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Rural Roots

News, Information, and Commentary from the Rural School and Community Trust

Rural Trust Named One of Worth Magazine's 100 Best Charities

The Rural School and Community Trust has been named one of *Worth* magazine's 100 Best Charities in the December issue of the magazine. The Rural Trust has the distinction of being the only rural education group selected by the magazine in the article "To Give Well, To Give Wisely," which names the 100 top charities in the U.S.

"We are very pleased to be named one of the best managed, most focused, and wisest places for donors to invest their money," said Rachel Tompkins, president of the Rural Trust.

The Rural Trust, along with hundreds of other organizations, went through a rigorous application process. Charities that were selected are considered to have the "greatest impact in the field" and "wisest use of donor dollars." *Worth* selected charities in six categories: health,

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Principal Sara Johnson works with students at Henry L. Slater Elementary School in Burns, Oregon.

Challenges and Rewards of Rural School Leadership

By Elaina Loveland

It takes a special person to lead a rural school.

Like school leaders throughout the country, rural school principals and superintendents must recruit teachers and deal with often lower funding than needed. But in rural areas, depending on the geographic location, there are other problems such as declining enrollments, the threat of consolidation and

high principal and superintendent turnover.

Rural principals often take on many different types of responsibilities compared with principals of larger schools that have more administrative staff. "In larger schools, people are assigned to do many different tasks. In rural schools,

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Rural Datebook

February 12–14, 2003

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

Sheraton New Orleans Hotel,
New Orleans, Louisiana

This workshop, sponsored by the Economic Research Service, Southern Rural Development Center, and the Rural School and Community Trust, aims to stimulate a focused attention on rural education-related issues in America, particularly the capacity of rural schools to provide high quality education to their students and to serve as an engine for local economic development activities. Details about the workshop are available at <http://srdc.msstate.edu/ruraled/index.html>. Please e-mail Bo Beaulieu at ljb@srdc.msstate.edu if you have questions.

March 20–22, 2003

American Council on Rural Special Education 23rd Annual National Conference

Sheraton City Centre Hotel,
Salt Lake City, Utah

“Rural Survival” is this year’s theme of the American Council on Rural Spe-

cial Education’s 23rd Annual National Conference. The conference will highlight teaching strategies and programs that have been used successfully in K-12 classrooms. Please visit <http://www.extension.usu.edu/acres> to learn more. Contact Dr. Jack Mayhew at (801) 626-6268 or by e-mail at jmayhew@weber.edu for additional information.

March 28–30, 2003

26th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference

Richmond, Kentucky

Berea College and Eastern Kentucky University will co-host the 26th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference in Kentucky next March. This year’s theme is “Building A Healthy Region: Environment, Culture, Community”; The Appalachian Studies Association brings together scholars, teachers, community and regional activists, entrepreneurs, planners, officials, families, young people, old people—people who care passionately about the region, who want to learn from each other, and who want to make a difference in their communities. Conference information is online at <http://www.appalachianstudies.org>. For questions, call Gordon McKinney at (859) 985-3141 or send an e-mail to gordon_mckinney@berea.edu.

Rural Trust Named One of *Worth Magazine’s* 100 Best Charities

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human services, environment, education, relief/development, and arts/culture. To apply, the Rural Trust had to provide a detailed description of its work, financial statements for the past three years and supporting ma-

terials including newsletters, policy reports, and the biennial *Why Rural Matters*.

The honor of being listed as one of the top charities in *Worth* magazine is immeasurable—the publication reaches more than 500,000 people, which will surely get the word out about the value of place-based learning and the Rural Trust’s work improve education by connecting schools and communities.

To list your upcoming events in the February 2003 newsletter, please contact *Rural Roots* at editor@ruraledu.org or call (202) 955-7177, ext. 14.

Editor’s Note

Thanks to all readers who returned change of address forms in response to our mailing earlier this year. Due to an error, the U.S. Postal Service has been holding many of these change of address forms since January 2002. We are now updating our database with the correct addresses as quickly as possible. Thank you for your continued patience.



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Rural Roots is published six times per year by the Rural School and Community Trust (Rural Trust). The Rural Trust is the premier national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving rural communities. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging rural places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, advocates for appropriate state educational policies, and addresses the critical issue of funding for rural schools.

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Place-Based Project Connects Rural Children in Tennessee and Bulgaria

The University of Tennessee and Bourgas Free University in Bulgaria have collaborated to introduce the *My Place, Our Place, Your Place* learning model to rural children in both countries in a two-year project funded by the U.S. Department of State.

The *My Place, Our Place, Your Place* concept combines two educational models generally thought to be in competition. The place-based model focuses on the local culture, environment, and skills for the local career market. The internationalization model focuses on intercultural issues, the global environment and skills for the global economy. Using this curriculum, Tennessee students will learn about their own culture by interpreting it to students in Bulgaria and vice versa. They will learn about their own government, environment, etc. by comparing them with those of their partner country. When students in Bulgaria learn about the *lev* or the *Euro* in the local economy, they will also learn about the dollar in Tennessee, and so on.

