



# Additional Learning Opportunities in Rural Areas

*Needs, Successes, and Challenges*

Roy Forbes  
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## Glossary of Two Key Educational Terms

### ***Additional or Extra Learning Opportunities or Additional Learning Programs or Services***

Learning opportunities that are in addition to those provided during the regular school day. Examples of programs that provide extra or additional learning opportunities include before and afterschool, intersession, weekend, holiday, and summer programs. These learning opportunities are **voluntary** and provide students with enrichment, academic support, or both. They are designed to improve student outcomes and can boost student achievement for those who participate.

### ***Expanded Learning Time***

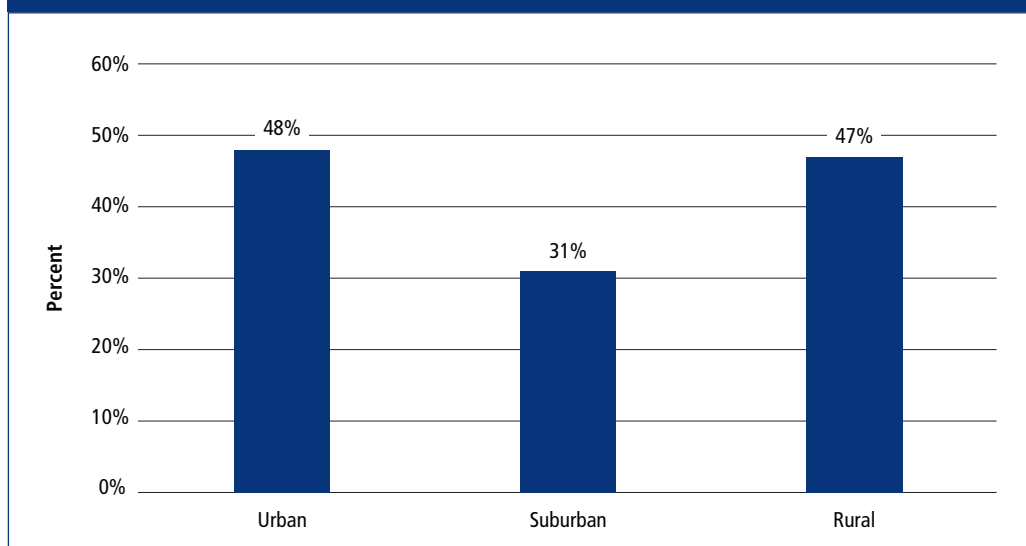
More academic learning time **required** for all students in a school by lengthening the school day, week, or year. A successful expanded learning time program requires a complete redesign of a school's educational program, and is therefore considered a school-wide improvement strategy, particularly for low-performing, high-poverty schools. With a focus on both core academics and enrichment, expanded learning time can improve student performance, close achievement gaps, and expand the curriculum.

## Introduction

Rural, low-income students are more at risk of becoming high school dropouts than their city and suburban peers.<sup>1</sup> This fact alone should be a sufficient reason to address the challenges facing rural schools that serve low-income areas, but the negative findings do not stop with that one statistic. Students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches do not score as well on assessments as other students,<sup>2</sup> and students attending rural schools do not perform as well as students who attend suburban schools.<sup>3</sup> Rural schools, especially those serving low-income areas, need the nation's attention, but currently they are not receiving the attention they deserve.

If educational achievement gaps are to be closed in this country it is just as important to address challenges in rural areas as urban and some suburban areas. One promising strategy that should be considered by policymakers at every level as they respond to these challenges is the expansion of learning time for all students attending schools with large concentrations of low-income students. A comprehensive approach to school reform that adds time to school days, weeks, and/or years for all students can result in significant learning gains. These so called “expanded learning time,” or ELT programs, when appropriately implemented, have obvious demonstrable advantages over other

**CHILDREN LIVING IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES, IN URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND RURAL AREAS, 2006**



Source: Douglas-Hall, Ayana; Chau, Michelle. 2007. Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Birth to Age 18. National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Available at [http://nccp.org/publications/pub\\_762.html](http://nccp.org/publications/pub_762.html).

programs that provide additional learning time services. The problem is, ELT programs have proven difficult to put into place in rural areas.

Rural schools in low-income areas are usually resource-poor—because of weak tax bases and in some states because of state education funding formulas that treat rural areas inequitably. Even the federal Title I educational program funding formula disadvantages many rural states, particularly in the South, Southwest, and West.<sup>4</sup> This translates into serious funding challenges.

Rural schools also face additional challenges related to the availability of high quality instructional staff, access to professional development opportunities, expertise in fund development, and parental engagement. The upshot: Increasing the number of hours in the school day and/or the number of weeks in the school year is not currently feasible in rural areas without significant new investments by state and/or federal governments, no matter how desirable.

Fortunately, there are programs that are successfully providing additional learn-

## A Unique Rural Exception: KIPP Gaston College Preparatory School and Pride High<sup>5</sup>

Expanded learning time programs that serve all students in a school are very rare in rural areas. Two schools that have gotten national attention are in Gaston, North Carolina. They are public charter schools—another rarity for rural areas—with no admission requirements or tuition and enrollment on a first come, first served basis.

Located in a rural area off of the I-95 interstate highway, the town of Gaston had fewer than 1,000 people in 2005. KIPP Gaston College Prep opened as a middle school with grades five through eight in 2001 and an enrollment of 100 students. Today it has 300 students and a waiting list. Seventy percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and 90 percent are African-American. In 2006, a second campus, KIPP Pride High, was added, with 150 ninth and tenth graders with subsequent grades to be added in the following years.

All students are in class from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. every day and half a day every other Saturday. They also attend a three-week, full-day summer session. There is tutoring at the end of each day. While the school program is heavy on meeting high academic expectations there is also a substantial mix of sports and arts activities. Student test scores are very high, and the state has consistently recognized KIPP Gaston College Prep for its extraordinary accomplishments.

Of course, Gaston's extra time means additional expenses. Teachers are paid up to 30 percent more. About 75 percent of the school's support comes from regular local, state, and federal funds for public schools. The rest comes from special grants and fundraisers. More recently, the new Pride High has gotten special help from U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) through a federal appropriation earmark of \$100,000 specifically for this one school. She has stated she plans to seek additional support in the future.<sup>6</sup>

ing services for rural students with the greatest challenges in a limited number of rural, low-income areas. Afterschool, before-school, intersession, weekend, holiday, and summer learning programs are being successfully operated in rural areas. Referred to throughout this paper in a variety of ways, these “extra” or “additional” learning opportunities or programs are academically focused and proving to be effective in serving the needs of students who require more than what is available through the regular school day.

