The Rural School Problem in 1999: A Review and Critique of the Literature

Patricia J. Kannapel
AEL, Inc.

Alan J. DeYoung
University of Kentucky

This article reviews key literature on rural education published in the last 25 years. We provide an overview of the characteristics and conditions of rural schools, followed by a discussion of the current "rural school problem" and how it developed. We then share various authors' notions of what appropriate rural school improvement projects should (or do) look like. We conclude with a discussion of the key issues, and recommendations for future directions in the field of rural education.

In 1896, the infamous Committee of Twelve completed a year-long study of the "Rural School Problem," concluding that rural schools were wasteful and inferior. The proposed solution was to centralize and bureaucratize management of schools through consolidation, and to upgrade academic standards through the professionalization of teaching (Fuller, 1982; Tyack, 1974). Over the past 100 years, this solution has been so effectively implemented that large, centralized school systems controlled by professionals are the accepted standard for both urban and rural schools. So thorough has been the transformation of rural schools that, among mainstream education reform scholars and researchers today, discussions of the "rural school problem" are but faint echoes of our national past. Hand-wringing about the state of America's schools continues, but education reformers and policymakers today are primarily concerned about the urban schools that, a century ago, were the professional models for educational excellence. The centralization, bureaucratization, and professionalization of schools has resulted in a relatively uniform model of schooling, but this model has failed to deliver on many of the promises made to parents and communities in many rural and urban settings. Not mindful that a century of generic reforms unresponsive to local contexts has proven inadequate, many national and state school reform leaders today continue to suggest that schools across the country are plagued by generic sorts of problems that, once again, can be fixed with generic sorts of solutions. Thus lessons of 100 years go unlearned among educators themselves.

This is not to say that a uniquely *rural* "school problem" does not exist. For many rural education scholars, significant rural school problems exist, but the problems are a consequence of former "solutions" to rural education reform during the past century, in addition to issues involved with general demographic and economic decline in many rural places. The major problem, claim these folk, is that rural schools have lost much of their uniqueness and, consequently, many of their strengths. Meanwhile, the loss of uniqueness has not been uniformly replaced with the academic excellence that was promised. There are excellent rural schools, of course, along with excellent urban and suburban ones; but centralization, consolidation, bureaucratization, and professionalization have not, by themselves, cured the problems that plagued America's schools. In fact, these reform approaches have created problems of their own in the form of large, impersonal schools; thick layers of bureaucracy; and decreased parent involvement in school decision making.

Many rural education researchers and analysts today lament the decline of small, rural schools that served as centers of the community. Moreover, they believe that the current reform agenda (now dominated by an approach known as "systemic reform") is but another example of a generic reform imposed on all schools. They call for school improvement efforts that are responsive to the unique needs of rural schools and communities, and that build on the strengths of rural settings.

Just over 100 years after the Committee of Twelve tackled the Rural School Problem, now seems a good time to take stock of the rural school situation in 1999. Because much useful research in rural education is never identified as such and/or is published mostly within state department documents, we cannot claim that our review of rural education research is as comprehensive as we would like. What we have tried to do is to review important writings in this area (papers, books, and collections of papers) that were recommended to us by the most prominent rural education scholars we could identify, and by inspecting the hundreds of books and monographs on rural education that were so identified. The sources consulted represent attempts over

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Patricia J. Kannapel, AEL, Inc., P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25324-1348. (kannapep@ael.org)

the past 25 years to identify key issues in rural education. We occasionally reference other sources, but these case sources are the collections that serve as the basis for what we write. The case sources are presented in Table 1.

The article is organized around the major issues that emerged from this literature review, beginning with an overview of the characteristics and conditions of rural schools, followed by a discussion of the current "rural school problem" and how it developed. We then share the various authors' notions of what appropriate rural school improvement projects should (or do) look like, and conclude with some discussion of the key issues and recommendations for future directions in the field of rural education.

Characteristics of Rural Schools and Communities in the 1990s

A theme that is prevalent among rural education researchers is the difficulty of defining the concept "rural." The Census definition of rural populations are those in towns of 2,500 or fewer, or outside incorporated areas. The more commonly used census distinction, however, is metropolitan/nonmetropolitan. Metropolitan counties are those including a city of at least 50,000 and/or adjoining counties that have a highly urbanized population; nonmetropolitan counties are all counties that are not metropolitan (Hobbs, 1994).

Rural researchers often acknowledge that rural communities across the United States are so diverse that it is difficult to define a set of universal characteristics (Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Hobbs, 1994; McGranahan, 1994; Nachtigal, 1982a). Nevertheless, many writers have identified common features of rural schools and communities, some of which are shared below.

Characteristics of Rural Communities

When demographic, economic, and educational statistics on rural communities are presented, the outlook often seems dismal. Most rural communities not adjacent to growing metropolitan areas are experiencing population loss, are poorer, and offer fewer opportunities for educational and occupational advancement than do urban communities. Many interpreters of these statistics, though, remain convinced that more aesthetic values of rural life are not captured by such numbers, and that the rural quality of life in America remains important (Theobald, 1997).

Demographic characteristics. The 1990 Census revealed that 23% of the United States population lives in nonmetropolitan areas (McGranahan, 1994), which represents a decrease since 1980 in the proportion of the population that is rural (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). The rural population loss, however, is related to the location and na-

Table 1
Case Sources

Coladarci, T. (Ed.). (1994). Implications of recent changes in nonmetropolitan America [Special issue]. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 10*(3).

DeYoung, A. J. (1987). The status of American rural education research: An integrated review and commentary. *Review of Educational Research, 57*(2), 123-148.

DeYoung, A. J. (Ed.). (1991). *Rural education: Issues and practice.* New York: Garland.

DeYoung, A. J. (Guest Ed.). (1995). A Kappan special section on rural schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2).

Howley, C. B. (1997). How to make rural education research *rural:* An essay at practical advice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13,* 131-138.

Nachtigal, P. M. (Ed.). (1982). *Rural education: In search of a better way.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sher, J. P. (Ed.). (1977). *Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sher, J. P. (Guest Ed.). (1983). Special section: Do we want standardized rural schooling? *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4).