Select K-12 school principals, teachers, and students from rural Tennessee and Bulgaria will participate in the program. Students, educators and community members will communicate via computers, taking the age-old "pen pal" model to a whole new level. Students will have "e-pals" to communicate electronically using software that will translate messages into the student's native language. In addition, over two summers, professors, principals and teachers will exchange to learn about local culture, design curriculum, and teach a course on the *My Place, Our Place, Your Place* model at both universities. This unique curriculum will offer students the skills to succeed in the global arena while affirming the value of the home place, encouraging students to stay, return, or maintain connections to sustain their home economy and culture.

Wartburg Central High School in Wartburg, Tennessee is one of the rural high schools that will be participating in the *My Place, Our Place, Your Place* project. Principal Edd Diden said

that place-based education is a key component to the initiative because students can't understand or appreciate another culture until they can understand and appreciate their own. Also, according to Diden, *My Place* will hopefully become a "replicable model of how to do place-based education in a global marketplace." Of course, Diden, who is a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, is pleased to be part of the project. "It's exciting for us because it allows our school to have a voice in school reform at an international level," he says.

News Briefs

Rural Leaders Sign "Nebraska City Declaration" to Improve Rural Policies

More than 200 national authorities on rural economic development adopted the "Nebraska City Declaration" at the "Rural Matters: Making Place and Culture Count!" symposium held October 16-18, 2002 in Nebraska City, Nebraska. The declaration is modeled after one adopted by European nations in 1996 and claims that federal and state policies have largely failed rural America—which has 80 percent of the landmass in the U.S. and one-quarter of the nation's population. Furthermore, the document challenges the notion that rural America's economic survival is dependent solely upon agriculture and agricultural business.

"Agriculture is major here in the Midwest, but rural policy in West Virginia is mining policy and in the Pacific Northwest it's forestry and in the Ozarks it's retirement," said Sam Cordes, a University of Nebraska agricultural economist who helped coordinate the meetings.

The declaration aims to bring attention to struggling rural areas with the hope that rather than attempting to fulfill the needs of rural America in a piecemeal fashion, policymakers will realize that large-scale improvements are needed.

The Nebraska City Declaration is being distributed to local governments, industry groups and rural people across the country for feedback before a final version is delivered congressional leaders in January 2003. For the text of this declaration, go to http://www.rupri.org/ruralmatters/nebraska_city_declaration.htm.

Rural Trust Releases Report on Rural School Leadership in the South

The Rural School and Community Trust has released *Rural School Leadership in the Deep South: The Double-Edged Legacy of School Desegregation*, the first of a two-part report intended to give public voice to school leaders in the South.

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Youth Council

The Sharing of Authority

From the Rural School and Community Trust National Youth Council

“An influential principal has the courage to stand alone. She has a commitment, above all else, to doing what is best for children despite the dictates of others. She challenges assumptions and traditions and helps others do so as well. . . It’s time for a new conception of the school principal, one based on a skilled, passionate, moral commitment to students’ and teachers’ learning—and to the leader’s own learning.”

— *Learning by Heart* by Roland Barth

The job of a high school principal these days is not an easy one. With increasing pressure to ensure that all students achieve at high levels, principals spend their time juggling the demands of external accountability measures, advocating for increased resources, managing highly charged political environments, and promoting high quality instruction. Many view their jobs as running schools *for* students, rather than *with* students. The principals who do distribute leadership to others within schools, usually look to adults—teachers, parents, community members—to share decisions. Occasionally, innovative administrators partner with the energy, talent and voices of students in clarifying the policies, purposes and values of the school.

Two members of the National Youth Council recently discussed the important roles their high school principals played in the development of youth-adult partnerships. James Gutierrez, a senior at the University of New Mexico, and Maura Shader, a freshman at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, each had influential experiences that made profound and lasting impacts on their attitudes about leadership and education.

“When students work together with school administrators to make their schools better, the results can be transformational,” said Gutierrez. “During my senior year of high school, Eloy

Roybal took the helm of the school. The first time I met him, I noted there was something different about him. He spoke to me, a student, with respect and seemed to value what I had to say.”

Roybal founded the Principal’s Action Council (PAC) at Robertson High School in Las Vegas, New Mexico during the fall of 2000. As a founding member, Gutierrez remembers the excitement of being a part of PAC’s inaugural year. “I had never heard of such a thing before, but I could tell it was something important. Mr. Roybal explained that PAC would comprise other students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Each would bring individual perspectives to help design school policies. From the start, there was great rapport among all, and the students, especially, were enthusiastic about the opportunity that the principal had given us.”

