The Rural Educator

Volume 43 | Number 2 Article 1

5-20-2022

The Potential of Service Learning in Rural Schools: The Case of the Working Together Project

Benjamin Ingman
University of Denver Center for Rural Health and Education, Benjamin.Ingman@du.edu

Katie Lohmiller
katie.moseley@gmail.com

Nick Cutforth
nicholas.cutforth@du.edu

Elaine Belansky
University of Denver Center for Rural Health and Education, Elaine.Belansky@du.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/ruraleducator

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Ingman, B., Lohmiller, K., Cutforth, N., & Belansky, E. (2022). The Potential of Service Learning in Rural Schools: The Case of the Working Together Project. *The Rural Educator, 43*(2), 1-15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.55533/2643-9662.1326

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Rural Educator by an authorized editor of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

Research Article

The Potential of Service Learning in Rural Schools: The Case of the Working Together Project

Benjamin C. Ingman
Katie Lohmiller
Nick Cutforth
Elaine S. Belansky

Service learning has been established as a promising method of teaching and learning that engages youth as change agents in their schools and communities. But service learning has not been widely implemented or studied in rural K-12 schools. This study explores the case of a service learning curriculum, the Working Together Project (WTP), in a rural, high-poverty school. Data collection included classroom observations, surveys, and individual/focus group interviews with participants of the curriculum. The case study findings illustrate how the WTP curriculum unfolded with students, benefits for the school (cross-generational collaboration, school introspection and improvement), benefits for the students (collaborative skills, professional skills, growth, and maturity), and the challenges of the WTP. This case highlights the potential of service learning to promote democratic citizenship in rural schools and communities.

Over one third of schools in the United States are considered “rural” (Autio & Deussen, 2017). Rural schools represent a range of people and communities but tend to be positioned in geographically unique and/or isolated locations and serve small student bodies (Wilcox, 2014). It is common for these staff members, teachers in particular, to hold several positions within the school that extend beyond traditional “teacher duties” (Glover et al., 2016). Rural school districts face unique challenges such as smaller staffing, collegial isolation, reliance on uncertified teachers, and a lack of resources to implement federal mandates (Barley, 2009; Belansky et al., 2009; Eppley, 2009; Schafft, 2016; Yettick et al., 2014) while being charged to implement “national education policies [that] often do not fit with the needs and material circumstances” (Gallo & Beckman, 2016, p. 1) of rural schools (see Bryant, 2010). These challenges can make it difficult for rural schools to provide the breadth of academic programs needed by students (Wilcox, 2014).

Rural schools also have many assets to leverage the implementation of innovative curricula. Rural teachers, for example, have similar levels of education and years of teaching experience as their urban counterparts (Glover et al., 2016). Professional development offerings are also increasingly available in virtual formats (McConnell et al., 2012), which has been expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic, and improved access to professional development in rural settings. In addition to their educational role, rural schools often serve as multipurpose institutions in their communities by providing other critical services and supports to the surrounding communities (Schafft, 2016). Recent federal education legislation has also grown to provide more concerted attention to rural schools (Brenner, 2016). Other assets, such as close-knit communities, small class sizes, and access to outdoor recreation, position rural schools as optimal environments for community-oriented curricula (Stern, 1994). These assets and challenges provide an important context for rural schools to implement innovative curriculum models, such as service learning.

Service Learning

Service learning is an educational approach that blends active community-based experiences with discussions and reflections about those experiences. Strong service-learning curricula allow students to connect academic learning with problems and needs in their community in ways that have meaning for themselves and others (Moely et al., 2009). When undertaking service learning projects, students use a variety of methods to evaluate information and think creatively to solve community problems and advocate for changes in policies and practices to address common concerns (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002).