Stern, J. D. (1994). *The condition of education in rural schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Theobald, P. (Ed.). (1990). A look at rural education in the United States [Special issue on rural education]. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(4).

Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons: Place, pride, and the renewal of community.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

ture of the rural county. Agriculture dependent counties continued a longstanding trend of losing population to outmigration, while retirement destination and recreational rural counties gained population (Hobbs, 1994). Because much of the outmigration was among the working-age population, rural counties showed a higher proportion of eld-

erly residents than did metropolitan counties (Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Hobbs, 1994; Stern, 1994). Another significant demographic trend for rural America is that rural women are having fewer children and working outside the home more than in the past (McGranahan, 1994). Also, there has been a decline in the traditional family structure corresponding to an increase in single-parent homes (McGranahan, 1994; Stern, 1994).

Economic characteristics. After years of off-farm migration, urban-to-rural industrial decentralization, and rural recreation development, the economic structure of rural America is quite similar to that of urban America. About 60% of employment in both urban and rural America is in distributive and consumer services, while 20% is in manufacturing (McGranahan, 1994). Contrary to popular mythology, agriculture no longer dominates the rural economy except in a few Great Plains states; less than 7% of the rural population is employed in agriculture (Hobbs, 1994; McGranahan, 1994; Stern, 1994). One rural/urban difference in the manufacturing industry is that there is a higher proportion of production/laborer jobs in rural manufacturing and fewer skilled managerial positions (McGranahan, 1994). In fact, overall (not just in manufacturing), rural areas have a higher proportion of low-wage, low-benefit jobs than do urban areas (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Since 1980, unemployment has been higher in nonmetropolitan areas (Stern, 1994). Median family income in rural areas in 1990 was about three-fourths of that for metropolitan areas (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Poverty rates are higher in rural areas, and from 1976 to 1986, poverty rates increased twice as fast for rural areas—with the highest poverty rates occurring in the South (Stern, 1994).

While these statistics may not seem promising when viewed from a cosmopolitan outlook, it should be remembered that the value systems with regard to economics in many rural communities differ from urban value systems. Seal and Harmon (1995) and DeYoung (1995a) note that in rural West Virginia, staying close to family and friends is more important than high-paying jobs. Many rural residents think in terms of jobs that will allow them to stay near home, as opposed to careers that may lead them elsewhere. For even though wage labor is considered important, it may not be important enough to leave family, friends, and home. In some communities, furthermore, white collar jobs are associated with anti-union corporate bosses, who have been viewed as oppressors. Thus, the preponderance of laboring jobs in rural areas may not be viewed as a major problem for rural residents, so long as there are jobs to be had.

Educational characteristics. Levels of formal education for rural residents are generally lower than for urban residents. High school completion rates were 7.8% lower in rural areas in 1990; while 9.5% more of the metropolitan population had completed college (Herzog & Pittman,

1995). The educational level of rural males actually declined in the 1980s (McGranahan, 1994). Generally, rural youth are less likely to take college preparatory classes and to attend college than their urban counterparts (Stern, 1994). Those students who do aspire to higher education tend to be the ones who migrate out of the rural community (Herzog & Pittman, 1995; McGranahan, 1994; Seal & Harmon, 1995).

The lower levels of education for rural youth are likely related to the economic opportunities that are available in the local community. Rural youth and families often see less direct relationships between education and economic opportunities (DeYoung, 1995a; Seal & Harmon, 1995). As mentioned above, staying close to home may be important to rural youth, and given that there are typically few rural jobs that require an advanced degree, it is no surprise that fewer rural youth aspire to a college education when the local occupational structure seems not to reward such undertakings (Bickel, Banks, & Spatig, 1991). In this respect, several interesting statistical studies of the status of rural and poor children in the United States link the effects of poverty in rural areas to the plight of urban poor (DeYoung, 1994; Khattri, Riley, & Kane, 1997).

Social characteristics. While the rural education literature paints a somewhat discouraging statistical portrait of rural communities, depictions of social life are quite the opposite. The literature appears almost devoid of negative images of rural life. One of the characteristics of rural social life that is commonly mentioned is attachment to place (DeYoung, 1995a; Howley & Howley, 1995; Seal & Harmon, 1995; Theobald, 1997). As mentioned previously, many rural residents identify strongly with their place of residence, and are loathe to leave it to pursue higher education or careers. Relationships and connections to other people are given primacy (Haas & Lambert, 1995; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998). The validity of information is based as much on who said it as what is said, and a person's word is considered a binding agreement. Layers of bureaucracy are lacking, which allows for direct, verbal communication (Nachtigal, 1982a).

Rural communities tend to be homogeneous in terms of race and socioeconomic status (Nachtigal, 1982a). Traditional values, such as discipline, hard work, and the importance of family are the norm (Nachtigal, 1982a; Seal & Harmon, 1995). Rural communities are also viewed by residents as safer and more connected to nature (Herzog & Pittman, 1995).

Characteristics of Rural Schools

Hobbs (1994) reports that 47% of the nation's 15,133 school districts are located in rural places. These districts encompass 28% of the nation's 79,307 schools. In spite of having been through at least two rounds of consolidation

by now, rural schools still, on average, have smaller enrollments than do urban schools (Sher, 1983b; Stern, 1994). There is a strong sense of community within the school, and the school often still serves as the cultural and social center of the town (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995; Dunne, 1977, 1983; Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Larsh, 1983; Nachtigal, 1982a; Seal & Harmon, 1995; Stern, 1994). Extracurricular or nonacademic activities are often valued as much or more than academics (DeYoung, 1995b; Nachtigal, 1982a; Peshkin, 1978; Stern, 1994), and a higher proportion of students participate in extracurricular activities than in urban schools (Nachtigal, 1982a; Sher & Tompkins, 1977). Rural schools reflect the economic and social stratification of their communities, and are influenced more strongly by the cultural and economic outlook of the community (Seal & Harmon, 1995).

In spite of being social centers that are strongly linked to and reflective of the community, rural schools are staffed by professionals who often obtained their education outside the community. Several critics of the "one best system" approach to rural education bemoan the fact that systemic study and understanding of local communities and their impact on educational possibilities is almost never developed in the programs that prepare America's teachers (Theobald, 1997; Theobald & Howley, 1999). Thus, rural school educators are often oriented toward linking students to the larger society and world (DeYoung, 1995a; Seal & Harmon, 1995).