Still, it must be acknowledged that these kinds of additional schooling options for low-income parents in rural areas are much rarer for them than their non-rural peers. There are exceptions (see box,

page 2), but in most rural areas expanded learning time programs that lengthen the school day, week or year for all students in the school are virtually non-existent. Similarly, charter schools are scarce, the number of service providers for federally funded tutoring programs for low-income schools is limited, and the promise of virtual courses has not yet been realized in most rural places. What extra learning opportunities there are usually exist in afterschool programs serving relatively small proportions of students.

Although limited in rural areas, these voluntary programs can have a positive impact. The keys to success are similar to those of best practices in non-rural areas. They include:

## Listening to Students in Rural Georgia

*Existing programs that provide additional learning time are making a difference*

**“Someone believed in me!”**

**“Someone was there when I needed someone to turn to.”**

**“Someone said that I could do it and I won’t let her down.”**

These are some of the comments the author heard while conducting research in rural Georgia from middle school students whose lives have been affected by extra learning programs. When asked why they were able to turn around an academic or behavioral problem, students without exception related it to a caring afterschool staff member.<sup>7</sup> This is the power of high-quality out-of-school learning opportunities.

The middle school student who said, “Someone believed in me,” had both academic and behavioral problems prior to participating in the afterschool program. She was failing two courses and had been assigned in-school suspension several times. She had all of the characteristics of an at-risk student who would not graduate. Because an afterschool teacher took the time to develop a positive, supportive relationship with her, her life was changed.

- Strong, committed leadership and quality instructional staff
- Adult-to-student ratios at levels that are low enough to make realistic the development of supportive staff/student relationships
- Emphasis on making learning engaging and exciting by providing academic-based enrichment activities while assisting students in meeting achievement standards.

These learning opportunities provide a means of reaching students that regular during-school-time programs are not effectively serving and could be the basis for programs that lengthen the school day, week, or year for all students.

These additional learning opportunities in low-income, rural areas help many students and families. In the following pages, this paper will examine the essential characteristics of successful additional learning programs and then detail where the author saw those characteristics in action in select programs in school districts in the Carolinas and Iowa. The paper will then explore the possible federal, state, and private sources of funding to replicate these kinds of programs across rural America.

Before any discussion of the successes and challenges associated with such opportunities can begin, however, we must first start with an understanding of what is meant by rural. Rural is not an easy concept.



## What Exactly Does “Rural” Mean?

The definition of rural varies depending upon geographic location. Rural in Iowa and rural in the Carolinas are not the same. Even within a state there are important differences. In North Carolina, for example, the rural western part of the state and the rural eastern areas are strikingly different, having more in common with neighboring states’ Appalachian or Tidewater regions. When planning rural afterschool programs it is necessary to avoid thinking in terms of a highly prescriptive funding distribution policy to respond to the needs of rural students. Programs that support the additional learning opportunities in rural areas must be flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of rural characteristics across the nation.

Many researchers and politicians have attempted to define rural, but those who have tried have found it not to be an easy task. For the general public, rural is more in the eye of the beholder. Rural may best be defined as: *If you think you are rural, then you are.* Yet when recommending responses to the challenges facing rural learning programs, it is necessary to have an agreed upon working definition of rural. Although not perfect, this paper provides a definitional framework that can be used for program guidance.

The following primary and secondary characteristics may be used in describing a rural setting.<sup>8</sup>

### Primary characteristics include:

- Size of the community
- Population density
- Proximity to a metro area
- Local job availability.

### Secondary characteristics include<sup>9</sup>:

- Access to the interstate highway system
- Access to one or more cell phone service providers
- Access to a broadband Internet service.

Other secondary characteristics relevant to diversities of rural settings include the level of parental education and the ethnicity of the student population, with the latter being a placeholder for the effects of previous and current discriminatory practices. (See Appendix on page 27 for a brief description of each rural characteristic.)

Because of these substantial differences, a definition of rural should be left to each state. How states should determine their definitions of rural is described later in this paper. Fortunately, rural definitional diversities do not negatively affect rural communities in their ability to plan and operate programs that provide students with greater learning opportunities. No matter where the successful programs are located, they have some characteristics in common. This paper now turns to those attributes.

# Characteristics of Successful Programs

## Essential Characteristics

Successful programs offering additional learning opportunities possess an innate energy that can be felt upon entering the school or the facility where the program is being held. It is not necessary to observe the program in action or to speak with students or staff. The energy is either there or not. This energy cannot be quantified using traditional measures, but its results can be. One characteristic that is always present in high-energy learning environments is strong **leadership**.

The characteristics of such a leader may best be documented by the words used by program staff and students when describing the individual: enthusiastic, visionary, supportive, fair, hard-nosed when it comes to doing what is best for the students, focused on relationships, appreciates the necessity for excitement in learning activities, and believes in and practices accountability.

The second characteristic of a high energy program is a cadre of **quality instructors**. Although there may be one or two exceptions, most instructional staff members have the following characteristics: commitment to what is best for students, nurturing, supportive, knowledgeable of content, makes sure that learning activities are exciting, understanding of the importance of developing appropriate supportive relationships with students, and instructionally skillful.

The quality instructors can be a mix of teachers, former teachers, and other caring people with particular expertise in the community, such as 4-H leaders, health professionals, and artists. Some successful rural programs rely heavily on the use of people who are not trained teachers but who possess the above characteristics. These caring and skilled individuals are proving to be quality instructors when provided with professional development opportunities.

Third, the program has a focus on **relationship** development between staff and students. Low staff-to-student ratios allow quality instructors to develop individual professional relationships with students. The text box on page 14 provides an example of the payoff when a program has a focus on relationships. Sometimes, letting a student know that someone is there for them is the greatest contribution to the student's success that the program will make.

The fourth characteristic of a high-energy program is a focus on ensuring that the program's academic, enrichment, and recreational activities are **exciting** for students. Suc-

cessful programs generate excitement by providing a variety of learning opportunities that expand the students' horizons through hands-on projects, experiences different from those found in the typical school day, art and music, and community projects.

The fifth essential characteristic of a successful program is **adequate basic funding**. Unfortunately, lack of funding is why there are relatively fewer extra learning opportunities in rural areas.

