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A REVIEW PAPER ON PROMOTING TECHNOLOGY BASED LEARNING TECHNIQUES IN RURAL AREAS SCHOOL

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Abstract: Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions. Promoting Learning in Rural Schools serve isolated sub cultural groups such as workers, rural Indians. To promote student learning in rural schools, both the distinct advantages of rural communities and their possible disadvantages should be taken into account. Experienced rural educators and empirical evidence suggest insights and evidence for improving rural students' motivation and increasing their learning

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INTRODUCTION

The research reviewed here suggests that some of the contentions about schools, districts, and communities in rural areas are mistaken. Many of the issues they face also confront urban and suburban educators, and rural communities offer several distinctive educational advantages. While we have not found research to substantiate that student motivation to learn is particularly lacking in rural schools, it is a problem often cited by rural educators. Rather, it seems a widespread problem in most of the nation's schools —rural, urban, and suburban. With that in mind, this report gives special attention to student motivation to learn, along with other contributing factors to student outcomes in rural schools. Our recommendations build upon the advantages of rural settings and address their perceived disadvantages. Similarly, small family farms consolidated, and many families quit farming and moved away, leaving large distances between the remaining farm families and communities. It is said that demography is destiny, and such remoteness or isolation substantially affected rural families, their communities, and their schools and school districts. In some rural areas, economic decline and increased poverty accompanied depopulation. Not unlike urban settings, rural schools. Promoting Learning in Rural Schools serve isolated sub cultural groups such as itinerant workers, Appalachian Whites, rural Blacks in the South, and American Indians in parts of the West. To promote student learning in rural schools, both the distinct advantages of rural communities and their possible disadvantages should be taken into account. In the balance, the small size of their schools is an asset, as is the strength of relationships among the people who constitute the schools and communities. While student motivation to learn does not appear to be a generally distinguishable variable between rural and non-rural schools, rural educators often attest to a dampening effect on student aspirations where families do not see education as an essential vehicle to advancement in life, and the improved life chances an education provides require a relocation away from a shrinking rural community.

RURAL SCHOOLS, DISTRICTS, AND COMMUNITIES

By definition, it is low population density together with family isolation and community remoteness that uniquely characterize rural areas. Small schools and small school districts are what distinctively characterize elementary and secondary education in these areas. To understand how best to enhance the learning of rural students, we first turn to these school and district contexts, drawing largely on more extensive summaries. School Size Effects One often contended reason for consolidating rural schools and districts is "economies of scale," that is, the possible cost savings for each student served since, for example, only one principal and football coach might be necessary in a large school in contrast to one each for several small schools. The research on this contention, however, is not altogether clear. Up to an uncertain point, larger and larger schools cost less and less per student, but beyond that point extra administration may be required to manage a larger staff and student body, and per student costs may increase beyond that point depending on the school community and circumstances.

SCHOOL DISTRICT SIZE EFFECTS

Smaller schools, of course, tend to be concentrated in relatively smaller rural districts. But contrary to the views that led to consolidating schools and districts, little evidence supports the larger districts' presumed scale economies. In fact, Gold's 1981 article in the Journal of Economic Literature shows that larger organizations including business firms with multiple divisions are often less cost-efficient, outcome-effective, and satisfying to employees and consumers. Consider the gigantic but now defunct Pan American Airlines and the near bankruptcies of Chrysler and General Motors that led to their bailouts and downsizing. This paper has shown that differences in high school curriculum and student density cause significant differences in optimal size and minimum attainable costs. A more extensive curriculum requires larger school districts to efficiently utilize the program. In sparsely populated areas, school districts could not expand in size to take full advantage of economies in instruction because transportation diseconomies were an overriding factor. Rural School and Community Challenges Student motivation to learn is a chief contributor to student learning outcomes and to student persistence in school. Student motivation to learn is a product of teachers' instructional practices, the school's ethos, and the family's child rearing practices—all of which are strongly influenced by the school community's expressed and unexpressed values, supports, and guidance. Student motivation, then, is strongly affected by the way a school operates and, in turn, influences the school's performance in terms of learning outcomes. While the school's impact on student motivation is significant for students in all schools, it is especially important where the community context, whether rural or not, is anemic in engendering high value for education and laden with adolescent pursuits such as dating, sports, and outside work that vie with academic achievement for young people's time and interest. When a child is reared in a family and community with weak traditions of regard for academic achievement, his or her reservoir of enthusiasm for learning and persistence in school may lie at low ebb when the child enters the school. This places a heightened responsibility on the school to fill the void. When a child finds in the community and among peers pursuits that are highly valued but in conflict with academic achievement, the child is easily drawn to them and away from what the school has to offer. Again, this makes the school of supreme importance in making learning and school success outcomes worthy of strong efforts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR RURAL LEARNING

An essential question in education is: Why does a student behave, specifically learn, in a particular way? The behaviorist answer is that a student's behavior is driven by external stimuli interacting with previously conditioned patterns of response. Cognitive science expands this answer to include mental operations by which the student perceives and processes information, making associations colored by prior knowledge, attitudes, and sentiments. Theories of motivation affirm that a student's willingness to take a course of action in pursuit of a goal and persist in attaining the goal, depends upon the student's estimation of the goal's value and his or her likelihood of success. Social learning theory roots this motivational calculation in the student's self efficacy or the degree to which the student assumes that he or

she possesses the abilities necessary to success in a particular undertaking. Self-efficacy perception is both general and specific; a student may possess general confidence in his or her ability to learn but less confidence in a specific subject area, such as mathematics. Further, social learning theory holds that the student learns vicariously through observation of other people's behavior as well as through the student's direct experience and that the student actively alters the environment with which he or she interacts.