The educators who serve rural schools are, as a group, younger and less experienced than their urban counterparts, and have less professional preparation. They are paid less, and receive fewer benefits (Hare, 1991). They are more likely to take second jobs than urban teachers. Rural high school teachers teach more subjects than do urban teachers. They also report feeling professionally isolated (Massey & Crosby, 1983; Stern, 1994). Teacher behavior is often scrutinized more closely in rural districts, making teachers more vulnerable to community pressures than in urban districts (Nachtigal, 1982a; Peshkin, 1978). There tends to be a dichotomy between locals and outsiders, with hiring preferences given to locals who, in many cases, understand the community ethos and are more inclined to preserve the status quo (Nachtigal, 1982a; Peshkin, 1978).

The Rural School Problem of the 1990s

The "Urbanization" of Rural Schools

The Rural School Problem today, as portrayed by many scholars in the field, is that rural schools have endured 100 years of assault from outside reformers in search of the "one best system" (Tyack, 1974), and that this assault continues to this day. Not only are rural schools faced with trying to piece together and capitalize on the remnants of

their remaining uniqueness, but they must do so under a barrage of ongoing reforms that seek to integrate rural schools into a national system of schooling (DeYoung & Howley, 1990; DeYoung, Howley & Theobald, 1995). At issue is the complex question of who the schools should serve—the local community, the larger society, or some combination of both?

Rural education writers have long remarked on, and often lamented, the imposition of urban-style reforms on rural schools over the past century (DeYoung, 1987, 1995b; DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995; Howley, 1997; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Stern, 1994). The short version of this story is that, in the latter half of the 19th century as urban centers grew rapidly, urban schools became bureaucratized in an effort to manage the large influx of students (Tyack, 1974). At the same time, leadership of public schools was shifting from part-time educational leaders to professionals who had made education a career (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The new brand of leaders believed that applying a factory management model to the schools would increase efficiency. They set out to institute a system of schooling in which schools were graded and standardized, and in which lay management was replaced with a new corporate decision-making model dominated by professionals (Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

By the time these professional education leaders succeeded in bureaucratizing and professionalizing urban schools, standards of urban life had become dominant in America, and urban schools became the accepted model for educational excellence (Fuller, 1982; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977). Rural schools were viewed as "inefficient, unprofessional, meager in curriculum, and heavily subject to lay control" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994, p. 460). Professional educators set out next to centralize, consolidate, and professionalize rural schools. Often in spite of strong local opposition, large, central, consolidated schools eventually became the accepted standard as a result of declining rural enrollments, improved transportation, increased curricular demands and escalating state financial incentives and accountability schemes. From 1950 to 1970, the number of school districts in this country decreased from 83,718 to 17,995 (Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977). In 1994, Hobbs placed the number of districts at 15,133. Several authors contend that the middle school movement of the past 3 decades continues in this same tradition (DeYoung, Howley, & Theobald, 1995).

Much of the rural education literature today appears at the surface as a nostalgic tribute to the small, rural, community schools of days gone by, coupled with chagrin at the historic (and still prevalent) attitude that rural schools and rural ways of life represent ignorance and provincialism. Rural education scholars lament the fact that rural reforms of this century have been done "to" or "for" parents, teachers, and communities, rather than "by" them (Sher,

1995); and that rural residents have long been left out of making decisions about rural schools (Howley & Howley, 1995; Massey & Crosby, 1983; Nachtigal, 1994; Sher, 1983a, 1995; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). Theobald and Nachtigal (1995) assert that generic education policies have been made to appear inevitable, but are in fact the result of choices by those in power. Others note that education policymakers and professionals, even in rural areas, have been so "urbanized" in their professional training and thinking that they have come to support and promote generic reforms in their own communities (Borson, 1982; Haller & Monk, 1988; Nachtigal, 1982d; Sher, 1995.)

But there is more to the rural education literature than a wistful and sometimes angry look back at what has been done to rural schools. The literature contains some thoughtful reflection on the philosophical differences that underlie the split between systemic educational reformers and those who believe rural school improvement efforts should be tailored to the needs of rural schools. This debate typically revolves around the question of if and when context is important.

The Philosophical Debate

Central to the discussion of rural school reform are two inter-related issues: (a) who controls the schools, and (b) who do the schools serve? Each issue will be considered in turn.

Who is in control? In an attempt to understand how centralized, professional control of schools came to be the accepted standard, a small number of rural education scholars have examined the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the current orientation away from community control. Theobald (1997) takes this exploration all the way back to classical Greece, which he holds up as an example of a communally-oriented system. He asserts that the Greeks "lived their lives in service to the community rather than in the service of their own individual wishes and desires" (p. 9). Their rationale was that order and harmony could be preserved by working toward the common good. Theobald states that this orientation was reversed in the 18th century, when modern liberals advanced the notion that community needs were best served through the pursuit of individual desires. He traces this change in orientation back to St. Augustine, who preached the doctrine of dedicating one's existence to God, not to the community, thus establishing an individual rather than community orientation. The Reformation, followed by the Renaissance, reinforced the notion that individuals should make choices—that they should turn to themselves for answers through the exercise of rational thought. Rene Descartes believed that the quality of an individual life was dependent on the rational power that the individual could exert. Thus, unlike the classical Greeks, rationale power was turned toward improving the

quality of individual life, not toward improving the community.

Theobald eventually works his way up to the Jeffersonian era in the United States, where he is joined by Dunne (1983) and Nachtigal (1994). All three writers view the battle between the populist views held by Jefferson and the Federalist views of Alexander Hamilton and James Madison as a turning point in how this country would be governed and, ultimately, who would control America's schools.