## Enabling Characteristics

Enabling characteristics of extra learning opportunities are necessary for the operation of a successful program. The program must have **adequate facilities** in which to operate. **Sufficient supplies and materials** must be available to implement the instructional program. And **technology** for learning activities is also an important enabling factor.

There must also be adequate **transportation** to ensure student safety in movement between school, program, and home. Finally, the program must have a strong **accountability process** that can measure student progress, be used for program improvement, and demonstrate the effective stewardship of program funds.

## Desirable Characteristics

Most successful programs also possess one or more of the following characteristics:

- **Family engagement and support** demonstrated through the active participation of adult family members of students in literacy/training opportunities and in recognition activities of the achievement of students
- **Community support** demonstrated through active partnerships between the program and businesses, service organizations, and volunteers
- **Professional development** opportunities for staff, based on assessments that staff help to design
- **Alignment** between the curriculum of the regular school day, the after-school program and state standards.

## Promising Characteristics

Although not present in a sufficient number of successful rural programs, there is one additional characteristic that is demonstrating great potential: embedding the additional learning time within a more comprehensive local initiative that addresses a larger community need and that enlists a **community coalition** for support.

The success of the afterschool program in Florence, South Carolina, for example (see below), is integrally connected with the success of the Mayor's Coalition to Prevent Juvenile Crime. By embedding an afterschool program in efforts to combat gang development in rural areas or to reduce juvenile-related crime, segments of the community other than those directly related to schooling become involved. With increased community involvement comes increased community support. Thus, establishing and sustaining extra learning opportunities becomes more realistic.

Successful programs may not exhibit all of the above essential, enabling, desirable, and promising characteristics. In fact, few do, but there are examples of successful programs operating in small cities, towns, and rural areas.

## Examples of Successful Programs Offering Additional Learning Opportunities

Visits were made to successful programs in Iowa, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Interviews were conducted with practitioners operating afterschool programs on a daily basis at the sites. Practitioners include program directors, site coordinators, and teachers. At some sites, students and parents were informally interviewed. Policy makers associated with some of the sites were also interviewed.

### Laurinburg, North Carolina (Scotland County)<sup>10</sup>

Scotland County is located in southeastern North Carolina, adjacent to South Carolina. The population of the county is approximately 37,000, with a little less than half of the inhabitants living in rural areas. The 2000 census listed the population density as 113 per square mile.<sup>11</sup> The county school system serves 7,025 students. Approximately 47 percent of the students are African American, 35 percent are white, 14 percent are Native American and 4 percent are either Hispanic, Asian or multiracial.

The Scotland County Schools' afterschool programs, Scotland SCHOLARS, provide additional learning opportunities specially designed for students who benefit from extra time and attention. The afterschool program operates in 10 elementary schools



Smiles: The expressions on the faces of these two afterschool participants tell the story. Afterschool programs provide students with additional learning opportunities in a safe and caring place. Low adult-to-student ratios ensure that strong, supportive relationships are formed, an essential characteristic of a successful program.





Thanksgiving: Holidays are excellent opportunities for enrichment activities. Role playing provides students with historical and cultural learning opportunities. Fun, engaging enrichment activities are a critical part of Scotland County's afterschool program.

(grades K–5), three middle schools (6–8), and one alternative school (grades 6–12). The program serves about 1,250 students, approximately 18 percent of the district's students. All of the elementary and middle school programs have earned the highest license level from the North Carolina Department of Social Services.

Scotland SCHOLARS provides support and enrichment activities that are closely aligned with the school day program. Students have opportunities to use the latest technology, including interactive whiteboards, in their learning activities. Visitors to the schools are quick to pick up on the caring, supportive methods used by the instructional staff, about 75 percent of whom are teachers, and the remarkable level of student engagement. The Site Coordinators, who are themselves teachers in

their schools, are well-organized and have a strong commitment to serving students who require focused attention.

Scotland County's afterschool program dates back to the early days of the federally administered 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. The district received federal funding during the period 2000–2006. The system also received multi-year state-administered 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants in 2002 and 2004. The last of the state-administered funds are scheduled to end in the spring of 2009.

Additional funding has been provided for two North Carolina Young Scholars Programs (at a middle school and an elementary school) by the Z. Reynolds Smith Foundation. The North Carolina Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services has supported an after school program at the Alternative Learning Academy.

The hours of program operation vary by school and are dependent upon the funding source. Programs supported with local funds operate eight hours per week; those supported with state funds operate 12 hours per week. Some programs operate four days per week; others operate five days per week.

The program shares a common characteristic with other successful programs. It has excellent leadership. The district superintendent, Dr. Shirley Prince, who was selected as the superintendent of the year in 2007 in North Carolina, is strongly committed to providing students with quality learning opportunities. The program director, Dr. Anne Crabbe, provides the guidance and support required to make afterschool programs effective.

Scotland County's afterschool programs have an academic focus. The standard course of study for the regular school day determines the afterschool curriculum. Students are also provided with homework assistance and technology-supported enrichment activities. The active engagement of all students is a goal of the afterschool program and observations indicate that this goal is being met.

In North Carolina those students scoring low on state tests are referred to as Level I and Level II students. Scotland County compares the achievement of Level I and II students served by the afterschool program with Level I and II students who do not participate in the afterschool program. Test results indicate that the program is making a strong positive difference. In

2006–2007 students who participated in the afterschool program for 30 days or more scored 2.02 points higher in reading and 3.76 points higher in mathematics than Level I and II students who did not participate in the program.<sup>12</sup>

Sustainability is the major challenge for the program. A task force is examining how to operate an effective program on a greatly reduced budget. Efforts are also being made to secure the funding necessary to maintain the current level of programming. A sliding-scale fee structure is being considered, but the ability of low-income parents to pay fees will be limited.

## Clinton, Iowa<sup>13</sup>

Clinton, with a population—overwhelmingly white—of approximately 29,000, is located in easternmost Iowa on the Mississippi River. Less than 8 percent of the population represents minority groups.

The Clinton Community School District began its afterschool program when it received its first 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant in 2003. The initial program served three elementary schools. In 2004, Clinton received additional 21st CCLC funding and expanded its program to serve students in an alternative high school, a middle school, and another elementary school. The school-based programs have before-school, after-school and summer components.

The program operates for 30 weeks during the regular school year, and for approximately seven weeks during the summer. During the regular school year the afterschool program operates four days per week for a total of approximately eight hours per week. Between

220 and 250 students are being served by the program. The school district's total enrollment is approximately 4,500, which means the program serves only about 5 percent of the students.

