

"In a lot of rural communities, we still have a lot of work to do to get people to understand," said Bill Seymour, president of Cleveland State Community College, which serves rural Tennessee's Bradley and neighboring Meigs counties; only 23 percent of residents in the two-county region have any kind of postsecondary credentials, compared to the national average of 47 percent.

Bradley County's rolling landscape is dotted with examples of the new economy. Major employers include a sprawling Amazon warehouse and a Wacker polysilicon plant, both just a short drive from Walker Valley High School, where students are learning how to contribute to the high-tech manufacturing world.

In the school's mechatronics lab – the term has become a buzzword across manufacturing-heavy Tennessee — students tinker with miniature machinery that flows into an assembly line. After a few supplementary classes at a local technical college, local companies will be clamoring to hire them, said teacher Alan Bivens.

"We have students come out [of high school] able to program these things," Bivens said. "That's a really good thing to have on your resume. There's a lot of opportunity in this community, but not a big workforce to draw from."

Students at this high school are encouraged to at least complete two free years at Cleveland State or a technical college. Those who successfully finish Walker's mechatronics program can start college with 12 college credits earned in high school.

Michaela Boggess, 17, hopes to take her mechatronics skills to the University of Tennessee, about 75 miles away, where she wants to study industrial engineering. Her parents didn't complete college, but they've pushed her to do it.

"I'll probably go for four years, maybe longer," Michaela said of her college plans. After college, she hopes to go into product design or architecture. "Ever since I was little, I've liked to build stuff."

Fellow Walker Valley student Jordan Munck, 18, isn't sure yet about his future. He's been working as an electrician during breaks, he said, but he'll probably end up taking over his family's real estate business eventually. A baseball scholarship may change his plans, he said, but for now he'll probably go to Cleveland State for a couple of years.

"My parents definitely want me to go for those two free years," he said. "It's not smart *not* to do that."

Agenda for 2019

(Tentative)

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

4:00 pm	Room Check-In
5:30 pm	Ag 101 - for those who would like to broaden their expertise!
6:30 pm	Wine Reception!
7:00 pm	Dinner - Welcome & Overview
	Panel of local employers cover the basics of their employee qualification search
8:30 pm till?	Networking

Thursday, October 17, 2019

7:00-8:00 am	Breakfast
8:00-8:30 am	Good Morning! Welcome and Announcements
	Welcome to Steuben County
	The Importance of NY Agriculture
8:30-9:30 am	Pre-Conference Comments & Participant Introductions
9:30-10:30 am	My Ag Story
10:30-10:45 am	Break
10:45 am	Investing in Tomorrow Presentations (2)
Noon	Lunch
1:00 pm	Board Bus for Tour – Three tour stops and dinner
8:45 pm	Return to hotel
9:00 pm	Networking!

Friday, October 18, 2019

7:15 am	Breakfast
8:00 am	Good Morning & Announcements
8:05 am	Industry Outlook Panel – Career Opportunities & Pathways
9:15-9:30 am	Open Floor for Questions
9:30-10:00 am	Time for individual conversations with the outlook panel
10:00 – 10:15 am	Break
10:15-11:30 am	Agricultural Education and Educational Agriculture (In order to receive CTLE Credits, this session must be attended.)
11:30 am	Summary, review & evaluation – Presentation of FFX Attendee Gifts (must be present to receive)
Noon	The Final Curtain & Lunch

Dress: Wednesday is business. Thursday/Friday is casual (no open shoes for tour).

Trade Show Exhibitors*

	Christmas Tree Farmers Assoc. of NY
Ag Outreach & Education	Cornell Cooperative Extension
NY Agriculture in the Classroom	NY Annie's Project
NY Beef Council	Morrisville State College
Farm Credit East	SUNY Cobleskill
Cornell University	NYS Turfgrass Association
Northeast Dairy Foods Association	NYS Nursery & Landscape Association
* From prior years - may vary for 2018	NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets

The 2019 Experience

Focus on Middle & High School Counselors

In 2019, the invited attendees will specifically be counselors who work with middle and high school students on career development and exploration. It's a boot camp of sorts to talk about the more than 300 ag-related careers and their pathways along with the skills that students will need. Attendees will explore a wide range of careers involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics that enhance production agriculture throughout New York State. This includes going on diverse farm tours in the area, access to leaders in the food and farm industry in New York, meeting with representatives of various post-secondary education options, plus resources to take home.

Nominate Someone for the 2019 Experience

Applicants are reviewed and selected by the Foundation Board of Directors. This annual event may reach out to a different target audience each year at the discretion of the Foundation Board.

To nominate someone, or to self-nominate, for The 2019 Food & Farm Experience, please contact Sandra Prokop at 1-800-342-4143, e-mail SProkop@NYFB.org or go to www.nyfbfoundation.org to download an application.

