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Editorial

Picture-Perfect Learning: Capturing Rural School Community Connections

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Editorial

The function of rural communities and their relationships to place can be complex. In this edition of *The Chronicle of Rural Education*, authors bring the simple complexity of rural places to life by investigating many of the opportunities and partnerships which commonly surround the rural school. Locating a rural school is often easier than describing the nature of its functioning, opportunities, and place-based relationships.

In the past quarter century, rural education and respective inquiry has benefited from the turn of place-based pedagogy and research. Rural place-based research attempts to capture the 20th Century call for demarcation of more accurate rural aperture as uniquely different from urban-laden monographs. Naturally, place-based pedagogical inquiry (e.g., Gruenewald, 2003; and Smith 2002) begins with a look at the relationship between the various implications of schooling based upon geographic metrics. In rural research, *where* has come before *what*, *who*, *how*, and *why*. Further development of place-based inquiry (e.g., Biddle & Azano, 2016) is more inclusive and critical of how rural educational ecology is impacted by the processes which operate within and near to rural geographic regions. Accurate study of rural life today includes consideration of schooling in the context of its surrounding relationships. In fact, Lyson (2002) argues many communities likely remain socially and economically viable because of school presence.

No matter the approach to rural inquiry, it seems that rural communities are likely to be left in a dark place without their school. Similarly, the photographer or researcher who is tasked with documenting any rural community would be hard-pressed to do so without the inclusion of its school. In this issue, readers will see close-ups of how the rural school is less comparable to an isolated “selfie” and more comparable to a panoramic, community-wide shot, encompassing its surroundings.

Readers of this issue will enjoy learning about the dynamics of place-based schooling. One example included in this issue is how one state is exposing rural challenges to reveal unique opportunities for an ELA classroom (Blaney). This issue also offers highlights on the importance of rural relationships: after school STEM engagement (Tessman et al.), building organizational capital via state grant initiatives (Palmer & Palmer), and the many values for rural communities who participate in Youth Development Programs (Robinson et al.).

We encourage readers to use this issue to consider how the rural school is much more than a building in a rural community. By viewing the whole picture of the rural school, readers get an opportunity to zoom out and gain a wider perspective of rurality. This issue also shows that when framed properly, negatives associated with rurality simply need a bit of development in order to be transformed into potential assets.

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