The program has an academic focus on mathematics, reading, and homework assistance. Enrichment activities focus on substance prevention, social skills and self-esteem development, and science. Students are provided with field trip opportunities throughout the school year.

Clinton has an effectively functioning curriculum alignment process. Regular communications between program staff and the regular school staff ensure that student needs are being addressed. Program site coordinators and teachers are encouraged to attend two professional development conferences each year.

The program is successful. One measure of success is parent survey responses:<sup>14</sup>

### *The program*

- Is a safe place for my child(ren)  
92 percent
- Provides academic support  
91 percent
- Provides opportunity to succeed  
88 percent
- Is a necessary program in schools  
91 percent
- Meets my needs as a parent  
87 percent

### *My child*

- Has improved in turning in homework  
71 percent
- Has a better attitude toward school  
68 percent

- Has improved academics  
84 percent
- Has more learning opportunities  
84 percent
- Has better social skills  
75 percent

Another measure is the responses from the classroom teachers of afterschool program participants. Classroom teachers were surveyed and requested to indicate student improvements in the following categories:

- Turns in homework on time  
66 percent
- Completes homework to teacher satisfaction  
70 percent
- Attends class regularly  
43 percent
- Improved classroom behavior  
56 percent
- Improved academic performance  
73 percent

The program director, Loras Osterhaus, who provided the above statistics, is very proud of the Clinton program. Each site has a full time site coordinator. Academics are taught by certified teachers who are also teachers in the regular school day. Partners assist in providing enrichment activities. Partners include the YMCA, YWCA, a mental health agency, and the Iowa state extension service.

Like all other programs that provide additional learning opportunities, the Clinton program has challenges. At the top of the list is sustainability. The program has a well-developed sustainability plan that reflects the guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Education. Activi-

## Clinton, Iowa Parent Discusses the Program

“My family lives within what the Clinton Community School District considers ‘walking’ distance. My children are much too young, seven and five, to walk the eleven city blocks, some of which have no sidewalks, from home to school. Since I work from 6:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. I have to ensure my children have appropriate childcare between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Since I absolutely will not allow my children to walk to school due to too many safety risks, this program is a godsend.

“My only other alternative is to enroll my children at a daycare center for 2 hours every morning and pay \$3.75 hourly, then pay a bus fee to have them bussed by CCSD from daycare to school, which is \$100 per trimester per child. That would be \$600 to bus my children and the cost of childcare. I do not have an income to sustain those kinds of fees.

“If this program were to be stopped, I would face many difficult decisions. I would either have to quit my job, lose health care coverage to be able to ensure my children’s safety, or risk my children’s welfare allowing them to walk to school, which would never happen. I thank whoever provides the funding for this program to allow those of us who really benefit from a program like this to be part of it.”

ties include considering a sliding-scale fee structure, writing competitive grant applications, and investigating the possibility of an additional tax resource.

The implementation of all of the plan’s components, however, will be challenging; however, the third component of the plan that relates to new taxes will be the most challenging. Other program challenges include improving parental engagement, retaining staff as the current funding expires, and teacher burn-out.

### Honea Path, South Carolina<sup>15</sup>

Anderson County is located in the upstate region of South Carolina. The county borders the Georgia line. Anderson District 2 is one of five school districts in Anderson County. Anderson is designated as a metropolitan county, but District 2

serves a rural area that includes two small towns, Belton (4,461) and Honea Path (3,504). The district’s total student enrollment is approximately 3,600. Approximately 78 percent are Caucasian.

Ensuring a successful afterschool program in Anderson, SC District 2 is a superintendent who appreciates the value of extra learning opportunities, a program director who is dedicated to doing what is best for students, and site coordinators who are enthusiastic, high energy leaders. The district operates before- and afterschool programs at six sites, two of which are described.

Middle school student engagement is a challenge. The afterschool program is designed to inspire, motivate, and change attitudes. The student achievement and referral data suggests that the program is meeting these objectives. Sixty-two students are being served.



## Anderson 2 Site Program Coordinator: Her Story

The site coordinator for the Anderson 2 middle school program understands her students and is ready to go the extra mile for them. She shared the following story.

One day three students had not been picked up by their parents at the end of the program day. She called and determined that there were transportation issues and she offered to drive the students home with the parents' permissions. One student pulled her to the side and asked if she would drop him off last. She didn't question his request. She took him home last. Then she saw the reason for his request. He did not want the others to see where he lived. He was embarrassed.

This story underlines the willingness of the site coordinator to go the extra mile, a characteristic that she looks for in hiring staff. The story also underlines her understanding of the need for developing relationships with the students she serves. Her act that day helped to develop a strong, supportive relationship between her and the "embarrassed" middle school student.

The program's academic focus is on mathematics, reading, and science. Enrichment activities are used to reinforce the academics. Homework assistance is provided. Academics are the focus for four days per week, two hours per day. Fridays are fun days. Only those students who participate on the academic focused days can participate in fun day activities.

Although the alignment between the regular school day and afterschool programs in Anderson 2 is informal, it is working extremely well. Teachers exchange notes about individual student's needs and study guides are shared to help students prepare for tests. The system works. Why? The afterschool staff, by design, is comprised of regular school day faculty members, but what makes the informal system successful is the feeling of "family" that exists among the faculty members. *"Families" do not happen in schools without effective leadership.*

The site coordinator at the middle school, Patti Barrett, believes that relationships are key. She understands what happens when a student feels that "somebody cares about me." She knows through observation that the relationships between her teachers and students are not limited to the before-school and afterschool programs. She has often seen the afterschool teacher become the person that a student turns to during the regular school day for advice and support. *Relationship development is crucial for all extra learning time programs and it is especially true at the middle and high school levels.*

Technology is being used. It is an expectation within the district. Last summer the superintendent offered to purchase an interactive whiteboard for each classroom as long as the teacher volunteered to participate in training during the summer. All classrooms now have interactive whiteboards. There is a computer lab and students have research-based curricula avail-



**Planting Bulbs:** This enrichment activity has two payoffs. The bulbs become beautiful flowers that students, staff and the public can enjoy. But, more importantly are the “science and mathematics bulbs” planted in the minds of the students. This activity is made possible by the active involvement of the local garden club.

able. The middle school also uses video streaming made available through ETV, the state’s education television system. All this technology is used during both the regular and afterschool programs.

