



Printable Edition

Note: This resource includes all articles from the November 2013 Rural Policy Matters newsletter. For the latest content updates, please check the [issue index](#) for this edition.

Editor's note: Links are free and current at time of posting, but may require registration or expire over time.

Facts and Figures About Rural Households With Internet Service

Question: What percentage of rural households has an Internet subscription?

Answer: In 2010, 62% of households in nonmetro counties had an internet subscription of some kind (dial-up or broadband), compared to 73% of households in metro counties.

(Source: USDA Rural Broadband At a Glance, 2013 Edition, www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eb-economic-brief/eb23.aspx)

Hope to See You in the Future

"Sign me up!" is what Dominique Kearney said the day she heard about New Generation Leaders. At the time, Kearney was a senior at Warren County High School and thought that New Generation Leaders was a jobs program.

Like many small communities, Warrenton, North Carolina does not have a lot of employment opportunities, especially for young people. "It's very hard to get a job," says Kearney of her initial enthusiasm. "You pretty much have to know someone or go somewhere else."

Kearney is now President of New Generation Leaders (NGL), which recently launched New Generation Beverages, a youth-led and youth-run micro business based in Warrenton.

But when Kearney "signed up," there was no job. New Generation Leaders is not a jobs project. Rather, it is a collaboration in Warrenton designed to bring together local partners to build supports for children and young people. It emphasizes genuine opportunities for young people to express opinion and take action in ways that are meaningful from their perspective.

Kearney, together with other NGL students, have, in fact, begun to launch their own business out of NGL -- a testament to the success of the collaboration and its emphasis on youth-led initiatives.

Young people: creating the community in which they live

"One of the questions we are always exploring is 'how can young people create the community in which they live?'" says Jereann King Johnson. Johnson is Project Coordinator/Trainer at the Rural Trust, which is spearheading the collaboration.

The collaboration received funding through the North Carolina Rural Center and currently includes the Warren County schools system, the Warren County Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program, Warren FoodWorks/Working Landscapes, and the County Extension Office/Food Corps volunteer among others.

Ernie Conner is Director of Career Technical Education for the school system. "This was a real opportunity for our students," he says. "For young adults to be able to serve as leaders, to take an active role to improve the community based on what the new generation wants, that's really important in a small place."

Kearney went to the kick-off event for New Generation Leaders because she wanted a job, but she stayed because she liked the idea that she and other young people could make a difference in their own community.

That idea is what drew in Tavis Dunston as well. He was in the 10th grade at Warren Early College High School when he first heard about NGL. "There aren't a lot of activities for young people here and I thought this would be a good thing for me to do; it would look good on my transcript," he says.

But Dunston, who is now Vice President of NGL, soon realized this project was different. "We really have a voice in New Generation Leaders," he emphasizes. "Usually the adults control things. They want you to get involved, but they stay in control. This is different. The adults and

mentors won't let us put anything off on them. We have to make the decisions and do the work. They guide us, but it's our ideas and our work."

Connecting youth to community

One of the first steps in supporting young people to *create* the community in which they live is to help them understand *where* they live. "We're specifically talking about this place, its history, the possibilities *here*," says Johnson. "It has to be connected to reality."

In order to help students get more connected to community and begin connecting ideas to place, community partners arranged a series of activities and visits around the county. For example, the students visited the Warren Free Clinic, where they learned that many local people face challenges getting enough high-quality food. They also learned that food and nutrition are at the root of many health conditions in the county.

The students also conducted oral histories with their grandparents and discovered dramatic changes in the ways that residents produce and consume food. These conversations further raised the students' awareness of food systems within the broader context of the local economy.

Conner says these activities were not only beneficial to students but helped establish the young people as serious and positive members of the community. "People in the community really took notice, especially when the students got out and started doing interviews," he says. "Businesses have been more than happy to have the young people come in."

As the students gained more firsthand knowledge of their community, they began to do research, especially on food and agriculture issues. (See a presentation of some of their research [here](#).) They partnered with another youth group GenZ, which had begun a school garden in conjunction with the Extension Service and Food Corps volunteer, to interview fellow students about where their food came from.

They visited North Carolina A & T State University, where they gained perspective on agricultural trends in emerging fields like biofuels and in traditional sustainable approaches like crop rotation and raising animals in natural conditions.