Jefferson believed that the political and economic stability of America rested in the political activities of communities. The bulk of political power would be in the hands of decentralized local communities, with only residual authority residing in a central government. This populist view held that local citizens would rise above their own individual interests to pursue the common good (Dunne, 1983; Nachtigal, 1994; Theobald, 1997). Hamilton and the Federalists, on the other hand, believed in a system run by an urban elite that would take a more global view of politics and economics and use its power in the national interest. While the populist philosophy was reflected in the Constitution and persisted for a century, the defeat of the populist William Jennings Bryan in 1896 by William McKinley brought an end to any further challenge to the federalist form of government (Nachtigal, 1994). By this time, economic and political power had shifted to urban centers, and the influx of immigrants made national leaders wary of providing too much power to local communities. Still, the built-in tension in the political system persists: "A tension between the fundamental promise of local control and the overwhelming reality of a national culture and economy" (Dunne, 1983, p. 253).

It is probably no coincidence that the election of William McKinley and corresponding neutralization of the populist movement occurred the same year that the Committee of Twelve outlined its plan to correct the Rural School Problem. We can see, then, how the notion that enlightened professionals, rather than local citizens, should make policy decisions about schools reflected a long-term historical shift away from a community orientation and toward a national—and now global—mode of thinking. This historical interlude sheds some light on how the urban model of schooling came to predominate.

Whom do the schools serve? As Dunne (1983) points out, the tension between the desire for local control and the reality of a national culture is ever-present in America. It is this tension that is at the heart of the battle for school reform—and not just rural school reform. Should schools be about cultivating the intellectual and moral autonomy of individual students (Howley & Howley, 1995), should they be oriented toward serving community interests (Theobald, 1997), or should they prepare students to contribute pro-

ductively to the national economy (Deaton & Deaton, 1988; DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995).

As has been discussed in previous sections, a number of rural education scholars assert that the goals of school reform efforts of the past century have been aimed at preparing students to participate in the national economy. At the beginning of this century, it was commonly believed that the country's future lay in continued industrialization and urbanization, and that the role of school was to prepare students for entry into emerging industrial and urban careers (DeYoung, 1987). Meanwhile, the organization of schooling was also borrowed from the factory model. Efficiencies and economies-of-scale rationales borrowed from the private sector were generally imposed upon all types of schools (Haas, 1991; Tyack, 1974). Reform efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s have aimed to change the factory model of schooling, but not because of any discontent with the notion of using schools to prepare students to participate in the economy. To the contrary, current reforms are aimed at better preparing students for their economic futures by changing schools to reflect the changing economic structure in which workers are now required to manipulate information, rather than perform repetitive, assembly-line tasks (Kannapel, 1991).

Several rural education scholars have decried the use of schools to serve national goals (DeYoung, 1995b; Howley, 1997; Howley & Howley, 1995; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). Howley & Howley (1995) lament the fact that the current education reform movement is aimed at making the United States economically competitive, when economic goals ought not be the primary ones for our schools . They view the recent outcome-based education movement as detrimental in the sense that it seeks to obtain the same results for all schools, thus devaluing any local goals for schooling, and further separating rural people (and urban, we would argue) from the education of their children. They label this approach to education as anti-intellectual in that the purpose of schooling is for global competitiveness and economic opportunity—not to advance intellectual pursuits in their own right.

DeYoung and Lawrence (1995) also explore the question of whether schools should serve the community or the larger society. They point out that professional educators, who have been schooled in generic approaches to education, often have goals for schooling that are contradictory to those of rural parents. Educators view it as their responsibility to prepare students to participate in the larger society and economy, with academics as the main focus. They tend to look down on rural youth who do not aspire to leave the community. Rural parents, on the other hand, expect the schools to provide their children with basic literacy and numeracy skills, but they often would like to keep their children close to home. In addition, they see the school as serving social and community, as well as academic, purposes.

Some writers have provided another angle on the question of whom the schools should serve, by contrasting the progressive education movement of John Dewey with the push for standardization that occurred simultaneously (DeYoung, 1987; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Theobald, 1997). Dewey believed that schools should function as miniature communities in which students dealt with real-life problems; that cooperative living in miniature would provide the setting for the development of the intellect. This, he believed, would result in intelligent social action, thus leading to a better society (Kliebard, 1995). Rosenfeld and Sher (1977) point out that educators became trapped between Dewey's philosophy and the simultaneous push for economy, efficiency, and sound business management in the schools. For the most part, the efficiency experts won control of the curriculum (Kliebard, 1995; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977). Dewey's ideas about school improvement, however, have continued to surface periodically throughout this century under the guise of various reform efforts (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In addition, the recent Rural School and Community Trust (formerly Rural Challenge) program (which attempts to reintegrate rural schools back into their communities and to focus on the importance of "place" in the educational lives of students) and Foxfire-type programs are important exceptions to the historical rule (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Wigginton, 1986).

To summarize, many rural education scholars believe the rural school problem today is that generic, standardized modes of reform continue to predominate in education policymaking. The strengths and needs of rural schools have been largely ignored at the national level in conversations about school reform. At the heart of the problem is the conflict over the purpose of schooling, with state and national reform leaders typically calling for schools to prepare students to contribute to national interests, while rural education scholars (and probably many rural parents) believe rural schools should also serve local community interests. In the next section, we cover more extensively programs and proposals on how rural school improvement efforts could be more responsive to rural needs.

Appropriate Rural School Improvement

Two kinds of problems arise when generic, urban-style reforms are imposed on rural schools. In the case of the most hard-hitting and "successful" reform this century—consolidation—the sacrifice of community schools with all their strengths for large, central schools has not resulted in improved education for students nor substantial financial savings (Haller & Monk, 1988; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Sher & Tompkins, 1977; Stern, 1994). Recent and important studies on how school consolidation negatively affects

learner outcomes have been accomplished by Franklin and Glascock (1998) and Howley (1996). This research and others suggest that when generic reforms are imposed on rural schools, the reforms are often short-lived because they are not meaningful for local residents. McLaughlin (1982) asserts that for a school improvement effort to be successful, local stakeholders must identify with the problem being addressed, and must believe the solution is worth doing. Seal and Harmon (1995) suggest that rural communities have not embraced school reform because reform historically has led to school consolidation, tax increases, and loss of local control; has been directed toward national goals, not locally-perceived needs; and has been designed to prepare students to leave the community. Nachtigal's (1982c) edited volume describes a number of generic-style, rural school improvement efforts that were short-lived precisely because they were not meaningful for local citizens and educators (Branscome, 1982b, 1982c; Dunne, 1982b, 1982c), while those that were locally-initiated or responsive to local needs were more successful (Branscome, 1982a; Dunne, 1982a; Gjelten, 1982a, 1982b).