As a voting member of the Principal’s Action Council, Gutierrez helped reconstruct the school handbook, examine the school’s strengths and weaknesses, and develop leadership skills. “It was quite an experience for me to have this adult

who was in charge ask me what I thought should be done. I think the greatest part of this situation was that we all worked together to accomplish our goals!”

Maura Shader’s high school principal also demonstrated a strong belief in youth-adult partnerships. Jeff Place was principal of Peoples Academy in Morrisville, Vermont, during Shader’s four years of high school. The moment she entered high school, Shader sensed her principal executed different educational strategies. “It was evident that Jeff Place’s presence in the school was initiating change among the students, teachers, and staff,” she said. Shader reported that her principal interacted with students on a daily basis: “He stood in the halls during lunch break, attended soccer games, and participated in drama productions—assuming acting roles in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Because he worked to develop and maintain relationships with the school



James Gutierrez, a senior at the University of New Mexico, with his former principal, Eloy Roybal.

and community, students regarded him as an accessible and approachable partner with whom to formulate change.”

Working with Place, Shader became involved in the Vermont Rural Partnership, a group that focuses on place-based education and youth-adult partnerships in rural schools and communities. The conferences that Place and Shader attended together as partners focused on methods to make schools a welcoming place for students and adults in the community. Shader remembers her experiences fondly.

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First Person

Diary of a Rural School Leader: What Really Matters Anyway?

By Jeanne Surface

I began as principal of Meeteetse Public Schools a few months ago. When I interviewed for the position, I knew that the Wyoming State Department of Education had raised some accreditation issues with the district. I had a sense that most of the issues would be resolved pretty quickly with some simple corrections.

I was wrong. In fact, the district went from full accreditation to non-accreditation and back to conditional accreditation. The non-accreditation status was given to them because of a teacher teaching in a non-endorsed area. In this case, the teacher had a 7–12 English endorsement but was teaching middle school English without a middle school endorsement. Wyoming Department of Education had just implemented a new “rubric” that they use for accrediting districts. The rubric being used was exactly the same for all of the districts in the state regardless of size. Meeteetse, a district of 140 students K–12, was given the same rubric as Cheyenne Public Schools, a district of 13,000 students. I wondered how it could be that both districts could be evaluated in the same manner. Cheyenne, because of its size, typically manages itself by using bureaucratic constraints that aren't prevalent in small rural schools.

Coming into the district, I decided that I was ready for the challenge of improving instruction and raising test scores in this district. As I looked deeper, I realized that there really wasn't cause for concern. The students in this district were doing quite well on standardized test scores. Well *above the state average*

in most cases. So, I wondered, what is really the problem here?

I haven't been in a school this small but, in a school district of around 500 where I worked previously, we were clearly accountable to the community, to each other and to the students. In a small school, there is really nowhere to hide. For example, if a middle school English teacher does a poor job of teaching in one area, the high school teacher has to pick up the slack. There is no doubt that a change will occur the next year. If a teacher is unkind to children, parents will certainly expect a change to occur and will hold

“Everyone has to pitch in to accomplish goals. . . . Teachers, community members and administrators do it all.”

the principal accountable until it changes. We stand “naked” in front of our public every day. They know when we do well and when we don't. Most importantly, everyone has to pitch in to accomplish goals. There are no curriculum directors, no standards coordinators, and no department heads. Teachers, community members and administrators do it all.

I wonder what happened here? It seems like the district didn't have the paperwork in place that the Wyoming Department of Education expected for documentation. Some of the “corrective

actions” needed were as follows: families who report zero income on free/reduced lunch applications needed to be contacted every six weeks to be sure that the income was still zero, a fire drill needed to be given during the four days that school was in session in August, a climate survey needed to be given to children in grades K–3, the school needed a systematic method of recording assessments for inclusion of correctives and enrichments, a home language survey needed to be given to all families, and several having to do with assessments and accountability. *For this, the school was told that it was second best—that they*

didn't deserve to be fully accredited by the state of Wyoming. Community members were upset at the state, upset with the embarrassment that the school had caused and in general, concerned and confused about what happened. The superintendent invited the two women in charge of making recommendations to the state board to a community meeting in the district. They sat at a table and appeared like the Supreme Court to tell the community why the school had been given this label. Community members were ready to roll up their sleeves to get the job done. They were willing to do whatever it took to get the district's accreditation back to a fully accredited status. When a community member asked the “experts” how long it would take the school to get back to full accreditation, they remarked that it would take at least two years and we should consider hiring a consultant. Their message seemed to suggest that we didn't have the capability to make things better. Clearly, the problem was not a lack of knowing and understanding, as they seemed to suggest, it was getting the work done with a skeleton crew.

WYOMING

● Meeteetse



Jeanne Surface

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principals do it all," says Donald Buckingham, principal of Sedgwick Elementary School in Sedgwick, Maine.