Service learning has the potential to teach young people about their roles and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society (Giles & Eyler, 1994). The practice of democratic citizenship in service learning can provide students an opportunity to develop skills of listening, communication, compromise, and problem solving. They can also learn how to communicate their thoughts and actions to others through oral, written, or visual representations (Sturgill, 2013). As a result of service learning, students may also experience stronger connection to their communities, have a more critical understanding of their role in them, and experience community efficacy. Service learning activities tend to be grounded in a vision of action for a better future in local community settings, and the audience of service learning courses is often individuals in leadership positions as well as classmates and peers (Battistoni, 1997; Ohn & Wade, 2009). A critical approach to service learning, in which students, teachers, and community members collaborate on projects that analyze and draw attention to the root causes of community-identified concerns, can achieve this vision for a better future. Through such engagement, students may acquire the knowledge and skills to analyze, propose, and implement strategies that address core issues facing their communities (Mitchell, 2008). Further, as students pursue courses of action to address these issues, they learn from their mistakes and successes and may grow to see themselves as engaged and active citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Teachers incorporating service learning as education with an eye toward democratic citizenship provide a supportive atmosphere that attends to the students' needs and interests in addressing a common problem. As teachers facilitate large group dialogue, written reflections, group-oriented work, or presentations, students can learn the lessons of democracy by weighing opinions, negotiating, dissenting, and compromising over issues of mutual concern (Wallin, 2003).

Several challenges are associated with service learning that may stand as barriers to implementing service learning. For instance, there are considerable logistical concerns associated with providing service activities that are meaningful for both the community and students. It is also necessary to gain the support of key stakeholders to implement service learning. Teachers and principals may not perceive the relevance of service learning to student learning or the connection to standards. Teachers may also be unfamiliar with the pedagogical approach of service learning, or unable to commit to teaching service learning due to competing professional obligations. Similarly, students may carry negative preconceived notions regarding service due to previous experiences with service (i.e., community service as punishment) (Ohn & Wade, 2009).

Service Learning in Rural Schools

While there is a well-established evidence base supporting the potential benefits of service learning curricula (Billig, 2000), there are few, if any, published studies on service learning in rural K-12 schools. Some have addressed the challenges and adaptations to consider when pursuing service learning with post-secondary populations in rural settings (Holton, 2003). Other works have described the potential of engaging rural youth in community change. For example, Bardwell et al.'s (2009) study of the feasibility of rural high school students engaging in community-based participatory research (CBPR) concluded, "it is feasible to conduct CBPR ethically, with the research being conducted by knowledgeable and credentialed adolescents from within the community" (p. 348). Similarly, Smith and DiClemente's (2000) efforts to engage rural students in a sexual education program found that they were both willing and able to participate in this intensive community-based programming and described the experience enjoyable and valuable. However, there remains a dearth in the literature concerning interventions that are based on a service learning framework in rural schools. The differences between rural and urban/suburban schools suggests that what is shown to be effective in urban/suburban settings may require an altered approach and yield different outcomes in rural settings (Colby et al., 2013). This knowledge gap is addressed by this case study of rural middle school students' participation in a service learning curriculum: the Working Together Project.

The Working Together Project

The Working Together Project (WTP) is a middle school service learning curriculum based on a strategic planning process called Assess. Identify. Make it Happen (AIM) (Belansky et al., 2011). AIM was originally designed as a process for adults and, in a randomized control trial, produced environment and policy changes for healthy eating and physical activity in schools (Belansky et al., 2013). The WTP

curriculum repackages the major components of AIM as a middle school curriculum (Belansky et al., 2020). Specifically, a classroom teacher guides a class through the three steps of AIM: Assess, Identify, and Make it happen. During the first step, Assess, students evaluate the status of their school, examining survey data, what students think, and what adults think related to seven health problems: 1) unhealthy eating; 2) physical inactivity; 3) alcohol, tobacco and other drug use; 4) high risk sexual behavior; 5) poor mental health; 6) bullying and other social issues; 7) checking out of school. Through this step, students determine the most pressing health concerns in their school, which informs their decision to select a health problem on which to focus their efforts. In Identify, students reveal the root causes of this health problem in their school, drawing on evidence from the data, the perceptions of adults in their community, and their own experiences and ideas. Finally, in Make it Happen, students survey the status of promising and evidence-based practices in their school related to the health problem, take ownership over student-led changes, and advocate to adults for other changes to the school environment and policies to address the health problem. The students' classroom-based work is supported by a group of caring adults selected by students called the Dream Team. Dream Team members support students through the process by providing guidance and resources while honoring youth voice.