What sort of school improvement effort, then, is appropriate for rural schools? Many rural education scholars have tackled this question and proposed some answers. In this section, we list some of the characteristics of appropriate rural school improvement efforts, followed by brief descriptions of programs that exemplify these characteristics.

Characteristics of Appropriate Rural School Improvement Efforts

Several scholars have suggested that rural school improvement efforts should capitalize on one of the major strengths of rural schools: the strong links among school, community, and place (Haas & Lambert, 1995; Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Howley, 1997; Howley & Howley, 1995; Rosenfeld, 1983; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). Improvement projects that are truly rural (a) are grounded in sense of place; (b) value outcomes arising from individual situations, rather than predetermined, specified results; (c) invite contributions from those who are usually marginalized in community development and reform efforts; (d) are systemic, comprehensive, long-term, multifaceted; and (e) are grounded in and energized by a moral stance of rural communities and schools strengthening themselves (Haas & Lambert, 1995).

What would such reform efforts look like? In 1982, Nachtigal suggested that because rural schools across the country are so diverse, and given the unlikely possibility that policies and strategies will be tailored for each unique rural situation, issues of rural education might be more effectively addressed if rural communities were categorized by type. He suggested three major categories (Nachtigal, 1982b). First, *Rural Poor* is typified by Appalachian coal towns and Mississippi delta communities. Here, where there tends to be a lower median income, lower educational level, higher mortality rate, and lower level of self-determination, implementing "in school" reform is not likely to be successful until more basic socioeconomic problems are addressed. Strategies that focus on community empowerment might be more effective. Second, *Traditional Middle America* includes the Midwest farm communities of Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and the Dakotas. These communities are well off when compared to Rural Poor. They are characterized by solid family life, well-kept homes, and a puritan work ethic that results in high levels of achievement in school and work. School improvement strategies most useful here would be those designed to serve as a catalyst, to motivate schools to reexamine practices and consider improvement options. Third, *Communities in Transition* are those in which recreation, energy developments, or proximity to urban areas results in an influx of outsiders who bring in new values, ideas, and demands. The social structure is in a state of flux because of conflict between old and new values. Nachtigal is unsure how to intervene here, except to advise that one should not add to the turmoil (Nachtigal, 1982b).

In the 1990s, Nachtigal went a step further in proposing a radical, new approach to rural school improvement. Along with Theobald, Nachtigal draws on the work of David Orr (1992) and Daniel Kemmis (1990) to propose that schools be redesigned on a "bioregional" philosophy, with understanding of one's own place as a chief curricular focus (Nachtigal, 1994; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995).

Theobald and Nachtigal (1995) assert that "conducting public affairs in bioregions, at the level of the ecosystem, would mean that rural and non-rural residents would act together to will a common world" (p. 134). They believe that understanding of one's place should be the chief curricular focus because such an approach (a) combines intellect with experience; (b) addresses the shortcomings inherent in our overly-specialized, discipline-based view of knowledge; (c) socializes people into the art of living well where they are; and (d) is intertwined with knowledge of self.

Sher (1977) and Rosenfeld (1983) favor a more specific rural school improvement plan that links school activities with community development. Sher's model, the school-based community development corporation, has students identify gaps in community services and economic development and, in turn, establish corporations to fill those gaps. Rosenfeld sets forth the vocational agriculture program as a model for rural school reform. He suggests that, using this model, schools might establish programs along the lines of Sher's proposed school-based enterprise. Rosenfeld identifies features of these programs that are models for rural school reform: located in comprehensive

high schools, making them accessible to students; leadership training; problem-solving approach to teach mathematics and science; less specialized curriculum that is tied directly to the community; adequate supply of dedicated and competent teachers; and entrepreneurial qualities.

A few writers have suggested the use of technology as a way to upgrade the quality of rural education (Barnhardt & Barnhardt, 1983; Seal & Harmon, 1995; Stephens, 1994). The idea is that offerings that are typically unavailable at small rural schools could be offered through technology. However, concern has been expressed about who controls the technology, and that extensive use of technology may lead to a homogeneity of education similar to the generic reforms that have been thrust on rural schools throughout the century (Barnhardt & Barnhardt, 1983; Howley & Howley, 1995).

Exemplary Rural School Improvement Projects

Examples of rural school improvement projects that are truly rural are provided in the work of Nachtigal (1982c), Haas and Lambert (1995), and Sher (1995). A brief description of several projects is provided below.

Rural Futures Development Program. Branscome (1982a) describes a program developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory to aid rural people in creating solutions to educational problems in their communities. Under the Rural Futures Development Program (RFD), a team of process facilitators took communities through a seven-phase school-community process to create awareness, form school-community groups, identify needs and solutions, plan for action, carry out the plan, and assess results. During field-testing of the program in 1974-1975, the RFD program was instrumental in getting a school constructed on the Navaho Indian Reservation in San Juan, Utah, so that Native American children did not have to be transported out of their communities to attend school. The program was also credited with improving school-community relations, and with improving teacher evaluations.

Iowa's People United for Rural Education. Dunne (1982a) documented the development of People United for Rural Education (PURE), a grass roots organization formed in Iowa in 1977 by two farm women and a superintendent. PURE was organized in opposition to a bill that would mandate reorganization of Iowa school districts with fewer than 300 pupils, K-12. The organization grew by leaps and bounds, first concentrating on preventing consolidation in north central Iowa, but later expanding to other rural issues in other parts of the state. PURE evolved into less of a grass roots organization and more of a national rural education center. The organization also won national recognition as an exemplary volunteer organization. In mid-1981, PURE had 32 local chapters and 2755 members.

The Loblolly Project. Gjelten (1982a) describes a Foxfire-type, student-researched and -produced magazine known as *Loblolly*, which provided local history and lore obtained from interviews with local residents and other research in the town of Gary, Texas (population 200). The project was initiated by the high school social studies teacher. The magazine had a shaky start, but was a smashing success in the local community, eventually earning local and state recognition. The teacher who initiated the program eventually linked up with Eliot Wigginton, but did not become a part of the Foxfire network. Loblolly continued to operate independently, relying on advertising and a few small grants for funding. The project was self-supporting.