Quick Facts

Who Should Attend: Middle & High School Career Counselors
When: October 16-18, 2019
Where: Radisson Hotel Corning, Corning, N.Y.

Positioned in the heart of Corning's Gaffer District, the Radisson Hotel Corning offers stylish rooms near shopping and dining on Market Street. Located about a 15-minute walk from the hotel, the world-famous Corning Museum of Glass displays inspiring glassworks and offers daily glassblowing demonstrations.

Amenities include the on-property Grill 1-2-5 and Steuben Bar as well as a fitness center, heated indoor pool and outdoor hot tub.

Driving Directions and Transportation Services

Corning is conveniently reached by major highways and is served by the Elmira-Corning Airport. Steuben County is easy to get to by bus and automobile via interstate highways I-86 and I-99 as well as New York State Routes 15 and 414.

Costs for all meals, accommodations and workshop materials are covered for registered attendees. Transportation to and from the Experience are the responsibility of the attendee.

If you cannot attend and do not cancel at least 2 weeks in advance, a fee of $50 will be imposed for expenses incurred. If you find that you cannot attend after acceptance, please let us know as soon as possible (at least a month in advance) so we can offer the opening to a waiting-list applicant.

Registration Deadline*: July 12, 2019

To learn more about the Food & Farm Experience or to nominate someone or to apply yourself, please contact us at 1-800-342-4143 or at www.nyfbfoundation.org.

Sowing the Seeds of Understanding
The Foundation
New York Farm Bureau
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* Postmark of Application Submission or Registration by Phone

APPLY TODAY FOR THE 2019

THE FOOD & FARM Experience
Making Connections with New York Agriculture

A Two-Day Experience Offering Middle and High School Counselors Information About Careers in Agriculture and Diverse College Courses







October 16-18, 2019
Radisson Hotel Corning
Corning, NY

A New York Farm Bureau Foundation for Agricultural Education Program
sponsored by The American Agriculturist Foundation

What is the Food & Farm Experience?

We eat every day and every day can, and should, be a learning experience!

The Food & Farm Experience is an annual summit for conversations about, and making connections with, the people, the technology and the policies associated with the agricultural food industry. This annual event reaches out to a different targeted audience each year. It is a two-day agricultural encounter meant to expose participants to New York State's excellence in agriculture. Their learning experience is maximized by introducing them to farming and food experts plus on-location farm and facility tours. The Experience includes a full reception and dinner featuring many local agricultural products and is attended by local and state dignitaries, as well as representatives from many non-traditional agricultural industry areas.

Needless to say, the food during the event is uniquely all produced in New York!

Taking place in October, The Food & Farm Experience puts attendees' feet on the ground and follows the steps that agricultural products take on the journey from farm to fork. They will receive high-quality materials and other resources that provide them easy reference and access to the core of New York State's agriculture and food industries.

Each year The Food & Farm Experience features:

- Informal interactive sessions with twenty-five to thirty-five target group members
- An attendee roster that includes two to three individuals who are actively engaged in farming. These farmers both share experiences and learn from the other attendees by interacting directly throughout the scope of the program
- Open conversations that allow the participants to enhance their understanding of food and farming. They will "connect" on all levels, providing networking opportunities and links to the industry that feeds them in so many ways
- **Meals, accommodations and workshop materials are covered for all registered attendees**

For more information:

To learn more about the Food & Farm Experience, to nominate someone, or to apply yourself please contact us at 1-800-342-4143 or at www.nyfbfoundation.org.

The New York Farm Bureau Foundation for Agricultural Education, Inc. has received funding from the American Agriculturist Foundation, Inc. to support The Food & Farm Experience. The grant supports the Foundation's mission to educate and promote awareness of New York State's agricultural bounty and its relationship to the food industry.

Focus on Steuben County

The Food & Farm Experience
October 16 – 18, 2019
The Radisson Hotel Corning
125 Denison Parkway East, Corning, NY

Known as the gateway to the Southern Finger Lakes, Steuben County has a population of about 100,000 people living in rural agricultural areas, quaint villages and small cities. Many of the names of the streets, towns, rivers, and lakes in the region reflect the influence of the Seneca Indians who lived here long before the county was founded. Like the Native Americans before them, residents and visitors alike enjoy vistas of rolling hills, valleys, and deep-water lakes. The many rivers and lakes provided early settlers with fresh water, abundant fish and transportation routes. Along with the public parks that dot the landscape, today these waterways provide excellent recreation opportunities.

Steuben County produces a large diversity of crops with 406,700 acres in production. The county is one of the top in New York State in hay, hogs & pigs, cattle, nurseries & floriculture, poultry & eggs, and Christmas trees. In addition, it is number one in acreage of oats, grain, and forage land.

In the last 15 years, the value of the agricultural products sold has increased 38%. The average size farm in Steuben County is 243 acres.

THE FOOD & FARM Experience
Making Connections with New York Agriculture