Growing a business

Dominique Kearney says she wasn't particularly interested in food when she first got involved with NGL, but as the group learned more about the circumstances and history of the county, they began to pay more attention to food and its connections to other issues.

Chris Ford joined the group last winter as a high school sophomore at Warren Early College High. At his first meeting, students were looking at the results of the student food survey and mapping where food came from. Ford took on the job of analyzing the survey results. "People used to grow their own food or get it from their neighbors or from a store ten minutes away. Now it comes in on a truck and most people have to drive to the big store," he says.

When the group began to talk about a possible entrepreneurial project the conversation naturally turned to food. "That's what we were always talking about," observes Ford. "Everyone was just popping out ideas of things we could do, things we didn't have in Warren County. Then the idea of smoothies came up."

Conner says the students' entrepreneurial thinking was nuanced and community-minded. "It wasn't just how to make some quick and easy money, but how to make the place better and healthier," he says. "The students were seeing ways to be productive and involved in agriculture without having to own a lot of land."

As the New Generation Leaders began to look at their options, they decided to sell smoothies at the local Ridgeway Cantaloupe Festival in July. Ridgeway cantaloupes have long been considered among the finest in the eastern U.S.

FoodWorks/Working Landscapes, a Warrenton business emphasizing local foods and a related non-profit focused on sustainable local livelihoods are key partners. "They let us use their commercial kitchen and advise us on the business aspects," says Ford. New Generation students began to test smoothie recipes and plan for the Cantaloupe Festival.

NGL settled on two recipes, cantaloupe-peach and cantaloupe-blackberry and purchased produce from local farmers. At the Festival, they surveyed customers for feedback.

"People loved the smoothies," says Dunston. "But we found out that some people didn't like the texture of the blackberry seeds. So we re-worked that recipe. Now it's even more popular."

Spurred on by their success, New Generation purchased more local produce and began freezing it at FoodWorks so they could sell smoothies at other community events. They worked on a business plan and purchased equipment. New Generation Beverages was born.

Kearney says the whole experience has been interesting. "We've done business plans at schools," she explains. "But this was different. At school the plans were on paper. These are the same steps, but it's for real, and we're doing it together. It's not just in your own mind, you have to figure it out together."

After serious deliberation, the students decided to incorporate New Generation Beverages as an LLC. They are in the process of opening the business's bank account. And next month the new food cart will arrive. That will enable the business to sell at more kinds of community events and activities.

"People love smoothies, especially the ones we make," says Kearney.

New Generation Beverages is currently working on hot drinks. "Right now we're developing a hot cider with local apples that we can serve at winter events like the Christmas Parade. We have ideas for foods, too," says Dunston. "Local foods," he adds.

New circles of collaboration

New Generation Leaders is a means to give young people authentic voice in their communities. It is also a vehicle through which adults learn how to build the collaborative supports that help young people flourish in place, a condition necessary for communities to flourish.

"This kind of collaboration takes real persistence," says Johnson. "When several entities are collaborating, you always have to keep the well-being of young people at the center."

That means that teachers, schools, community-based organizations that are working together must create a seamless holistic approach. "Collaborating entities must be open rather than fixed about their program boundaries," says Johnson. "Each entity must be willing to unravel its edges, almost like a piece of fabric, so the programs can be interwoven to form multiple circles around the kids. Instead of working in the small areas where their programs intersect, collaborators have to think about creating a new bigger circle, one with multiple layers rather than lots of boundaries."

Johnson says that kind of flexibility for the purposes of collaboration proves essential when it comes to doing something innovative like working with young people to launch a business. "The students have good exposure at school to business planning, so they know a lot about *how* to set one up. But there's a real difference between doing that in theory or in virtual reality and doing it in a real community," she says.

Conner agrees. "We can have course projects in school, but when you make it real and relevant in the community, it has a lot more impact — on the students and the community. It has made a real difference when people can see the student's product."

Collaborating in ways that hold to the principles of youth-led initiatives is an adult balancing act that students recognize and appreciate. "Our mentors are great," says Ford. "They really want us to become independent."