Despite the workload, educators choose to become school leaders for several reasons. Sara Johnson, principal at Henry L. Slater Elementary School in Burns, Oregon, was inspired. She once overheard a woman administrator colleague say: "If you believe you could go into administration to make a difference, you have a moral obligation to do it." Johnson took those words to heart and knew she had a calling to become a principal.

Rural leaders face unique challenges every day. The snapshots below attempt to bring to light some of the distinctive aspects of leading a rural school.

The Dual Principal

After 30 years of teaching high school English and drama, Christy Campbell decided she wanted to "help teachers be better teachers." So she took the plunge—she interviewed for a principalship at Lyman Middle School in rural Wyoming. Campbell landed the position, with a catch: the district was tacking on another school to her job—she would become the principal of both Lyman Elementary School and Lyman Middle School.

Now, three years later, Campbell is still a dual principal shuffling her day between two offices in two different buildings and heading a campus made up of four buildings altogether. "At least the buildings are in walking distance," she says.

A cutback in funds caused the Lyman district to combine two principal positions into one after the elementary school principal resigned.

What makes Campbell's dual principal job even more demanding is that her schools are at two different levels. This means double paperwork, not only for two different schools, but for different grades as well. "When I go to a superintendent's meeting, all the other principals have one set of papers. I have two: one set for the elementary school and one set for the middle school."

Campbell's situation is not all that unusual in rural areas.

Linda Pearl, from Escanaba, Michigan, has been principal at the same two K-6 elementary schools for eight years and has been a dual school principal for a total of 15 years. Pearl is currently the principal of Ford River Elementary

School with 174 students and Franklin Elementary School with 190 students, located about 12 miles apart. Because of the distance between schools, Pearl spends Mondays and Wednesdays at one school, Tuesdays and Thursdays at the other and divides Friday between the schools. "My biggest challenge is getting to all activities at both schools," says Pearl. "But having a great faculty makes a difference."

Consolidation at Work

While many urban and suburban schools have enrollments increasing faster than they can hire teachers and

After 30 years of teaching high school English and drama, Christy Campbell decided she wanted to "help teachers be better teachers."



build facilities, rural schools can have the opposite problem. Some rural schools have declining enrollments and, as a result, lose state funding. Norm Yoder, superintendent of Heartland Community Schools in Nebraska, got into administration because he was interested in school finance. As the leader of a consolidated school district that faces a steady decline in enrollment, school finance is a key concern for this rural administrator who must, by definition, "wear a lot of hats."

Heartland Community Schools was created when neighboring districts Henderson Community Schools and Bradshaw Public Schools merged five years ago. The consolidation did result in saving dollars, according to Yoder, but it did not solve the declining enrollment problem. There are fewer students in Heartland schools today than there were when there were two separate districts.

The district may look to consolidation in the future, but the success may not be as simple. When Henderson and Bradshaw merged, the districts had to

Educating Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas

"There is not enough of me to go around," says D'Ann Cathriner, describing her job as principal of Blessing Elementary School. The preK-5 school serving 220 students is located in Blessing, Texas, a small agricultural community on the Gulf Coast.

Due to its proximity to Mexico, Blessing Elementary School has many students who don't speak English. The school advocates total immersion to

teach English to Spanish-speaking children.

A lot of the children are illegal aliens and do not attend school all year; many parents are migrant workers and divide time between Blessing, Texas and other locations.

"We feel it is our duty to educate all children when they are with us and it is rewarding to see the students developing language skills," says Cathriner.

Principals Leading Learning

Edd Diden, a 12-year veteran principal at Wartburg High School in Wartburg, Tennessee, believes that principals have the responsibility of helping teachers engage students in learning, not just by teaching, but by getting students to a higher level of understanding.

“Getting students engaged in education is not just playing the game of going to school,” he says.

Diden says that “knowing is only part of the big picture” and “caring and passion have to be part of learning” in order for students to want “to do something about it.” Getting students involved is a top priority for Diden; his mission is to “open teachers’ eyes to place-based and project-learning.” Recently, Wartburg High School was selected to participate in *My Place, Our Place, Your Place*, an international place-based learning initiative between the University of Tennessee and Bourgas Free University in Bulgaria.

Diden is pleased that he and his school will be part of the two-year project. “Any leader has to be willing to take risks. You can’t drive people to make changes—you have to do it with them,” he says.



Principal Edd Diden with students at Wartburg Central High School in Wartburg, Tennessee.

eliminate ten positions, but the state offered financial incentives for consolidation. That is no longer the case. Financing the school as enrollments decline pose a continuous problem and without financial assistance from the state, recon- solidation is a not as accessible as before.

“The state legislature is going to have to provide more funds,” Yoder says. “Period.”

For other school leaders who may look to consolidation due to community choice or state pressure, Yoder has this advice: “The best thing for a leader to remember in a consolidation is to keep the focus on the students. Kids mesh well. It’s the adults who sometimes have problems.”