STUDENT MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY PERCEPTION

The strength of motivation can be measured by a person's willingness to engage in an activity and to persist in it. When confronted with a challenge, a person implicitly calculates the value of the ultimate accomplishment and the likelihood of success. The likelihood of success is determined by an appraisal of the difficulty of the task and the person's self-perception of his or her ability to succeed. Consider a 16-year-old studying the Rules of the Road in order to pass the written test to secure a driver's license. The high value the youngster places on the outcome (a driver's license) may overshadow his or her perceived inadequacy in mastering the material.

SELF-EFFICACY AND METACOGNITION

Teachers also contribute to a student's perception of self-efficacy in learning by intentionally teaching and reinforcing metacognitive skills. Metacognition is thinking about thinking—the learner's ability to know what he or she knows and to adapt learning strategies in order to reach desired ends. Teaching and modeling a metacognitive approach to learning benefits students. The teacher shows students how to address a learning challenge by: □□ Defining the task: What am I expected to learn, and what do I already know? □□ Goal-setting: How will I know when I have completed the task? What strategies will I apply? □□ Applying learning strategies: How will I use research, practice, questions, memorization, outlining, and other strategies? □□ Monitoring: What new information do I need? Is this a simple or difficult task? How do I approach it? How am I doing? Should I try a different strategy?

MASTERY AS A MOTIVATION TO LEARN

It is idealistic to expect students to learn motivated purely by intrinsic factors. Sometimes learning is simply hard work. Ideally, the reward of mastery makes the effort worthwhile. Teachers build students' motivation to learn by celebrating the end result—what the student now knows and can do (Brophy, 2004). High interest in a topic and high value for the outcome contribute to motivation, but some learning is essential regardless of the student's initial interest in the topic. The teacher can only do so much to stir enthusiasm for a topic; usually students must be motivated by learning itself, finding reward in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Mastery itself can be the fuel of motivation and the goal to be attained. Schools are using student tracking of their own progress on short-cycle (unit) tests, benchmark assessments, and teacher-determined mastery of objectives as a means for helping students set goals and see their progress toward their goals. With graphs that illustrate the progress,

students clearly see the concrete results of their efforts, and this feedback is itself a motivating factor. Engaging parents in this process by including them in the goal setting and in discussions of progress with their children and with the teachers adds to the power of this exercise.

TEACHER–STUDENT INTERACTION

Motivation to learn for the satisfaction of mastery can be enhanced when the teacher models an enthusiasm for learning and for the specific topic, presents material clearly, interacts with the students, and directly teaches the content. Teacher–student interaction (both social and academic) is effective in building motivation to learn (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993), especially when combined with an expectation for student self-direction and self-management of learning toward clear objectives. When teachers exhibit the right blend of caring and Promoting Learning in Rural Schools expectation, showing that the teacher knows the student and thinks there is something special about him or her, students respond positively. Teacher enthusiasm is more than pep talks and theatrics. The teacher's delight in learning and expressed interest in the topic convey a genuine message that learning is important. All students, but especially at-risk students, whether rural or urban, do better with teachers who: □□ share warm, personal interactions with them but also hold high expectations for their academic progress, □□ require them to perform up to their capabilities, and □□ see that they progress as far and as fast as they are able.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RURAL LEARNING

Given the insights in the foregoing sections, what specific steps can be taken to enhance the motivation and learning success of rural students? Since there is little or no contrary evidence against the general motivational principles in this section for rural students, there is little reason not to recommend them here. They are selected and adapted from the relevant action principles in Improving Student Learning (Walberg, 2011) and other sources as cited. Some of the action recommendations selected for inclusion in this paper address barriers that may be especially pronounced in rural settings, such as the use of distance learning to overcome limited course offerings and distance from resources. Other recommendations build upon strengths inherent to rural schools, especially their centrality to community life and their ability to engage families

CONCLUSION

Experienced rural educators and empirical evidence suggest insights and evidence for improving rural students' motivation and increasing their learning. Rural communities, by definition, are small and geographically remote, as are their schools. There is little evidence that community or school size militates against student performance, all else being equal. Geographic remoteness presents its challenges, but distance technology available today helps close the miles in ways not possible in the past. In many ways, rural schools are advantaged—conscientious governance by school boards with a vested interest in the well being of their small communities, school personnel who assume broad responsibilities for their students'

success, close-knit families, abundant social capital (or close social relations among area families), and the centrality of the school in community life. Rural schools struggle with many of the same obstacles to improved student learning that bedevil schools in urban and suburban settings. Some of these obstacles are contextual in nature—pockets of poverty, limited English usage in migrant and immigrant populations, the distractions of mass media, the temptations of drugs and alcohol to youth, and the difficulty in attracting and keeping quality personnel in places in which not everyone wants to live. But the avenues to greater learning outcomes and persistence in school in rural schools are primarily within the control of the schools and are not substantially different from the paths to improved performance evidenced in non-rural schools. Because rural schools may not count on the recruitment of new talent to elevate their level of human capital, they must intentionally ingrain systems (policies, programs, procedures,and practices) that optimize the productivity of current staff and readily assimilate new staff. These systems, supportive of the action recommendations offered in this report, are necessary and achievable in rural schools.

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