Johnson adds that innovation takes a lot of persistence from students and from their adult mentors. "Those mentors have to stay with the young people as they move through the process and honor principles like questioning, mental agility, and ability to live with failure."

Creating the community we want

Kearney says the most surprising thing to her about the experience of New Generation Beverages is that "people know about us."

Dunston elaborates. "People can see the changes we've made in our community. We are leaders here already."

Kearney says that even though New Generation Beverages is just getting started, it has changed the way she thinks. "This is a job you can do of your own free will. You begin to realize that you could open a business. You could hire people."

That sense of possibility is one powerful outcome of the New Generation Leaders collaboration. "You can use your local place, what's here, to do something good. There's no limit if you really think out a process and put your mind to it," says Dunston.

In the end it is the collaboration that matters. "You have to get ideas from everyone," says Ford. "We all need to help each other out to make this work. We buy fruit from local farmers and make something new and more people buy it. People tell us they're happy to see young people doing something like this. They say they hope to see us in the future."

Read more:

Warren County School's Career and Technical website:

- www.warrencareertech.org/contact-us.html

Warren County Cooperative Extension website:

- <http://warren.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Warren FoodWorks and Working Landscapes

- www.warrenfoodworks.com/
- <http://workinglandscapesnc.org/>

It's Complicated... Why What's Rural Matters

Do you consider yourself rural? Do you live or work in a place you think of as rural? Did your grandparents come from the country? Does the answer to "What's rural?" seem pretty obvious or at least intuitive to you?

Can you easily explain to your non-rural friends four or five ways that rural is different from urban, or suburban, or small town for that matter?

These questions are a lot harder than they seem at first blush, so let's have some fun.

Yes or no?

- Rural is any place with a core population of less than 50,000.
- Rural is any place with a population under 2,500 people.
- Towns of less than 1,000 people are considered rural.
- Rural places are communities and open country located in non-metropolitan counties.
- Rural is defined by low population density, not total population.

- There are capital cities of American states that meet an official designation as rural.
- Rural is open country.
- Rural is a way of life.
- Rural is a state of mind.

Surely, this is clearer with schools, right? A school is rural if:

- A majority of its students live in rural places.
- It is located in a district with fewer than 600 students.
- It is located in a town of less than 2,500 people, no matter how many students are in the district.
- It is small and located at least five miles from an urbanized area.

The best response to most of these questions is *it depends* — on the definition, the context, and, arguably, one's personal perspective. In some cases, as in the "rural" capital cities, the answer is *yes and no*.

As for those capital cities, *RPM* estimates that seven state capital *cities* could be considered *rural* by at least one existing or proposed official definition. They include:

Montpelier, VT, pop. 7,705; Pierre, SD, pop. 14,072; Augusta, ME, pop. 19,136; Frankfort, KY, pop. 25,527; Helena, Montana, pop. 28,190; Juneau, Alaska, pop. 31,275; and Concord, New Hampshire, pop. 42,695;

Keep reading to understand why.

So where does this leave rural schools and communities?

Funding and policy are often governed by if and how rural is defined, a solid understanding of the characteristics of *rural* places can enable policies to serve rural communities, their schools, and their students more effectively. Tapping rural potential and addressing rural challenges yields benefits for everyone.

Rural: what is/what isn't, not so easy

The [Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](#) defines [rural](#) as "*of or relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture.*"

That definition reflects popular understanding, but it also begs a lot of questions.

More hard-edged definitions are needed for public policy where the definition of rural determines whether a community or school is eligible for various grants and loans and, sometimes, how public policy will be implemented in that place.

Here again, defining rural is not a clear-cut task. By some [accounts](#), there are at least 15 definitions of "rural" in use by federal agencies. As we'll see, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, it reflects the complex nature and context of rural.

We'll take a quick look at five of the more commonly used definitions as they apply to rural communities and schools.

Urbanized Areas, Urbanized Clusters, and Rural. Most official definitions of rural (as well as urban, suburban, and town) are based on data and designations assigned by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).