Staples, Minnesota. Gjelten (1982b) also tells the story of the strong role played by the school district in community development in Staples, Minnesota (population 2700) in the 1960s and 1970s. Facing economic decline, the community came together to make plans for how to revitalize the local economy. The school district became a central partner in this plan, due to a school board chair who took an active interest in the schools and saw them as helping to strengthen the community. He and the superintendent worked together to make sure the school system supported efforts to revitalize the community. The community and schools raised money for a development corporation, which purchased land and constructed a building to lure industry to the area. The superintendent also took advantage of a little-known federal program, "tools for schools," in which the army loaned machine-shop equipment to schools until times of emergency. The result was a major upgrading in the equipment at the vocational school. Staples soon boasted the largest and best-equipped machine-shop vocational program in the country. The curriculum at the vocational school expanded to include farm equipment. Students received their training by working exclusively on the equipment of local farmers, who paid only for parts. Vocational students also undertook community service projects for which there was not money to hire professionals, such as reclaiming a lake donated to the city by the railroad company, and turning it into a public beach and snowmobile race track.

In 1967, the school district and community worked in concert to attract a major industry to town. The school district moved the machine shop to the bus garage to provide space for the new industry. In addition, after failing to attract funding to start an irrigation project in the community, the school board borrowed money to start the program themselves, and purchased a farm that they ran using irrigation. They taught local farmers the technique, resulting in increased production on local farms. Another example of school-community integration was that one of the administrators became active on the economic development council by virtue of having obtained education grants. He helped win major grants for the city, sometimes spending

his working hours on such efforts, which was fine with the school board who felt a healthy school system needed a healthy community. The result of all this activity was that the Staples school district became recognized around the state as a progressive rural school system.

Program for Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS). Haas and Lambert (1995) describe the PACERS program, organized in 1991 by the Program for Rural Services and Research (PRSR) at the University of Alabama. At 29 schools, PRSR staff helped teachers, community residents, and students identify strengths and needs in their communities, and how to use resources to meet the needs. Communities and their betterment became the focus of academic study at these schools through Foxfire-like projects; local, student-operated business that filled gaps in the local economy; and student projects that enhanced recreational activities in the communities.

Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL) Enterprises. Haas and Lambert (1995) describe how Jonathan Sher's idea for school-based enterprises has played out in real life. Started in the late 1970s in Georgia, and later expanded into North and South Carolina, REAL involves students in researching, planning, developing, and operating businesses in cooperation with their local high school or community college. Students participating in REAL plan and run actual businesses. The program was operating in more than 100 sites (in 1995), including one urban site.

Center for School Change. Haas and Lambert (1995) describe the Center for School Change, which was established in 1990 at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Working with teams from local communities, the Center supports school change efforts that incorporate combinations of five major elements: (a) parent/educator partnerships, (b) engaging young people in service projects; (c) creating more distinctive schools from which families may select; (d) promoting diversity as a value; and (e) moving toward the demonstration of skills and knowledge for graduation. Service learning activities involve students in efforts to study and help solve community problems. Entrepreneurial skills are developed as students create businesses to serve community needs.

Rural School and Community Trust. Sher (1995) describes the Rural School and Community Trust as "a major new force gearing up to join the battle against the industrial model of rural school reform" (p. 146). Launched in August 1995, the Rural School and Community Trust has four major goals, which are to support or help create: (a) the greatest number and widest distribution of genuinely good, genuinely rural schools; (b) political, professional, policy, and public environments that will enable such rural schools to thrive; (c) a powerful and sustainable rural school

reform movement that involves families, communities, and the public, as well as education professionals; and (d) an effective combination of documentation and evaluation methods to find out what succeeds, what does not, and why. The basic strategy of the Rural School and Community Trust is to identify key networks or clusters of rural teachers, schools, and communities that share a common vision of rural school reform; encourage these networks/clusters to participate in the Rural School and Community Trust and invite them to submit proposals describing the ways in which they will be active partners; provide partners with needed resources to strengthen their capacity; search for rural schools and communities engaged in similar reform work or that are prepared to do so; invite these rural schools and communities to join one of the existing networks; request proposals from these new clusters and provide them with resources; link all Rural School and Community Trust partners and help them collaborate; recruit new funding partners so that sufficient resources can be secured; document, assess, and interpret the work of all Rural School and Community Trust partners; and build support for ongoing rural school reform among the broader public.

Sher (1995) states that the Rural School and Community Trust is committed to serving as the catalyst for a rural school reform movement across the country. The desire is to develop a critical mass that includes all stakeholders who have joined together to work toward the vision of "genuinely good, genuinely rural" schools (p. 148). The final verdict on the Rural School and Community Trust, like most of the others, is not yet in. Initial reports on this nationwide experiment are promising, however, and the Rural School and Community Trust has its own web site for interested readers (www.ruraledu.org). There is also a draft of the Rural School and Community Trust program assessment forthcoming from the Harvard team contracted to study that program's implementation (Perrone, 1999).

Discussion

In the 1990s, scholars in many fields (as well as laypersons, we imagine) fear not just the demise of rural schools, but the disappearance of distinctive communities, cultures, and philosophies. Anthropologists have increasingly become concerned with globalization, in which production, consumption, communities, politics, and identities become detached from local places. This sort of deterritorialization is exemplified by such "hyperspaces" as airports, franchise restaurants, and production sites that have monotonous universal qualities (Kearney, 1995). One might add schools to this list.

The rural education literature reviewed for this article suggests that the "rural school problem" of 1999 derives from increasing and ongoing attempts to nationalize and globalize schools. That is, the problem with rural schools

today derives from failed attempts to correct the inappropriately-identified Rural School Problem of 1896. Over the past 100 years, the drive to make rural schools more centralized, standardized, bureaucratized, and professionalized has nearly robbed them of their distinctiveness and has failed to deliver on the promise of improved quality of education. Even so, many state and national reform leaders today continue to ignore the distinctiveness of schools (not just rural) and push for generic reforms for all schools in the nation, aimed at achieving generic results. Rural education scholars, in contrast, have argued that if rural schools are to be, first, preserved, and second, improved, reform efforts must build on rural schools' existing strengths, particularly their strong ties to local communities.

