

The role of education in rural communities



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Researcher Positionality

- ❑ Immigrant and daughter of a Minister
- ❑ Student of Business, Public Policy and Education
- ❑ Worldview: Subjectivism
- ❑ Previous Careers:
 - Voter education and training (State of Iowa)
 - State economic developer
 - Telecommunications local union president
- ❑ Passion: Community & Political Activist
 - assisting communities not only to survive but thrive

Trelawny School District

- Governance: Public consolidated system
- Board of Education: Five members serving four-year terms
- Personnel Structure: 127 persons; including 57 teachers and 70 staff persons
- Salary & Contract information: \$32,000-\$64,000 Union
- Student enrollment: 864 students
- School organizations: Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD).
- Athletics: football, volleyball basketball, wrestling, tennis, soccer, golf, track and field, softball, cross country, and baseball.

Research Question



- What are the functions of education in rural community development?

Theoretical Framework

Community Capitals

- ❑ Natural
- ❑ Human
- ❑ Social
- ❑ Cultural
- ❑ Financial
- ❑ Political
- ❑ Built

Meanings

- ❑ The Environment
- ❑ Skills and abilities
- ❑ Connectivity and networking
- ❑ Attitudes and values
- ❑ Invest in projects
- ❑ Residents' contributions
- ❑ Infrastructure – roads & buildings

Research Design



- Reviewed board of education meeting notes
- Conducted semi-formal Interviews:
 - Superintendent
 - Curriculum Director & Principal
 - Special Projects Director

The Findings-The role of education

School District

- Large employer
- Train workforce
- Public use of facilities
- Community presence
- External collaboration
- Community support

Community Development

- Salaries, residents
- Workers-skills, opportunities
- Cultural center
- Social bonding
- Employer & students
- Political Benefits

Community Capitals & Findings

Cultural

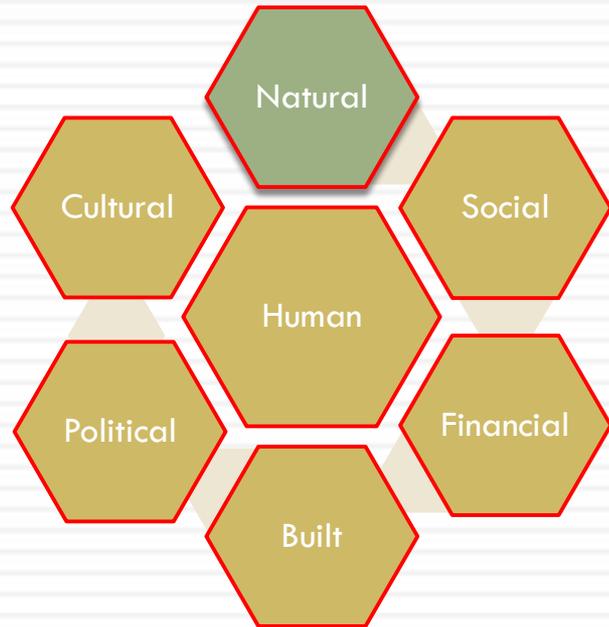
Developing character

Human

Trained workforce
Jobs for citizens

Built

Public use of
facilities
Performing arts center



Political

Financial resources
Recognition and goodwill
Citizen participation

Social

Performing arts
Sports activities
Diverse ideas

Financial

Fitness center
Shared resources
School levy tax

Discussion



- ❑ How do we use CCF to improve and strengthen our investment in education?

Future Directions and Implications



What comes to mind when the word “rural” is heard? Some envision the natural beauty of the landscape, while others visualize dying fields and empty towns. I believe that the word ‘rural’ in this globalized era should make us think ‘opportunities.’ There are opportunities for researchers in the field to discuss how the challenges could turn into opportunities. A regional school partnership inspired by Carr and Kefalas (2009) is making a difference in the lives of many young people and their families. A collaborative effort is now viewed as an opportunity for new energy and creativity in workplaces. A small investment of time is now seen as an economic engine. As researchers, we have an ethical responsibility to improve upon what was given to us. This is a fine opportunity to ‘pay it forward.’