It is important to note that these definitions are not fixed. The Census Bureau updates its designations as it collects data. It also changes its definitions and designations with each decennial census. In 2012, the Bureau released definitions based on 2010 census data as follows:

- Urbanized Areas: 50,000 or more people with a core population density of at least 1,000 people per square and adjoining territory with at least 500 people per square mile.
- Urban Clusters: places with populations between 2,500 and 50,000 people.
- Rural: all population, housing and territory not designated as urban, including open country with population densities less than 500 people per square mile and places with fewer than 2,500 people.

You can get more detailed descriptions of 2010 Census classifications [here](#).

Metropolitan/Nonmetropolitan Counties is another widely used definition that designates entire counties as either urban or rural (described, in this case, as metropolitan or nonmetropolitan respectively). The [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#) makes the designations based on a combination of census data and work commuting patterns.

- Metropolitan counties include
 1. central counties with one or more Urbanized Areas (densely settled with 50,000 or more people), *and*
 2. outlying counties where 25% of workers commute *to* or *from* (reverse commuting) the central county.
- Nonmetro counties are essentially all other counties.

Many metropolitan counties include large swathes of land and communities that are rural as defined by the U.S. census. Therefore, OMB definitions tend to undercount the rural population.

Census and OMB definitions are used primarily for research and planning purposes. Which definition is most appropriate depends on the type of research and its purpose.

You can read more about the process of designating counties as metropolitan or nonmetropolitan [here](#). You can see state-by-state maps of

census designated places and metro/nonmetro counties along with other information [here](#).

Researching or serving?

Definitions in use by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) serve somewhat different purposes and govern the many loan and grant programs administered through USDA and targeted to rural areas and small towns.

USDA has historically used multiple definitions of rural, depending on the specific purposes of its various programs. For example, the [Telecommunications Loan Program](#) serves rural areas with populations under 5,000 — communities that have the most difficulty accessing high speed internet and other quality telecommunications. On the other hand, some USDA economic development programs are available to communities with populations up to 50,000. The rationale, in this case, is that these larger towns often serve as employment hubs for surrounding rural areas and therefore economic investment benefits rural residents. Other programs use different population thresholds (typically 10,000 or 20,000), all of which are less than 50,000.

In February, USDA issued a [report](#) to Congress that proposes simplifying its definitions to designate any community with fewer than 50,000 people as rural. The definition would apply to all USDA programs. The USDA asserts the change would simplify programs and incentivize regional planning and collaboration.

Advocates for smaller places have pushed back, however, arguing that the redefinition will direct a shrinking pot of federal funding for *rural* places to large regional towns. Those larger towns are relatively privileged in terms of existing infrastructure, revenue-generating capacity, and ability to attract investment. Some rural advocates suggest, therefore, that the re-definition will unfairly pit small rural communities against larger, better-resourced towns.

Addendum 4 of the USDA report (p 92) provides examples of “Filtering criteria” that could be used to rank proposals. Places with smaller populations could get more points. But critics note that point systems have their own problems. And some rural advocates argue that extra points for smallness are easily outweighed by different sets of extra points that favor larger places.

You can read the report [here](#) and the announcement of the proposed changes [here](#).

Schools and districts: clarity and complexity

The [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#), a program of the [U.S. Department of Education](#), assigns Locale Codes to schools and districts. In 2006–07, NCES introduced new **Urban-Centric Locale Codes** that designate schools and districts based on their relationship to an Urbanized Area. *Note: districts are designated (with some exceptions) according to the locale code of the school/s which 50% of students attend; different schools within the district may have different locale codes.*

- City and Suburban schools are located in Urbanized Areas (core population of 50,000 or more with population density of at least 500 people per square mile) and defined as *Large*, *Midsized*, or *Small*, depending on the size of the city.
- Town schools are located in Urban Clusters (population 2,500 to 50,000) and defined as *Fringe*, *Distant*, or *Remote*, based on their distance from an Urbanized Area.
- Rural schools are in census-defined rural territory and defined as *Fringe*, *Distant*, or *Remote*, based on their distance from both

Urbanized Areas and Urbanized Clusters.

Locale Codes prove useful for research because they create a consistent way to categorize schools based on their locations. The distance measures (*fringe*, *distant*, and *remote*) identify schools that are the most isolated and make it possible to distinguish among rural schools in very different circumstances. However, the codes are not a foolproof way of classifying schools, as we shall see later in this section.

You can read more about the NCES locale codes [here](#).