What are the implications of this debate for the future of America's rural schools? It seems to us that a major problem in the sphere of education policy and research today is that there is, in fact, very little debate taking place between rural education advocates and leaders of mainstream state and national reform movements. It is not that their actual school reform strategies are so different. As Stern (1994) points out, many current reform efforts, such as multi-age grouping and schools-within-schools, characterize small school practices. The outcome-based education movement and the constructivist approach support the notion of making learning relevant to students' lives in all contexts.

Where systemic reform and rural school improvement diverge—as so aptly pointed out by Howley (1997)—is in their orientation and commitments. The current systemic reform movement, like so many other reform movements this century, is oriented toward preparing students to participate in a national and global economy and culture. The rural school reform movement, on the other hand, is committed to strengthening the local economy and culture. So the student working on a Foxfire-like journal under systemic reform may be undertaking this type of work to strengthen her research, analytical, and writing skills which may one day be applied by this same student working for an information-age corporation. A student doing the same work under one of the various rural education improvement projects mentioned earlier seemingly is doing so to strengthen her own knowledge of and ties to the local community, and to strengthen the local community itself. The real difference between these two students and what they are learning, of course, may lie more in the minds of education policymakers and researchers; not in what the students, the community, or the nation actually gain from the experience. Are these two movements diametrically opposed at the student level? Probably not. And at least one of the rural education reform movements this decade appears to agree, although even they believe that learning ought to focus not only on the learner, but on the connection between the learner and her context (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998).

It is sometimes difficult to view the homogenization of our schools and our culture in a favorable light, but it is also difficult to complain about the modern technology, transportation, and communication systems that have connected most rural communities with their nation and world. This is not to say that it is fruitless to work toward strengthening local communities. On the contrary, it is critical to develop and implement strategies for preserving in rural communities, and for re-establishing in urban and suburban ones, a sense of local community and culture. Perhaps rural educators should focus on the opportunities afforded by the information age as well as the difficulties. Just as rural electrification made possible the schoolhouses of the early 20th century—schoolhouses which drew many in the community into the school to partake of that era's modern culture—today's Internet and computer sophistication might become an avenue to relocate the schoolhouse at the center of the community instead of yet another dying institution located there.

At a different conceptual level Nachtigal's call for a bioregional approach is one route to go—organizing political and social systems around natural features. Such an approach does not attack the national culture directly. In this view, citizens would theoretically become oriented toward working together toward both a local and a global "common good," and preserving the environment. We agree that teaching, learning, and living democracy seem underplayed themes in today's schools, both urban and rural. Yet we hope that developing the common good, practicing democracy, and preserving the environment are still characteristics of the national culture. Some rural community advocates, of course, disagree that the economic and industrial forces that control our country can be channeled into working toward the common good. Even so, the school is often viewed as a place that can restore balance to democracy and nature (Snauwert, 1990).

In any case, national education reformers and rural education advocates ought to be engaging in some dialogue about how the learning standards set by states and the possibilities for community may simultaneously be achieved. The sorts of standards that are being discussed today do not have to drive students from their communities. As demonstrated by some of the rural improvement projects listed above, students can develop higher order skills in real-life situations by tackling community-based problems and issues. Education can and should be oriented toward giving students the skills and knowledge to choose the kind of life they want, and where they want to live it. If it is true that rural life choices have typically been frowned upon by educators (DeYoung & Lawrence, 1995), it is also true that rural youth need to be given the information and skills they need to make an informed choice about where they want to live.

Should rural education advocates ever have enough power to challenge the education establishment, some compromises will be needed on both sides. Generic reformers will need to rethink their attachment to the idea of context-free accountability mechanisms. Real accountability is found in community satisfaction with the schools, and in student ability to succeed after school in ways that are sustaining to themselves, the community, and society at large. Using test scores or other artificial indices to measure school success and hold teachers accountable results in generic teaching to the test, which likely prevents teachers from being responsive to local concerns. All schools should hold all students to high standards, and it may be possible to arrive at some national standards to which all schools will adhere, but there must be room for local standards, as well. Accountability systems without such flexibility are flawed at best.

As for rural school reformers, they may have to abandon some ideas of rebuilding communities and schools of the past, and focus on how to build the communities of the future. The industries and technologies that created many of them no longer exist, but new industries and technologies may provide opportunities to regroup and move forward. Both brands of reformers should also give some serious thought to where they stand on the issue of the intrinsic value of intellectual pursuits. Education aimed at rural economic development is as anti-intellectual as education aimed at global economic competitiveness.

References

Barnhardt, R., & Barnhardt, C. (1983). Chipping away at rural school problems: The Alaskan experience with educational technology. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 274-278.

Bickel, R., Banks, S. R., & Spatig, L. (1991). Bridging the gap between high school and college in an Appalachian state: A near replication of Florida research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 7*(2), 75-87.

Borson, R. G. (1982). Taking education to the crossroads: Texas's Regional Education Service Centers. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 101-115). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Branscome, J. (1982a). San Juan, Utah: Ending the White-Indian school battle by the "Process Method." In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 157-169). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Branscome, J. (1982b). The Teacher Corps in Mississippi: Washington strategy against Delta dilemmas. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 47-60). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Branscome, J. (1982c). The Urban/Rural Program: Can the government buy change in rural schools? In P. M.

Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 139-156). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Deaton, B., & Deaton, A. (1988). Educational reform and regional development. In *The rural South in crisis* (pp. 304-324). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

DeYoung, A. J. (1987). The status of American rural education research: An integrated review and commentary. *Review of Educational Research, 57*(2), 123-148.

DeYoung, A. J. (1994). Children at risk in America's rural schools: Economic and cultural dimensions. In R. Rossi, *Schools and students at risk* (pp. 229-254). New York: Teachers College Press.

DeYoung, A. J. (1995a). Constructing and staffing the cultural bridge: The school as change agent in rural Appalachia. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 26*(2), 168-192

DeYoung, A. J. (1995b). *The life and death of a rural American high school: Farewell Little Kanawha.* New York: Garland.