The positives present at the middle school are also present at the elementary school. The site coordinator, Delores Hill, is a retired teacher who had been on the regular school day faculty. Her enthusiasm is catching. She only recruits the strongest teachers to be on the afterschool staff. The program serves 50 students and there is a waiting list. Students are engaged. The program has four strands: homework, mathematics, reading, and activities. Students participate in groups of 10 and are organized so that there are two groups of five within each group that has the same homework assignments. It is obvious that the site coordinator is extremely well organized.

One of the challenges facing the Anderson 2 district is its graduation rate. Only about 70 percent of the entering students graduate. In recognition of this challenge, the superintendent, Tom Chapman, has established a personal mentoring program for young children who have been identified as being at risk. These students are also served by the additional learning time program, and mentors work with the students during both the regular and afterschool programs.

Both the elementary and middle school programs have established strong supportive relationships with the community. The local garden club, for example, is a partner at each school. Students are actively engaged in landscaping and gardening activities, and the results at both campuses are very pleasing to the eye. A junior master gardener program has been instituted at the middle school.

The program has a long history. Initial funds came from the federally administered 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Subsequent funding has come from the same program, now state-administered. As the first part of the state-administered funds comes to an end, the district is faced with another challenge. How will the program be maintained? The program director, Ms. Brenda Parson, is committed to finding the funds necessary to continue the program. The district will provide some of the funding necessary, but the continuation of the current program is contingent upon securing additional support.

## Adair, Iowa<sup>16</sup>

Most Boys and Girls Clubs are located in cities, but there is a big exception in Adair, Iowa. Located about an hour west of Des Moines on Interstate 80, Adair, with a population of 816, has a Boys and Girls Club. The club, chartered in 2002, began providing services for the area's youth in early 2003. The paid staff is small, with two full-time and two part-time members. Community volunteers help the staff to make the program successful.

The Adair Boys and Girls Club operates an after-school program Monday through

Friday, and a summer program. The Club is open four hours per day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and for six hours on Wednesday. The program is open for all students, but the primary age range of participants is eight to 15.

The local school district provides transportation from the Adair-Casey K-12 school to the club, but not from the club to home. Parents need to arrange transportation home from the club. The school, located seven miles from the club, has an enrollment of 300, of which 225 are registered members of the Boys and Girls Club. About 40 students participate regularly in the after-school program. Last year 52 students participated in the summer school program.

The three primary funding sources for the program are fund raising and contributions (57 percent), grants (27 percent), and membership fees (6 percent).<sup>17</sup> The Adair-Casey School has slightly less than 40 percent of its students on free and reduced-price lunch status, which explains why the program is not eligible to apply for 21st Century Community Learning Centers program funds.

Funding is a challenge for the program. Another challenge is recruiting and retaining staff. There are no formal aca-

## Adair, Iowa student: a brief profile

The positive effects of a relationship-focused program can best be described in terms of individual students. Three years ago a sixth grade student began attending the program. She came from a single family household and had very limited verbal ability. Staff immediately recognized and discussed the challenges the student faced. A plan for developing long-term relationships was set in motion. Today the student's verbal skills have improved remarkably as demonstrated through her non-stop chatter when given the opportunity.

demic program alignment procedures between the school and the after-school program. Club staff depends on information from parents pertaining to individual student needs. This works well because of the parents' involvement in transportation. There are ample opportunities for staff/parent communication.

The program takes advantage of the instructional resources of the national Boys and Girls Club of America. The national organization has resources available to assist local clubs with planning and implementing academic-based enrichment activities. Three days per week the program has a "power hour" where the focus is academics. The remaining program time provides students with enrichment activities designed to reinforce academics and develop social skills.

The program is relationship focused. Students have fun as they actively participate in enrichment activities. The strong relationships between students and staff are obvious. One staff member is called and referred to as "Grandma," who is obviously a very caring person.

The club's executive director is Heidi Blomquist. She is a very "hands-on" person and because of the size of the staff is a "jack-of-all-trades." She also obviously has great relationships with the students participating in the program. Her board of directors is very supportive. The board's chairperson volunteers her services at least twice per week. The program has strong and committed leadership.

The Adair program is relatively small, but it is providing a valuable service to the community and the strong community support reflects the community's appreciation of the program.

## Florence, South Carolina<sup>18</sup>

Florence County is located in the northeastern part of South Carolina. It is designated as a metropolitan area. The county has five school districts. Florence District One serves the city of Florence, which in 2000 had a population of 30,288. The Florence One student enrollment is approximately 14,700, with the student body about evenly divided between minority and white students.

Florence, South Carolina has a problem with juvenile crime. Located approximately halfway between New York City and Miami on Interstate 95, it is a magnet for youth gang members associated with drug trafficking. In response to this challenge the Mayor's Coalition to Prevent Juvenile Crime was formed.<sup>19</sup> The Coalition's planning committee, which is chaired by Mayor Frank Willis, is comprised of the following individuals: Neal Zimmerman, Boys and Girls Club; Chuck Pope, Parks and Recreation; Superintendent Larry Jackson, Florence School District One; Police Chief Anson Shells; Pastor Odom; Tom Marschel, President, Chamber of Commerce; Jodi Beauregard, Carolinas Hospital System; and Greg Dewitt, McLeod Hospital. Jim Shaw, Florence School District One, serves as the lead staff person for the Coalition.

Extra learning opportunities are major components of the Coalition's juvenile crime prevention plan. It includes an after-school program serving students at the Church Hill housing development. The program operates in space within the development provided by the Housing Authority. The program serves students grades one through eight. Sixty students are enrolled in the program, but only 35 are regular attendees.

By being part of the Church Hill community, the program has been able to establish good relationships with parents. Interviews with middle school students participating in the program indicate that the center is providing safe and supportive learning opportunities. The center's coordinator, Beverly Woods, is another example of a high energy, enthusiastic leader.

The program operates three hours per day, five days per week. The program day starts with a snack and recreation time followed by a 45-minute homework assistance/tutorial session. Students then go to the activity room where there are a number of enrichment activities available including games and computer access time.