The older Metro-Centric Locale Codes are used to determine district eligibility for the federal [Rural Education Achievement Program \(REAP\)](#). REAP is another frequently used method of identifying rural *districts*. REAP provides non-competitive federal grants to rural districts (not schools). Those grants are intended to “help rural districts that may lack the personnel and resources to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and that often receive [formula] grant allocations in amounts that are too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes.”

REAP defines rural based on a combination of district size, population density, poverty levels, and Metro-Centric Locale Codes. REAP-eligible schools fall into two categories.

The [Small, Rural School Achievement Program](#) (SRSA) is available to districts that meet all of the following criteria:

- Total Average Daily Attendance is less than 600 students;
- The district is located in a county with a population density under 10 people per square mile; *and*
- Every school in the district is located in a community defined as rural by the Census Bureau.

See the Metro-Centric Locale Codes [here](#).

The [Rural and Low-Income School Program](#) (RLIS) is available to districts that meet a different set of criteria:

- The district is not eligible for a grant under the Small Rural School Achievement Program; *and*
- 20% or more of the children served by the district are from families with incomes below the poverty line, *and*
- Every school served by the district is defined as rural or small town (population under 25,000) in the metro-centric locale codes.

Again, you can see the Metro-Centric Locale Codes [here](#).

The two different definitions help REAP serve rural schools in states with very different district organizations. SRSA districts are primarily in the Mid-West, West, and New England where rural districts are typically small. RLIS districts are concentrated in the South where most districts are highly consolidated at the county level, meaning the districts are generally fairly large and often include a non-rural town.

However, both the REAP and Urban-Centric Locale Codes — like all descriptors of rural — have some arbitrary characteristics. For example, a district with 650 students in a county with an average population density of four persons per square mile would likely have a rural Locale Code, but it would not be eligible for REAP funding, unless at least 20% of its students live in poverty. Likewise, a small high-poverty, back-side-of-the-county K–12 school would not be eligible for REAP funding if it is located in a district that also includes a town of 28,000.

On the other hand, a very large suburban school, built five or six miles out from town (for the sake of cheap land and projected growth, perhaps), might be designated as rural in the Urban-Centric Locale Code.

There's no getting around some of the difficulties in drawing lines to separate rural from urban and especially from suburban.

Context and culture: multi-dimensional measures

The varying definitions speak to the complexity of describing *rural* in a large and diverse country. Rural is, for many practical purposes, a product of context. Let's explore this idea with a hypothetical community of 850 people located in different contexts.

If that community is in the eastern United States, is not the county seat, and is located 25 miles from the next closest community, it would be widely considered rural and its culture would likely be akin to that of surrounding rural areas.

But if that 850-person town is the county seat (especially if it is located in the South), it is likely the county's economic and political powerhouse, able to dominate smaller, more rural communities.

In parts of the West, a town of 850 might be the bustling commercial center for a territory covering hundreds of square miles. This Western town and its county seat cousin back East might have more in common culturally with much larger, more urban places than with surrounding rural areas. In this sense culture is partly a function of context.

There are other aspects of the question of *what's rural?* based on the access a community, or its institutions, has to basic amenities. For example, a "distant" town of 20,000 can usually get good broadband and cell access. In that sense it is pretty urban and very different from a rural area with no high-speed access and little hope of attracting commercial investment. Rural grants and loans for telecommunications infrastructure are more properly targeted to the most rural places.

But that same community's hospital might have much more in common — in terms of resources and services — with small rural clinics than it does with most urban and suburban hospitals. In terms of health care, the region's residents are likely to be best served if the hospital has access to resources and supports targeted to rural places and their needs.

Sparse, distant, small, diverse: rural characteristics that matter

Rural and urban are dimensional concepts that exist along multiple continuums incorporating size, density, isolation, culture, and function. This complexity only underscores the necessity of understanding and accounting for *rural* within the context of specific public policies.

There are, fortunately, ways to get a handle on the complexity. Rural places, in all their variety, are characterized by a combination of low population density (sparseness), isolation (distance from an urban center), and small size (total population). They are also highly diverse.