Leadership in Native Schools

Little Singer Community School in Winslow, Arizona, headed by principal Mark Sorensen is a charter school for Native Americans rooted in bringing the students back home. Native American children often leave the reservation to find jobs, and trying to promote tribal culture and keep Native children home can be difficult, especially in areas like Winslow where the poverty rate is high and the school is the largest employer.

The school, founded in 1978, has 120 students and was established in memory

of a Navajo medicine man who wanted to instill the values of Native culture and keep them alive on the reservation. Traditionally, Navajo medicine men were singers, hence the name of the school. Sorensen is also principal of the Star School near Flagstaff, Arizona, a K–6 school for Native students started just three years ago, which depends solely on solar power for its operation.

Being a leader at a Native school has challenges of its own, according to Sorensen. “It’s one thing to want to bring students back home, but it’s harder to address what are kids going to do back home,” he says. Yet, Sorensen believes that the school’s aim to “regenerate the multigenerational impact of traditional families” and keep Native children at home is an effort that is more than worthwhile. Teaching Native children with tribal culture integrated into the school’s curriculum is at the heart of Little Singer Community School and Star School’s mission. Through service to the people and the land, Sorensen hopes to keep Native traditions alive for children and keep them at home where they can impact future generations.

Recruiting Rural Teachers

It’s no secret that salaries for rural teachers are often less than salaries for

their urban and suburban counterparts. Rural teachers earn an average of \$6,124 less per year than their counterparts in suburban and urban areas according to Rural Trust’s *Why Rural Matters* report released in 2000 [an updated report will be published in 2003].

“Salaries don’t often attract outsiders. There aren’t many job opportunities for spouses,” says Carlinda Purcell, former superintendent of the rural Warren County School District in North Carolina. Purcell is now associate superintendent for support services of Cumberland County Schools in Fayetteville.

Donald Buckingham, principal of Sedgwick Elementary School in Sedgwick, Maine, says that recruiting teachers in his small coastal town in Maine is becoming increasingly difficult. “We have a dual problem here,” he says. “Not only do we have trouble competing with surrounding larger districts for competitive salaries, there is a high cost of living here due to our coastal location where real estate is priced quite high compared to most rural areas.”

Buckingham says that in the last decade, more people have found a way to live in a highly desirable coastal community like Sedgwick and make a decent

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living. Technology and the willingness to take on long commutes have brought higher income families to the area. The economic demographics of children attending Sedgwick Elementary School are unusual. "About half the children are eligible for free and reduced lunch and the other half are from wealthier families," says Buckingham.

Teachers at Sedgwick Elementary don't earn high salaries, and coupled with the higher than average cost of living (compared to other rural settings), attracting and retaining teachers is tough.

About half of the staff at the school

has been hired in the past three years. Other districts and schools and even other schools in the same districts can pay upwards of \$5000 more per year.

"I try to get good teachers who are committed to the area," says Buckingham.

In an area like Sedgwick, commitment to place is the primary factor in getting educators to say put, because the salary alone just won't cut it.

Networking, Networking

The Vermont Rural Partnership (VRP), a coalition of 17 of Vermont's

smallest, most rural, economically challenged schools and communities, offers unique networking opportunities for principals and supports place-based learning. Each August, the VRP hosts a Principal's Retreat, a required one-day meeting for principals in member schools. The retreat provides networking opportunities, place-based readings, and pairs new principals with a more experienced "buddy" principal. The VRP also has a "response team" to go to schools to help solve problems. Team members volunteer their service based on their expertise in order to ensure the most efficient problem-solving team possible.

Principal Sonja Davis of Burke Town School has been attending VRP's Principal's Retreat for five years. Initially her school, serving grades K-8, applied to be a part of VRP to get funding for students to get more involved in the community. But, happily, Davis got more than she bargained for. Burke Town School staff has participated in writing place-based curricula, the school has developed a strategic plan, and also has standard units based on place-based learning. "Being part of the partnership, we've gotten 100 times back in opportunities for staff," Davis says.

Director of the VRP and Peacham School Principal Margaret MacLean believes that principals are key in helping to implement place-based learning in schools. "Their role in place-based education is to facilitate the curriculum," she says. "Leaders need to know how to make it happen for teachers." To fill the need to educate principals on place-based education, VRP provides workshops in addition to the Principal's Retreat and encourages leaders to visit other schools where place-based learning is effective.

The VRP Principal's Retreat also exists to ease the leadership transition period due to high turnover of principals in Vermont—a trend that affects many other states across the nation, especially in rural areas. According to MacLean, the average time principals stay at one job is three years so there are new principals at the VRP Principal's Retreat every year.

"Leadership changes have been a huge issue," she says. "Often principals come

Rural School Leaders Honored

These rural principals are among 63 chosen as 2002 National Distinguished Elementary and Middle School Principals by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.