During the summer of 2007, the Coalition operated four teen centers with three basketball centers opened until 10:30 p.m.; conducted a camp for alternative school students; conducted job skills training for 230 students securing jobs for 177; and operated credit recovery programs that served 365 students who earned 437 credits.<sup>20</sup>

The Coalition's efforts are working:<sup>21</sup>

- Department of Juvenile Justice referrals are down by 30 percent
- Juvenile Arbitration cases are down by 45 percent
- Juvenile felonies are down by 75 percent
- The ninth to tenth grade promotion rate is up by 11 percent

## **Anonymous, North Carolina and Estherville, Iowa<sup>22</sup>**

The previous five descriptions were based on on-site observation and interview data.

This description of contrasting situations was based on interview data. It is included to underline the importance of committed, supportive leadership.

This is a story of two after-school programs. One is located in Iowa, while the other is in North Carolina. The North Carolina program will go unnamed for reasons that will soon become obvious. The program in Iowa is located in Estherville.

First, the North Carolina story: Several years ago a nationally documented, extremely successful program was underway in western North Carolina. Students were involved in many exciting after-school learning time activities ranging from archeological digs to in-the-field water color painting. The program actively involved students in a conflict resolution process that had a very positive effect on student behavior. Student achievement improved dramatically. During 2002, 100 percent of the participants increased between one and three levels on end of grade tests in both mathematics and reading.<sup>23</sup> Also, there was no achievement gap between white and black students. There was strong school and community support for the program.

All of this occurred under the leadership of an enthusiastic site coordinator who had a very clear vision of what was possible. She understood the need for excitement in learning activities and the need to develop supportive relationships. The leadership of the school recognized and appreciated the value of the additional learning time program and the learning approaches that were being used.

But, when new, inexperienced leadership arrived at the school and with no



clear directions from the superintendent, the after-school program began to suffer from benign neglect. This was during the period when action was needed to secure continuation funding. No action was taken, funding ended, and, the site coordinator departed. Today there is no after-school program.

Estherville also was operating a successful after-school program funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. As the original funding was coming to an end, the leadership of the program, lead by Superintendent

Richard Magnuson, who appreciated the value of the after-school program, took action. He formed a task force.

The task force was charged with categorizing all of the services being provided by the program and placing each component in priority order. Funding sources for sustaining the program were identified. Based on the funds available and the priorities established by the task force a new program was constituted. Its scope is not as extensive as the former program, but it is successfully serving students.

# Challenges Associated with Providing Rural Students with Additional Learning Opportunities

Leadership does make a difference. But it is not the biggest challenge associated with providing rural students with opportunities for extra learning time.

The availability of funds to support additional learning opportunities and competition for the funds that are available are two huge challenges facing rural communities. Many rural communities simply do not have the tax base or the local community support options needed to generate sustaining funds for extra learning opportunities. This means that they have to turn to external funding sources.

But, a quick review of currently available sources results in the unquestionable conclusion that the demand far exceeds the current supply. And, as the demand increases, the situation will become even more dire unless new investments are made in rural programs.

## Limited Funding Sources

### *Federal Funds*

The federal government is a major funding source for programs that provide students with additional time for learning. Potentially the greatest amount comes from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965—now known as the No Child Left Behind Act. Title I has two funding pots of money: formula grant funds and out-of-school tutorial and transportation funds.

Title I formula grant funds may be used to provide additional services that include academics and enrichment and local districts have discretion in allowing Title I schools to use them for before, after-school, intersession, and summer programs.<sup>24</sup> There are significant problems, however, with the Title I funding formulas that penalize many rural states.

As Goodwin Liu, a law professor at the University of California Boalt Law School, has pointed out, the Title I formula does not fulfill the law's purpose to level the educational playing field for poor students. If it did, Title I would disproportionately benefit low-spending states, where low-income students are concentrated. But this is not the case.

“Instead, wealthier, higher-spending states receive a disproportionate share of Title I funds, thereby exacerbating the profound differences in education spending from state to state,” Liu explains. “Title I makes rich states richer and leaves poor states behind.”<sup>25</sup>

The problem is that the Title I formulas take into account not only the number and concentration of poor children in each state, which benefits poorer states with their disproportionate numbers of low-income children, but also take account of the average per-pupil expenditure in the state. As Liu states: “This state expenditure factor means that high-spending states get more Title I money per poor child than low-spending states.”

His solution is the elimination of the state expenditure factor in the Title I formulas. “This reform would bring Title I into line with the aid formulas for special education, English language instruction, and child nutrition, all of which assign equal weight to eligible children regardless of the state where they reside.”<sup>26</sup>

Districts with schools identified as needing improvement must set aside Title I funds to cover the cost of transporting students to schools of choice. When schools are designated as needing improvement for a second year, districts must set aside funds to provide out-of-school academic tutorial services in reading and mathematics provided by state-approved organizations and businesses for low-income students. The required set aside is 20 percent.<sup>27</sup>

A second major source of ESEA funds is Title IV, Part B, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.<sup>28</sup> This program’s sole purpose is to provide funding for extra learning opportunities—largely in the form of after-school and summer programs. Its funds are allocated to states by formula. Each state then awards competitive grants to local school districts, community-based and faith-based organizations, other agencies and businesses.

Public school students served by these grants must be enrolled in schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from low-income families. Private school students may participate in a program that serves public school students if the private school is located within the attendance area of the public school being served.

Other federal funding sources for additional learning activities are available through the state-administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and the U.S. Department of Justice.

## State Funds

A few states have provided funds for the support of after-school programs. By far, the largest commitment has been made in California, with the implementation of the After School Education and Safety Act of 2002. California allocates \$550 million per year for the operation of programs that create more learning time for students. Other states have made afterschool funds available but to a much smaller extent.

## Other Funding Sources

Many local school districts provide funding to support these activities as well. Most often the funding is derived from federal and state sources, but in some relatively affluent rural areas local tax revenues are used.

Extra learning opportunities are also provided by community service organizations. For example, YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs provide after-school, weekend, and summer programs. These programs are often supported by United Way and other



charitable organizations. But many of these national programs are not readily available in rural communities.

Other funds for the support of learning activities are provided by foundations and businesses. Many of these opportunities are through grant application processes in which rural communities often find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

## Un-level Playing Field When Competing for Funds

Urban areas have been quick to act on opportunities to secure funds for extra learning time programs. Their quickness is possible because most urban school districts have personnel dedicated to securing funds available through federal and state agencies, businesses, and philanthropic foundations.

In comparison with rural districts, urban districts have more flexibility in how Title I funds can be used due to the size of their allocations. They also have a large number of local businesses from which they can solicit funds. This has resulted in the rapid expansion of after-school programs and other learning opportunities in urban areas.