DeYoung, A., & Howley, C. (1990). The political economy of rural school consolidation. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(4), 63-89.

DeYoung, A., Howley, C., & Theobald, P. (1995). The cultural contradictions of middle schooling for rural community survival. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 11*(1), 24-35.

DeYoung, A. J., & Lawrence, B. K. (1995). On Hoosiers, Yankees, and Mountaineers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 104-122.

Dunne, F. (1977). Choosing smallness: An examination of the small school experience in rural America. In J. P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom* (pp. 81-124). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Dunne, F. (1982a). "Have you considered reorganization?" Iowa's people united for rural education. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 185-206). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Dunne, F. (1982b). Holistic change: The Experimental Schools Program in Oregon. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 83-99). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Dunne, F. (1982c). Natives and newcomers: Vermont's Mountain Towns Teachers' Center. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 61-82). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Dunne, F. (1983). Good government vs. self-government: Educational control in rural America. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 252-256.

Franklin, B., & Glascock, C. (1998). The relationship between grade configuration and student performance in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 14*, 149-154.

Fuller, W. E. (1982). *The old country school: The story of rural education in the Middle West*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gjelten, T. (1982a). Gary, Texas: The rise of *Loblolly*. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 227-246). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Gjelten, T. (1982b). Staples, Minnesota: Improving the schools to save the town. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 247-265). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Haas, T. (1991). Why reform doesn't apply: Creating a new story about education in rural America. In A. DeYoung (Ed.), *Rural education: Issues and practice* (pp. 414-436). New York: Garland.

Haas, T., & Lambert, R. (1995). To establish the bonds of common purpose and mutual enjoyment. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 136-142.

Haas, T., & Nachtigal, P. (1998). *Place value*. Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

Haller, E. J., & Monk, D. H. (1988). New reforms, old reforms and the consolidation of small rural schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 24*, 470-483.

Hare, D. (1991). Identifying, recruiting, selecting, inducting and supervising rural teachers. In A. DeYoung (Ed.), *Rural education: Issues and practice* (pp. 149-175). New York: Garland.

Herzog, M. J. R., & Pittman, R. B. (1995). Home, family, and community: Ingredients in the rural education equation. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 113-118.

Hobbs, D. (1994). Demographic trends in nonmetropolitan America. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 10*, 149-160.

Howley, C. B. (1996). Compounding disadvantage: The effect of school and district size on student achievement in West Virginia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 12*, 25-32.

Howley, C. B. (1997). How to make rural education research *rural*: An essay at practical advice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13*, 131-138.

Howley, C. B., & Howley, A. (1995). The power of babble: Technology and rural education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 126-131.

Kannapel, P. J. (1991). *Education reform in Kentucky: Expert theory, folk theory, and the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990*. Master's thesis, University of Kentucky, Department of Anthropology. Lexington, Kentucky.

Kearney, M. (1995). The local and the global: The anthropology of globalization and nationalization. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 24*, 547-565.

Kemmis, D. (1990). *Community and the politics of place*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Khattri, N., Riley, K., & Kane, M. (1997). Students at risk in poor, rural areas: A review of the research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13*, 79-100

Kliebard, H. M. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum 1893-1958* (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.

Larsh, E. (1983). Touch and go in Lincoln County. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 263-264.

Massey, S., & Crosby, J. (1983). Special problems, special opportunities: Preparing teachers for rural schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 265-269.

McGranahan, D. A. (1994). Rural America in the global economy: Socioeconomic trends. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 10*, 139-148.

McLaughlin, M. (1982). What worked and why. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 279-286). Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Nachtigal, P. M. (1982a). Education in rural America: An overview. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 3-13). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nachtigal, P. M. (1982b). Rural America: Multiple realities. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 269-277). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nachtigal, P. M. (Ed). (1982c). *Rural education: In search of a better way*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nachtigal, P. M. (1982d). Rural school improvement efforts: An interpretive history. In P. M. Nachtigal (Ed.), *Rural education: In search of a better way* (pp. 15-24). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Nachtigal, P. M. (1994). Political trends affecting nonmetropolitan America. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 10*, 161-166.

Orr, D. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to the modern world*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Perrone, V. (1999). *Rural Challenge assessment monograph*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University: College of Education.

Peshkin, A. (1978). *Growing up American: Schooling and the survival of community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rosenfeld, S. (1983). Something old, something new: The wedding of rural education and rural development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 270-273.

Rosenfeld, S. A., & Sher, J. P. (1977). The urbanization of rural schools, 1840-1970. In J. P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom* (pp. 11-42). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Seal, K. R., & Harmon, H. L. (1995). Realities of rural school reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 119-125.

Sher, J. P. (1977). *Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Sher, J. P. (1983a). Bringing home the bacon: The politics of rural school reform. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65* (4), 279-283.

Sher, J. P. (1983b). Education's ugly duckling: Rural schools in urban nations. *Phi Delta Kappan, 65*(4), 257-262.

Sher, J. P. (1995). The battle for the soul of rural school reform: Can the Annenberg Rural Challenge turn the tide? *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 143-148.

Sher, J. P., & Tompkins, R. B. (1977). Economy, efficiency, and equality: The myths of rural school and district consolidation. In J. P. Sher (Ed.), *Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom* (pp. 43-77). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Stern, J. (1994). *The condition of education in rural schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Snauwert, D. T. (1990). Wendell Berry, liberalism, and democratic theory: Implications for the rural school. *Peabody Journal of Education, 67*(4), 118-130.

Stephens, E. R. (1994). Recent education trends and their hypothesized impact on rural districts. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 10*, 167-178.

Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons: Place, pride, and the renewal of community.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Theobald, P,. & Howley, C. (1999). Public purpose and the preparation of teachers for rural schools. *Teacher Educator, 33*(3), 150-164.

Theobald, P., & Nachtigal, P. (1995). Culture, community, and the promise of rural education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77*(2), 132- 135.

Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward Utopia: A century of public school reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D., & Hansot, E. (1982). *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in America, 1820-1980.* New York: Basic Books

Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The "grammar" of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(3), 453-479.

Wigginton, E. (1986). *Sometimes a shining moment: The Foxfire experience.* New York: Doubleday.