

# Engaging Students, Improving Schools and Revitalizing Rural Communities



Presented by

Rachel B. Tompkins

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# The Rural Trust

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The mission of the Rural School and Community Trust is to help rural schools and communities get better together.



# Rural Community Development:

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- *The process by which a community...*
  - Creates, retains, and reinvests wealth
  - Raises standard of living
  - Improves quality of life

# Community Development

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- *Happens only when wealth is retained and reinvested in:*
  1. Enterprises to keep them strong and efficient
  2. People to keep them healthy, engaged, and productive
  3. Physical infrastructure to ensure that people live healthy lives and enterprises can compete
  4. Institutions to keep them strong and resourceful

# Schools As Centers of Community

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**“...it’s a recognition that six hours a day, five days a week, nine months out of the year doesn’t quite work. It’s really trying to redefine fundamentally what it means to be a school. So I think it means a longer day; I think it means all the values and principles around community schools: art, drama, academic enrichment, GED, {English as a second language}, family literacy nights. Really engaging the community: health care clinics, early childhood, the whole gamut. Making school the center of family life. ...”- Arne Duncan,**

**Secretary of Education**

**ED Daily 03/25/09**

# Community Education and Development Centers

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Economies of scope, not economies of scale.



# Community Education and Development Centers

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- ❑ Public School
- ❑ Health Clinic
- ❑ Pre-School
- ❑ Childcare
- ❑ Cyber Café & Technology Center
- ❑ Senior Center
- ❑ Library
- ❑ Small Business Incubator
- ❑ Community Fitness & Recreation Center
- ❑ Municipal Offices
- ❑ Fire & Rescue Services
- ❑ Public Meeting Space
- ❑ Community Development Corporation Office
- ❑ Post Office

# Community Education and Development Centers

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## □ Wakefield Family Resource Center



*Childcare –  
Wakefield,  
Nebraska*





# Community Education and Development Centers

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## □ *Headwaters, Rappahannock County Public Education Foundation*



*Small Business (Farm to Table, Geospatial Technologies, Greenhouse), Community Development, Fire & Rescue, Fitness Center - Rappahannock County, Virginia*

# Community Education and Development Centers

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- *Advantages*
  - Coordinated delivery; convenience
  - Shared use of specialized areas
  - Access to multiple sources of funding
  - Enable community-based learning
  - Share professional personnel

# Community Education and Development Centers

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- *Barriers*
  - Regulatory – centralized control
  - Categorical funding
  - Different construction standards
  - State laws prohibiting joint use
  - Hours of operation
  - Formulas for advocating space and costs
  - Zoning regulations
  - Time to negotiate

# Community Education and Development Centers

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- ❑ Community Development Corporations
- ❑ Community Foundations
- ❑ State enabling legislation
- ❑ Funding for planning and architectural services

# Students As Resources

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- Schools and students can and should be major players in building and nurturing community.
- Schools become community-building institutions when they connect student learning to community needs and interests.
- Communities become school improvement partners when they embrace, enable, and enhance the community-building work of students.

# Place-Based Learning...

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- ❑ ...is rooted in the unique history, environment, economy, and culture of a particular place.
  - ❑ The community is the context for learning.



- ❑ Student work focuses on community needs.
- ❑ Community members are resources and partners in teaching and learning.

# Why Place-Based Learning?

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- **Engages students** in work that is relevant to them, useful to their communities, and honored by adults
  - 40-60% of high school students are chronically disengaged.
  - 30% of teenagers leave school before earning a diploma.



# Why Place-Based Education?

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- ❑ **Pairs relevance with academic rigor**
  - ❑ Deep thinking in critical content areas
  - ❑ Sustained academic work as researchers and scholars
  - ❑ Meet or exceed state and local accountability standards





# Why Place-Based Education?

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- ❑ **Models the democratic principles upon which this nation was built**
  - ❑ Challenges historic patterns of racism, power, and low expectations
  - ❑ Values the contribution that every child can make
  - ❑ Honors every child's right to exist and succeed



# Why Place-Based Education?

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- **Increases the social capital available to address pressing community needs and interests**
  - ▣ Engages youths in partnerships with adults and organizations to provide services the community might not otherwise be able to provide
  - ▣ Strengthens young people's ties to their communities

# Why Place-Based Learning?

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## □ Improves teaching

### □ Alters teacher practice to be....

- More engaging of students
- More accommodating of different learning styles
- More reflective of and connected to real life
- More focused on 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce skills
- More democratic
- More collegial

# Social Infrastructure

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## *Culture & History*



*Young historians at the  
Margaret Chase Smith Library  
Skowhegan, Maine*



*Media Arts  
in Public  
Schools -  
Montana*



# Social Infrastructure

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## Civic Engagement



*School Funding – Van Wert, Ohio*



# Physical Infrastructure

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## *Environment & Science*



*Science Curriculum –  
East Feliciana, Louisiana*

# Workforce Development

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## *Entrepreneurial Opportunities & Internships*



*Aquaculture –  
Lubec, Maine*



*The grand opening of the Gateway Theatre in Albion, Nebraska. Photo courtesy of Boone Central High School.*

*Theatre – Albion, Nebraska*

# Economic Development

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## Reinvestment



*Howard, South Dakota*



*Earned Income Tax Credit –  
St. Helena, Louisiana*



*Historic walking tour  
Skowhegan, Maine*



# Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

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- **Bertie Co., NC 2006**
- **3,300 students 89% free & reduced lunch**
  - “One of our biggest dysfunctions is keeping qualified teachers. Two of every five school days kids have a substitute.”
    - - Chip Zullinger, Superintendent



**Bertie County, NC**

# Bertie County Teacher Cadet Program

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- ❑ Selects high school seniors by application and interview
- ❑ Commit to teach math, science or English for five years post college
- ❑ Covers tuition and books
- ❑ Hires the cadets at \$25,000, benefits and retirement
- ❑ Partners with best teachers during the school day, do classes after school, weekend and summer
- ❑ Shaw University is collegiate partner

# Bertie County Teacher Cadet Program

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- ▣ Goal is 20 cadets per year – started with 8 in 2008
- ▣ Cost of 20 is \$670,000 per year
- ▣ Rearranged budget to pay all costs from local revenue



# Rural School Innovation Network

- A Rural School and Community Trust managed network of schools and school districts striving for excellence in challenging circumstances.
- A mutual self-help network sharing innovations that improve rural education, especially in the poorest rural communities.
- An alliance of rural education advocates working to improve policy for rural places.

# Rural Education Working Group (REWG) Meeting

- ✓ A Gathering of Rural Citizens and Educators
- ✓ April 19 – 21, 2009
- ✓ Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC



*“Everyone told me that this was the best conference they’d ever attended, but this is much better than I ever imagined. I’ve learned so much that we can use and build on.”*

# Thank you.



**Rural School and Community Trust**

[www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org)

**(703) 243-1487**