Rural areas have not been as fortunate. Rural districts usually do not have dedicated grant writers on staff or have the extra funds available to hire a consultant to write for them and secure funding for new initiatives. They have limited flexibility in how they can allocate Title I funds and in many rural areas opportunities for soliciting funds from businesses are very limited.

Steps need to be taken to “level the playing field” between rural and urban

districts in their competition for funds. Urban areas should not be penalized, but regulations need to be in place to ensure the equitable distribution of funds between urban and rural areas. Great care needs to be taken, however, in the development of any regulations related to the distribution of rural-directed funding because the definition of rural varies greatly across the United States. A recommendation below (see page 23) suggests an approach that could help to level the playing field while recognizing the nation’s rural diversity.

## Need and Justification for More Funds

The federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program supports extra learning opportunities throughout the country, but the need throughout rural states far exceeds the available resources available to them. During the last competition for funds in Georgia, for example, requests totaled over \$35 million but less than \$3 million was available for new grants.<sup>29</sup> Many of the unfunded applications came from rural areas. Even in California, with its massive state program, demand still is greater than the funds available.

Cost-benefit studies of after-school programs indicate that the return on funds invested justify the allocation of additional funds. An examination of cost-benefit studies of the California program found that benefits ranged “from nearly \$9 to nearly \$13 for every \$1 in program cost.”<sup>30</sup> The same study estimated that for every dollar invested, taxpayers would save approximately three dollars. The total benefit also includes benefits to individual students and benefits to crime victims,

thus, the differences between taxpayer savings and the total benefit estimates.

In another cost-benefit study, Philip Levine and David Zimmerman “arrived at a cost-benefit ratio of 3.19. That is, for every dollar spent on after-school programs, \$3.19 in benefits accrue.”<sup>31</sup> The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA conducted “a longitudinal study on the effect of LA’s BEST (Los Angeles’ Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) after-school program on educational attainment and juvenile crime.”<sup>32</sup> The CRESST cost-benefit study estimated “an average saving of \$2.50 for each \$1.00 invested in the program.”

These studies strongly suggest that the benefits of programs that provide additional learning time far exceed the costs of the programs and that these programs are cost-effective. An increase in funding for rural states by federal, state, and local governments is justifiable. States and the federal government should also build in incentives in their funding streams to encourage local government matches—from county, city, town, and school districts—and support for opportunities.

## Transitions to Larger Programs Are Possible

After-school programs can serve as a basis for initiatives that lengthen the school day and/or year for all students in a school. Partnerships with after-school providers and other service providers such as departments of recreation or museums play a key role in these schools. In Massachusetts, for example, the state’s expanded learning time initiative for schools in which all students participate relies on the heavy and dedicated involvement of after-school providers such as Citizen Schools, the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, Tenacity, and Squashbusters.<sup>33</sup>

Rethinking and expanding the role of providers to serve as school and learning partners, and developing a memorandum of understanding reflecting this new partnership, can facilitate the transition of an after-school program to a school with more learning time. While several other school redesign elements are necessary for the success of expanded learning time initiatives, establishing partnerships from committed entities is critical.

## How to Improve Additional Learning Opportunities in Rural Areas

By far, the biggest need is to level the playing field for rural communities in the quest for funds. As previously described, the major sources for extra learning opportunity funds are the federal government, the states, foundations, and businesses. Foundations and businesses make funds available in line with their “business” plans. They can determine where to direct their funds. But the federal and state governments have a responsibility to ensure that all citizens are equitably served. That’s why funds for additional learning opportunities should be equitably distributed among urban and rural communities.

For example, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program does not currently guarantee the equitable distribution of funds between rural and urban areas. The authorizing legislation includes the following statement: “To the extent practicable, a State educational agency shall distribute funds under this part equitably among geographic areas within the State, including urban and rural communities.”<sup>34</sup>

Language should be added to ensure that states equitably fund rural after-school learning opportunities. State education agencies should use at least two of the specified primary rural characteristics and at least two of the specified secondary characteristics in creating a formula for determining a “ruralness” factor for each sub-grant applicant. The “ruralness” factors should be used by state education agencies in assigning competitive priority points, thus helping to ensure the equitable distribution of funds.

### Primary Rural Characteristics

- Size of community
- Proximity to metro area
- Population density
- Local job availability

### Secondary Rural Characteristics

- Proximity to Interstate highway system
- Availability of cell phone service
- Availability of DSL Internet service
- Level of parental education
- Ethnicity

The above recommendation takes into consideration rural diversity. It allows states to develop distribution formulas that are appropriate for each state while ensuring a “level playing field” within each state. States could use the same approach in the distribution of state funds.

Title I funding guidelines should also be modified in ways that could result in more support for rural extra learning opportunities. Specifically, guidelines pertaining to the use

of funds to provide transportation related to choice should be modified to allow the use of funds for additional learning programs where parents select to enroll their children in after-school, intersession, weekend, and summer programs.

In addition, supplemental education services funding guidelines could be modified to encourage rural school districts to provide after-school programs. Specifically, for rural districts that do not have in-person service providers locally available, the amount of local funds used to sup-

port extra learning opportunities should be viewed as an offset in meeting Title I's 20 percent set aside for supplemental education services and choice transportation Title I requirement.

Finally, if we are to close achievement gaps, most high poverty schools will need to expand and enhance their current after-school programs into ones that serve all students. While costly—dependent in most rural areas on increased state and federal investments—they are likely to have great pay-offs in student learning.

## Conclusion

High quality programs providing additional learning opportunities for students can result in significant learning gains and should become a national goal. In the case of rural schools that serve low-income areas, providing expanded learning time in the form of a longer school day, week, or year for all students may not be feasible in the short term absent significant new investments. Yet providing additional learning opportunities, such as after-school programs for rural, low-income students, is a feasible alternative as advocacy continues for more extensive learning opportunities as those found in expanded learning time programs.

Currently, there are successful additional learning time programs operating in rural areas. The largest impediment to having more successful programs in operation is funding. More funds are needed and are justifiable. Federal funding plans need to be revised as discussed above to ensure rural areas get their fair share.

Successful programs have a common set of characteristics:

- Strong and committed leadership
- Quality instructional staff
- Low adult to students ratios
- Focus on academics
- Understand the role of fun and excitement in the learning process
- Understand the role that supportive, caring relationships play in assisting students as they face and successfully respond to academic and behavioral challenges.