These characteristics shape rural-specific challenges and assets. For example, sparseness contributes to lagging telecommunications infrastructure and poor access to health care and social services across rural America. Distance is one contributor to undiversified, low-wage local economies as well as comparatively low levels of education among rural adults, in part, because colleges and large labor markets are beyond commuting distance. Small size (low total population) can be a cost factor because operational costs are spread over fewer individuals. Rural is also characterized by concentrated poverty in dispersed locales.

On the other hand, these same characteristics are assets that can be leveraged in thoughtful public policy as well. For example, sparseness means each individual is more likely to be needed in her community. Small size means that individuals can more easily be known and feel a sense of belonging — factors that are strongly associated with higher achievement and graduation rates. Investments and adaptations to make the most of rural assets can go a long way toward offsetting some of the challenges. For example, effective technology can often dramatically reduce costs associated with distance and scale.

In upcoming issues of *RPM*, we will look at what the characteristics of population sparseness, distance, small size, concentrated poverty, and diversity mean for public policy at the state, federal, and local levels.

Stay tuned for more policy fun.

Read more:

What is Rural? USDA Economic Research Service. This site helps clarify the different purposes of Census Bureau and OMB definitions:

- www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx

State-by-state maps and other information:

- <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-definitions.aspx#.Uo2N8iqmVRV>

A compendium of resources devoted to the question "What is Rural?"

- www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/what_is_rural.shtml

Another good overview of issues involved in defining rural:

- www.raconline.org/topics/what-is-rural/faqs/

This Issue Brief provides both overview and specific characteristics of a variety of definitions of rural:

- www.rupri.org/Forms/RuralDefinitionsBrief.pdf

The *RPM* series, *Why Policy Matters*, explores the importance of policy in shaping what is possible in school:

Why Policy Matters, Part 1: The Rules We Play By

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2937

Why Policy Matters, Part 2: Who Makes the Rules?

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2971

Why Policy Matters, Part 3: Citizen Action and Research

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=2990

Why Policy Matters, Part 4: Legal Interventions

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=3066

California State Senator Liu Hosts Community Schools Bus Tour

California State Senator Carol Liu (Chair of the Senate Education Committee) recently hosted a bus tour called **Pathways to Partnership — Community School Strategies in Action**. The bus tour was a three day statewide tour of effective cross-agency partnerships in California that are having dynamic impacts connecting students, parents and schools to local resources so that families and communities thrive.

“Senator Liu is very engaged and passionate in addressing issues of poverty across the state. Her bus tour, *Pathways to Partnership — Community School Strategies in Action*, reflects her passion and understanding of community schools as a vehicle for addressing these poverty issues. Many of the community schools we visited are on the vanguard of what’s happening systems-wide in California. We had a remarkable time, even nicknamed the bus “Liu-mobile for children and families,” says Robert Mahaffey, Director of Communications and Marketing for the Rural Trust and Co-Chair of the Coalition for Community Schools.



Some of the participants on the Pathways to Partnership — Community School Strategies in Action bus tour.

The bus tour was a significant vehicle for advocating for community schools across the state. The bus tour brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, including James Mayer, CEO of California Forward, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to bring government closer to the people and move the state in the right direction.

The bus tour also garnered significant media attention including coverage in Annenberg TV News, [State Senator Carol Liu Visits Local Elementary Schools](#); Pasadena Now, [Pasadena Area Initiative Highlighted as Part of Sen. Carol Liu's Tour](#) and [State Senator Touts School-Community Partnerships](#); the Fresno Bee, [State Senate Education Leader Tours Heaton Elementary in Fresno](#); California Forward, [The Not-so-Magic School Bus](#); the Coalition for Community Schools blog, [Is Slow Fast Enough?](#) and the Washington Post, [Why Community Schools Are a No-Brainer](#), which included a blog post by Brock Cohen, a former English and Humanities teacher who recently joined the [Los Angeles Education Partnership](#).

You can also read Cohen’s full blog post [here](#).

Read more:

Coalition for Community Schools, coverage of the bus tour:

- www.communityschools.org/policy_advocacy/community_schools_bus_tour_in_california.aspx

[Pathways to Partnerships: State of the Community Schools Movement](#), a presentation to the State Education Committee Hearing on Community Schools, Sacramento, California, by Robert Mahaffey

Colorado School Funding Defeat

The future of school funding in Colorado is unclear after voters defeated a measure that would have raised about \$950 million for schools. Amendment 66 would have altered the state's flat income tax system by raising the current rate from 4.63% to 5%, and taxing incomes over \$75,000 at 5.9%.