Cynthia A. Eliser, a 2002 National Distinguished Principal

Name: Cynthia A. Eliser
Position: Principal
School: Raceland Lower Elementary
Location: Raceland, Louisiana
Size: 425 students (Pre-K to second grade)
Years as a Rural Principal: 8
Quote: As a rural principal, people not only see me as the school principal, they see me as a "real" person. I go the same churches, stores, and businesses that they do!



Peggy Ames Nerud, a 2002 National Distinguished Principal

Name: Peggy Ames Nerud
Position: Principal
School: Northside School
Location: Wolf Point, Montana at Fort Peck Indian Reserve
Size: 219 students (grades 4-6)
Years as a Rural Principal: 14
Quote: I get to know my students and parents as individuals and beyond the school day. You can make a difference working with them over a long period of time.

in and have a new agenda. There has to be buy in from teachers and community members.”

Sara Johnson, principal of Henry L. Slater Elementary School in Burns, Oregon, notes that superintendent turnover is especially problematic in her rural district. “When a superintendent leaves, the district becomes fractured. Instead of working with one clear vision, schools start working independently and can create competition among the schools,” she says.

It Takes Vision to Lead

For better or worse, education is not just about schools, but also about politics. Parents, educators and policymakers are raising questions about the accountability of education, its success rate, its methodologies and even its purpose. Rural school leaders play a key role in educating American’s children, yet they are in the midst of politics as well.

“Our nation has to figure out what our schools are going to do. Are they supposed to maximize the potential of the individual or set a minimum standard of education across the board—it’s hard to do both,” states Mark Sorensen, principal of Little Singer Community School and the Star School in Arizona.

A rural school principal has to figure out how to balance individual achievement while maintaining standards. The role can be “both a quandary and a blessing” in the words Edd Diden, principal of Wartburg Central High School in Tennessee. “Typically in rural places,

leaders can get very close to people in the community. The negative side is that there can be unbelievable expectations that a leader can’t solve because they are societal problems,” he says.

As rural school leaders, principals have to be up to the challenge to see resources that they have in rural areas, which are different than resources in urban and suburban settings. “The dominant culture sees resources as big buildings, but there are things we can enjoy that are nature-connected and these are resources too,” says Sorensen. In order to recognize non-monetary resources in rural areas, Sorensen recommends that rural leaders, as a group, need to “realign our vision to see and appreciate the richness we have.”

GrantsWatch

Grant: *Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation*

Funder: *National Trust for Historic Preservation*

Deadline: *February 1, 2003*

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is offering grants through the Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation for projects that contribute to the preservation or the recapture of an authentic sense of place. Funds may be used for professional advice, conferences, workshops, or education programs, and grants range from \$2,500 to \$10,000. The annual deadline for applications is February 1. For more information contact Melissa Curran at (202) 588-6197 or by e-mail: psf@nthp.org. To learn more about the National Trust for Historic Preservation and additional funding opportunities, please visit <http://www.nthp.org>.

Grant: *National School Library Media Program of the Year Award*

Funder: *Follett Library Resources and The American Association of School Librarians*

Deadline: *January 3, 2003*

Sponsored by Follett Library Resources, this award recognizes exemplary school library media programs in three categories: large school district (over 10,000 students), small school district

(under 10,000 students), and single school. The winners in each of the three categories will receive \$10,000. The award honors programs that emphasize the importance of the school library media program as an integral part of the instructional process. An application is available online at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/awards.html>. For more information contact AASL, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611; (800) 545-2433, ext. 4381 or e-mail kchaney@ala.org.

Diden agrees that leaders, educators and community members need to see rural areas in a new light. “School leaders must convince young people that living and learning in a rural place is an asset instead of a liability,” he says. “Students, educators, and parents may catch a renewed vision and enthusiasm for local communities and the possibility of a bright future through education rooted in place.”

Ultimately, rural school leaders believe that rewards of rural school leadership are worth the challenges. “It’s a great job,” asserts Donald Buckingham, principal of Sedgwick Elementary School in Maine. “We get to make a real difference in the school and how the community views education.”

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Grant: *NEA Fine Arts Grant*

Funder: *National Education Association*

Deadline: *February 3, 2003*

Sponsored by the National Education Association Foundation, the NEA Fine Arts grants are awarded, through local NEA affiliates, to enable fine arts teachers to create and implement fine arts programs that promote learning among students at risk of school failure. Programs must address the arts (e.g., painting, sculpture, photography, music, theater, dance, design, media, or folk arts). Ten grants will be awarded in the amount of \$2,000. Grant funds may be used for resource materials, supplies, equipment, transportation, software, and/or professional fees. To learn more, visit <http://www.nfie.org/programs/finearts.htm> or call (202) 822-7840.