Programs that are funded should be expected to demonstrate these characteristics. If they do not, then with technical assistance they should be given opportunities to improve. But if they still do not demonstrate these characteristics then funding should be withdrawn and given to others who will provide the leadership necessary to be successful. Additional learning opportunities can improve students' learning and development and help launch them into successful adulthood, but only if they are effective.

## Endnotes

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- 8 Listing derived by author from review of literature. See U. S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Agriculture references.
- 9 Listing derived by author from review of literature.
- 10 Information presented on this district is largely derived from an interview with Anne Crabbe.
- 11 <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37165.html>.
- 12 Data provided during interview with Anne Crabbe.
- 13 Information presented on this district is largely derived from an interview with Loras Hausoster and from promotional materials provided during the interview.
- 14 Survey data provided during interview.
- 15 Information presented on this district is largely derived from interviews with Patti Burrett, Delores Hill, and Brenda Parson.
- 16 Information presented on this district is largely derived from an interview with Heidi Blomquist and from promotional materials provided during the interview.
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- 18 Information presented on this district is largely derived from interviews with Jim Shaw, Mayor Frank Willis, and Beverly Woods.
- 19 Flyer provided during interview with Jim Shaw.
- 20 PowerPoint provided during interview with Jim Shaw.
- 21 PowerPoint provided during interview with Jim Shaw.
- 22 Information presented on these districts is largely derived from interviews.
- 23 Data provided during interview.
- 24 <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>.
- 25 Liu, "How the Federal Government Makes Rich States Richer."
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>.
- 28 Ibid. Congress increased the appropriation for the 21st CCLC program by \$1 million. This illustrates the popularity and support for the program.
- 29 Author was program manager during referenced grant competition.
- 30 Willaim O. Brown et al., "The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs: The Estimated Effects of the After School and Safety Program Act of 2002," (Claremont: Rose Institute).
- 31 [www.kauffman.org/pdf/afterschool\\_report\\_20205.pdf](http://www.kauffman.org/pdf/afterschool_report_20205.pdf).
- 32 Pete Goldschmidt, Denise Huang, and Marjorie Chinen, "The Long Term Effects of After-School Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: A Study of the LA's BEST After-School Program," (Los Angeles: CRESST/University of California, Los Angeles).
- 33 *Time for a New Day: Broadening Opportunities for Massachusetts Schoolchildren*, Expanded Learning Time Initiative 2006-2007 Annual Report.
- 34 <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>.

# Appendix: Rural Characteristics

## Primary Characteristics

### *Size of Community (Metro and Nonmetro)*

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service provides a wealth of statistical data pertaining to rural America. In a Briefing Rooms paper, "Measuring Rurality: New Definitions in 2003," they provide a summary of definitions used by the U.S. Census Bureau in classifying metro and nonmetro counties.

Counties are listed as being either metro or nonmetro. Metro areas include central counties with one or more cities of at least 50,000 and surrounding counties where at least 25 percent of the workers commute to the central counties. Counties not included in metro areas are classified as nonmetro.

Rural includes the countryside and small towns with populations up to 2,500 individuals. The definition of rural also includes persons living in sparsely populated areas of cities that have very broad geographical city limits.

The U.S. Census Bureau also has an urban cluster category, micropolitan, which includes small towns with populations of 2,500 or more. A small town of less than 2,500 may also be designated as an urban cluster if there is an adjacent densely populated area that would result in the total population being 2,500 or more. Urban clusters are included as metropolitan areas.

### *Proximity to a Metro Area*

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies counties as being in either a Core-Based Statistical Area (CBSA) or not. The CBSA designation includes metropolitan and micropolitan areas.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service provides a paper pertaining to the proximity of rural counties to metro areas. "Measuring Rurality: Rural-Urban Continuum Codes," classifies counties by "degree of urbanization and adjacency to a metro area or areas." There are nine Rural-Urban Continuum Codes. Codes eight and nine are used to designate rural counties. Code eight is used for rural counties adjacent to a metro area. Code nine is used for rural counties not adjacent to a metro area.

### *Population Density*

Population density is determined by the number of persons living in a square mile area. Some states use population density to define rural. For example, in North Carolina a rural county is a county that has a population density of less than 200 persons per square mile.

### ***Local Job Availability***

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service provides two papers pertaining to local job availability. The "Measuring Rurality: 2004 County Topology Codes" classifies rural areas by economic type and by policy type. Economic type pertains to the availability of work by specific areas: farming, mining, manufacturing, government, services, and non-specialized. Policy type pertains to housing stress, low-education, low-employment, persistent poverty, population loss, nonmetro recreation, and retirement destination.

## **Secondary Characteristics**

### ***Proximity to Interstate Highway System***

Proximity to an Interstate Highway is related to the primary characteristic, proximity to a metro area. Persons not close to a metro area and who do not have easy access to an Interstate Highway have to travel longer (more time) to access services associated with metro areas than those who have easy access to the Interstate System.

### ***Availability of Cell Phone Service***

In most cases, when the cell phone does not work due to the lack of a tower signal, the user is isolated from what is now considered to be normal communications. The user is definitely in a rural area.

### ***Availability of Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) Internet Service***

When the only Internet service is dial-up, the user is placed at a big disadvantage in her/his ability to use the Internet as an information source. In most cases, the absence of a DSL Internet service is associated with rural areas.

### ***Level of Parental Education***

The level of parental education is closely correlated with student achievement; hence, this factor is a good determiner of need in a rural area.

### ***Ethnicity***

Ethnicity, in this case, is a placeholder for past and current discrimination practices. In some rural areas African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans constitute a majority of the population. When ethnicity is combined with size of community, it is closely associated with low-income, rural communities where the majority of the inhabitants are minorities.



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## About the Author

During his 48-year career, Roy Forbes has served as the director of a rural education center, director of an urban education center, advisor to a governor, director of a regional education research and development laboratory, director of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, program manager for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in Georgia, and consultant to an after-school network and to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in two states.

## About this Paper

The information contained in this paper is derived from the following sources:

Extended learning time programs were visited in Iowa, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Practitioners, those operating programs on a daily basis at the site visited, were interviewed. Practitioners included program directors, site coordinators, and teachers. At some sites, students and parents were informally interviewed. Policymakers associated with some of the sites were also interviewed.

Some of the information was obtained via the Internet. When this means was used, appropriate references are cited within the text and references are provided. Some of the information provided is based on the experiences and expertise of the author whose career in education policy covers a period of 48 years.



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