The measure was defeated by a two-to-one margin.

Advocates, including [Colorado Commits to Kids](#) and the [Colorado Education Association](#), which championed Amendment 66, had argued the measure was needed to address long-standing inadequacies in the finance system as well as more recent woes resulting from budget cuts.

In May, the Colorado Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that had found the state's school funding system unconstitutional. (You can read *RPM* coverage [here](#).)

The state legislature then passed Senate Bill 213, which includes a number of measures to strengthen school funding and address some of the issues raised in the finance lawsuit. Many of the provisions of SB 213, including full-day kindergarten are politically popular. Some would address specific concerns of rural districts, including funding for teacher recruitment and retention, a small district weight, and support for districts with declining enrollment.

Implementation of SB 213 hinged on raising new revenues leaving advocates unclear how to implement its provisions.

While voters defeated Amendment 66, they approved taxes on recreational marijuana. About two-thirds of voters approved the proposed 15% excise tax and 10% sales tax, which are projected to generate about \$67 million. Much of that revenue will go toward regulation of the newly legal marijuana market. The first \$40 million of the excise tax will go to school construction.

Read more:

News coverage:

- <http://gazette.com/education-tax-soundly-beaten-colorado-voters-strongly-support-marijuana-taxes/article/1508877>
- www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/11/06/colorado-approves-marijuana-taxes-but-turns-down-a-nearly-1-billion-income-tax-increase/?print=1
- http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2013/11/proposed_colorado_tax_hike_to_aid_schools_gets_drubbed_at_the_polls.html?qs=Colorado+tax+vote
- www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/11/08/12colorado_ep.h33.html?qs=Colorado+tax+vote

Prior coverage in *RPM*:

- www.ruraledu.org/articles.php?id=3075

Applications for 2014 Global Teacher Fellowship Program Now Open

The Rural Trust's [Global Teacher Fellowship](#) program will be awarding up to 25 fellowships in 2014 to support the professional and personal development of rural teachers.

The awards (up to \$5,000 for individual teachers and \$10,000 for a team of two or more teachers) support teachers' participation in self-designed summer learning experiences and a two-day place-based learning institute in the fall following their summer experience. This fellowship is a stand-alone grant not meant to supplement other grant funds for larger projects.

Teachers are encouraged to center their learning in an **international travel and study experience**, out of which they develop interdisciplinary, place-based learning curricula aligned with their specific state and local content standards.

Eligibility: Any K–12 teacher working full-time and teaching at least 60% time in a rural community can apply for the fellowship. Counselors, media specialists, and other school personnel working in a teaching setting for at least 60% of their paid work time may also apply.

The Rural Trust defines a rural community by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale codes: 32 (Town, Distant); 33 (Town, Remote); 41 (Rural, Fringe); 42 (Rural, Distant); or 43 (Rural, Remote). If your school is listed in one of these locale codes, you are eligible to apply. If your district is REAP eligible, you may also apply. **For more details on eligibility, see the [FAQs page](#)**

Application deadline is **January 30, 2014**.

You can learn more about the Global Teacher Fellowship program at www.globalteacherfellowship.ruraledu.org/. You can read about the most recent Global Fellows in [2013 Global Teacher Fellows Share Experiences](#).

Info Session for Rural America: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont

INFO SESSION FOR Rural Americorps: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont

The Great Strides Rural Education Corps places volunteers in rural schools throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and northern Vermont. Get more information about In-Person meetings and a November 25th web-based meeting at www.goodwillnne.org/jobs/amicorps/.

More from the Rural Trust

[RPM Special Edition on School Violence](#)

[Consolidation Fight-Back Toolkit](#)

[Global Teacher Fellowship](#)



Rural Policy Matters is a monthly newsletter which provides news of interest to citizens and community groups working on state-level policy issues affecting rural schools. For subscription information visit www.ruraledu.org/getrpm.html.

Comments, questions, and contributions for *Rural Policy Matters* should be sent to:

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