Feedback

Do you have any questions, comments or feedback? Something got you jazzed up? Think we should cover your story? Have an idea for us? Have a rural education need that we are not fulfilling? We greatly value your thoughts and opinions. Write to the Editor at the Rural School and Community Trust: 1825 K Street, NW, Suite 703, Washington, DC 20006. Or e-mail: editor@ruraledu.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

The Sharing of Authority from page 4

“With Mr. Place, I worked closely with students and teachers from my community in developing projects that highlighted the benefits of place-based education and youth-adult partnerships. Without the guidance and enthusiasm of Jeff Place, Peoples Academy would not be where it is today,” she said.

The roles of principals such as Eloy Roybal and Jeff Place outlast the high-school careers of their students. The significance of their role, though, stays active in the lives of students for years to come. James Gutierrez and Maura Shader will remember their principals not simply because they were authoritative figures for four years of their lives. Rather, Gutierrez and Shader, along with thousands of other students, remember their innovative administrators because

they realized that authority in governing schools resides in involvement of everyone—from the principal to the tenured teacher to the youngest student.

Eloy Roybal retired in June 2002 after 27 years as a teacher and school administrator in rural schools throughout New Mexico.

Jeff Place is now the special education coordinator of the Lamoille South Supervisory Union in Vermont.

News Briefs from page 3

From the conception of this report, the Rural Trust sought to identify the special challenges and opportunities for school leadership within the context of the unique conditions and circumstances of rural places. The report comes from discussions with the Rural School Leaders Working Group (comprising 20 principals, superintendents and instructional supervisors from Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi) to discuss the issues, challenges and opportunities for school leadership from their individual and collective perspectives as experienced leaders in what are arguably among the most difficult places in the country to operate a school. Their insights and articulated needs are reflected throughout this report. The data collected from the Rural School Leaders Working Group are summarized in several important findings with implications for approaching rural school leadership in the South. A “Ventures in Leadership” grant from Wallace Reader’s Digest Funds provided funding for the Rural Leaders Working Group and the publication of the report.

Rural Trust Affiliates Receive Grant to Continue Curriculum

The Vermont Rural Partnership (VRP) and the Vermont Children’s Forum (VCF) have received a \$185,000 grant from the Vermont Department of Education and Training to further student leadership development work already under way.

In 1998, the two groups joined forces to create a dynamic youth leadership curriculum. Eleven middle and secondary level students and nine adults from around the state formed a working group to explore ideas and construct a model committed to authentic youth-adult partnerships. The outcome was a curriculum that fully integrates student leadership development with place-based education and service learning, fostering meaningful youth-adult partnerships in the process. The “Our Voices, Our Community” curriculum was

designed for all teens, but particularly offers youth who are nontraditional leaders—or those deemed at-risk—an experience to identify their strengths, set goals, and build the necessary skills to help them attain their life vision. The curriculum honors multiple learning styles and is adaptable to meet the needs of youth with diverse learning and developmental challenges. It is flexible in that it can utilize both the school setting or a community-based setting. The curriculum has already been piloted at 12 sites subsequent to two statewide training sessions. An innovative year-long course based on the curriculum is currently in progress at three schools.

With the new grant, VRP and VCF plan to update their inventory of youth leadership programs, fine-tune the curriculum, introduce its availability to agencies who desire this resource and seek their collaboration, conduct four training sessions, evaluate and revise the curriculum and training format, and develop a plan for sustainability. In the future, the groups plan to share the “Our Voices, Our Community” curriculum nationally. For more information, contact Helen Beattie by e-mail at hnbeattie@aol.com.

New Resources for Small Town Leaders

The National Center for Small Communities (NCSC), based in Washington, DC, has two new resources for small town leaders and rural development practitioners.

The Thriving Home Network is a fully searchable Internet database which compiles more than 50 community and economic development case studies drawn from small communities. It is available free of charge at <http://www.smallcommunities.org/ncsc/> (click on “new resources”).

Technology and the Grit at the Grassroots is a 68-page guidebook that provides information on effective technology-led economic development strategies for distressed rural communities. The book provides practical advice on how to implement the latest technology in rural areas and has been distributed to regional and state economic organizations and agencies in order to reach small town leaders. For more information, please visit <http://www.smallcommunities.org>.

Diary of a Rural School Leader

from page 5

I asked if there were schools that they would hold up as having met accreditation at the level that they expected? One of the women said, "Cheyenne, of course." She didn't stop at that; she commented about how Cheyenne was able to do all of this with only one area that needed to be corrected and it was difficult for her to understand how a school the size of Meeteetse could have not met the expectation of the rubric. It was a pretty "telling" comment in my mind. I wondered if she had given any thought that it might be different to accomplish these feats with an instructional staff of 22 compared with a staff of more than 1,100. I had some Cheyenne people in a principal preparation class that I taught this summer for the University of Wyoming. There is no doubt in my mind that they do an excellent job of educating kids, but circumstances in the two communities are vastly different.

