Why rural schools matter

Mara Casey Tieken
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance Conference
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Vanleer Elementary School
Vanleer, Tennessee
Rural schools define and sustain rural communities.
• economies
• social fabric
• culture
• political power
WE love OKOLONA school. But now it is gone.
The urgency of this moment
Non-metropolitan population growth 2000-2010

white
black
Hispanic
Native, Asian or API, multi-racial

Percent change in Latino population, 1990-2010

Source: Latinos in Wisconsin—A statistical overview, Applied Population Laboratory and UW Extension, 2014
Poverty rates by metro/nonmetro residence, 1960-2016

Percentage poor (persons)

- Metro
- Nonmetro
- Nonmetro-metro gap

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) 1960-2009 and annual American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2009-16. CPS poverty status is based on family income in prior year and ACS poverty status is based on family income in the past 12 months.

2 More Black Churches Burn, This Time in Rural Mississippi, and Investigators Flood In

Sources: The Atlantic, The New York Times
Rural poverty rates

Job Growth Index in Wisconsin's Metro and Non-Metro Areas, 2006-15

Source: WisCONTEXT: https://www.wiscontext.org/5-crucial-differences-between-job-growth-rural-and-urban-wisconsin
But it doesn’t have to be this way.
Delight senior-day countdown
What can we do?
1) Build strong community/school relationships.

2) Pursue equitable teaching practices.

3) Organize to push for more equitable policies.
1st class, fall 2002, Vanleer Elementary School