Sadly, this school has been given the message that they are second best. If they were really good, they would do things like Cheyenne does. The age-old societal view once again comes in that bigger is better. I don't think I can stomach that view.

Since that meeting in August, I took on the challenge and rather than hire an "expert" from the outside, I will be the assistant superintendent and will work on a daily basis with the staff to take some of the burden off their shoulders with all of this accountability stuff. We've already done some of the bureaucratic hoop-jumping that they ask us to do and we continue doing great things for kids. I'm up for the challenge and will continue to champion the cause for small rural schools. If they really look deeply at what we do for kids, *our way*, I think they'll be really impressed.

Jeanne Surface is the assistant superintendent at Meeteetse Public Schools.

"Diary of a Rural School Leader" is an ongoing column that will appear periodically on the Rural School and Community Trust Web site. Visit www.ruraledu.org to read future columns.

Publications of Note

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high-performing community of schools that ensures both equity of opportunity and high-level achievement across all groups of students. The portfolio includes eight documents including: School Communities that Work for Results and Equity; Generally Accepted Principles of Teaching and Learning; Central Office Review and Results and Equity; Find, Support, Deploy, and Keep the Best Teachers and School Leaders; Developing Effective Partnerships to Support Local Education; First Steps to a Level Playing Field: An Introduction to Student-Based Budgeting; Assessing Inequities in School Funding within Districts; and Moving toward Equity in School Funding within Districts.

The toolkit is available at <http://www.schoolcommunities.org/portfolio.html>.

Schools and Communities Working Together

By Terri Anderson and Vicki Nelson
Center for School Change, June 2002

The Center for School Change, located at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, has published *Schools and Communities Working Together*, a handbook highlighting work in rural Minnesota communities. The book is

based on a decade of research on rural Minnesota's schools and communities and offers improvement ideas for parents, educators and community members. The book is available in PDF format for download at <http://www.centerforschoolchange.org>.

Students in Service to America: A Guidebook for Engaging America's Students in a Lifelong Habit of Service

Corporation for National and Community Service, August 2002

As part of President George W. Bush's USA Freedom Corps, the initiative to encourage Americans to commit at least 4,000 hours of service to others throughout their lives, a guidebook has been published to help students learn the value of service. The *Students in Service to America* guidebook and CD-ROM were developed through a collaboration of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the U.S. Department of Education, the Points of Light Foundation, the Volunteer Center National Network, and the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. The guidebook can be downloaded in PDF format from: <http://www.studentsinservicetoamerica.org/guidebook/index.html>. For more information on USA Freedom Corps, please visit www.usafreedomcorps.gov or call 1-877-USA-CORPS.

Submissions

Rural Roots contains stories that share the incredible variety of place-based work going on around the country, its successes and challenges. Stories on rural community development, individuals and organizations making a difference in education and community life, and practitioner interests are all highlighted throughout the year.

Rural Roots is published six times per year and is distributed to more than 6,000 constituents. We encourage stories that focus on groundbreaking place-based education projects, youth-adult partnerships, small schools and consolidation, economic development, conservation, the arts, and instructive resource guides geared to teachers, to name a few.

We publish stories ranging from 400 to 2,000 words. If you are interested in submitting an idea for an article, please e-mail the editor at editor@ruraledu.org or call (202) 955-7177. We cannot offer payment for articles.



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Publications of Note

New from the Rural Trust

***Rural School Leadership
in the Deep South:
The Double-Edged Legacy
of School Desegregation***

By Doris Williams and Jereann King
Rural School and Community Trust,
October 2002

This new report is the first installment of a two-part series intended to give public voice to school leaders in the South. The report comes from discussions with the Rural School Leaders Working Group comprising 20 principals, superintendents and instructional supervisors from Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi to discuss the issues, challenges and opportunities for school leadership. The report is available for free from the Rural Trust and is available as a PDF download. Please visit <http://www.ruraledu.org/publications.html> for ordering information.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

***Battle Rock:
The Struggle Over
a One-room School
in America's
Vanishing West***

By William Celis
Public Affairs Publishing,
November 2002

Battle Rock, a member of the Colorado Rural Charter Schools Network, is featured in a new book *Battle Rock: The Struggle Over a One-room School in America's Vanishing West*. From 1999-2000, author Bill Celis (former education correspondent for the *New York*



Times and a reporter and columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*) lived in the community and attended Battle Rock School. Celis examines the role of the school within the community and according to the publisher, "puts to rest the common misperception that smaller communities offer simpler lives." The book can be purchased at bookstores worldwide and through online booksellers. For more details on ordering, please visit www.publicaffairsbooks.com.

Portfolio for District Redesign

School Communities that Work,
October 2002

School Communities that Work, an initiative of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, has released a portfolio toolkit to introduce a new conception for a "smart district"—a

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