The Working Together Project was implemented at 11 middle schools in a rural, high-poverty region of Colorado, over 3 years. The curriculum was developed in collaboration with the community (see Ingman et. al, 2017), and offered during a class period of the school day (often as an elective). Key features of this curriculum are included in *Figure 1: WTP Curriculum Overview.* Principals selected teachers to implement the WTP. Those teachers were provided with a manual of lesson plans, supportive materials (e.g., presentations, art supplies), 3 days of training, ongoing technical assistance, and lists of promising and evidence-based practices for addressing health problems.

A quasi-experimental, convergent mixed methods study found that (1) schools completing the WTP curriculum implemented evidence-based practices and (2) students in WTP participating schools showed increases in students' personal responsibility to solve problems, 21st century skills, school connectedness, and program planning skills (Belansky et al., 2020). The current study complements this and other literature by using case study methodology to provide an in-depth description of both the implementation and thematic qualities that emerged in one school implementing the WTP. In particular, this work demonstrates the potential of service learning curriculum with youth in a rural setting and showcases the promise of service learning as a means of democratic citizenship.

Method

Case studies seek to develop an in-depth understanding of complex processes and provide inferences for successes and failures which can be informative. Case study researchers study one or a few cases, collect multiple sources of data, and strive for detail and depth of analysis and description (Yin, 2003). This case study describes one WTP class in depth so that others might apply the lessons learned in this process to their contexts (i.e., naturalistic generalization) (Stake, 1995). The boundaries of this case are defined by the activities and actions of those participating in the WTP at this school. This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How did the WTP unfold at Montaña Middle School?
2. What were the benefits and challenges of the WTP for the school and students of Montaña Middle School?

Participants and Setting

The participants of this study include the student's classroom teacher who delivered the WTP curriculum (WTP teacher), the school principal, a school board member, an elementary school teacher, and 13 sixth-grade students. The school had a student population of 270 K-12 students, of which, 78% of which were Hispanic or Latino/a/x and 90% were eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (76% Free; 14% Reduced) (Colorado Department of Education, 2021).

Montaña Middle School rests at the edge of a small, remote, rural Colorado town (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) 100-150 miles from a metropolitan statistical area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). These compounding factors of rurality, poverty, and racially minoritized status are shown to have marked effects on health and educational access and outcomes (Caldwell et al., 2016; Norris et al., 2010).

Working Together Project
Curriculum Overview

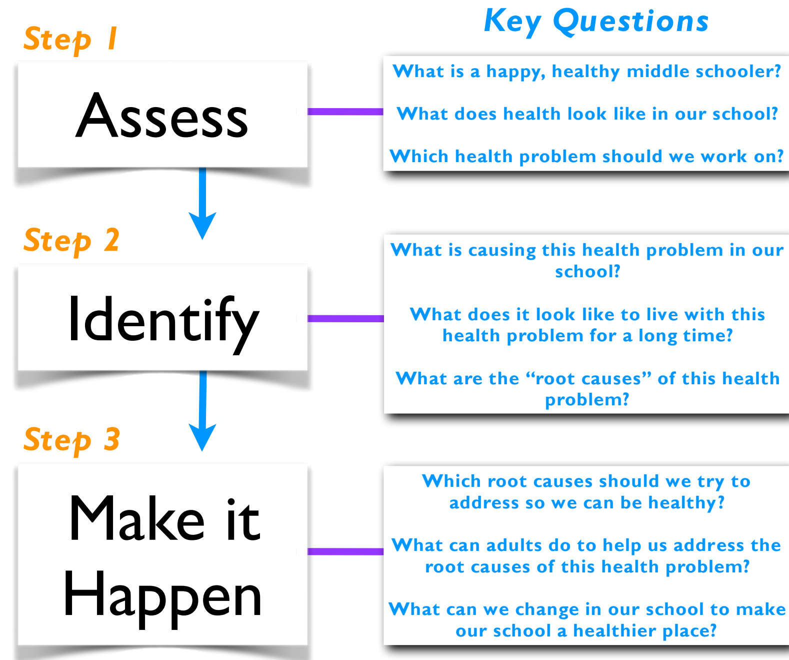

Figure 1: WTP Curriculum Overview

Many youth residing in the area experience extreme poverty, which is juxtaposed by the scenic beauty of formidable, snow-covered peaks and rolling foothills. Abandoned homes and trailers dot this picturesque landscape, which is populated by off-grid encampments of families without running water or electricity, exhibiting a level of poverty often hidden from view (Cox, 1998). The students in these foothills attend Montaña Middle School, which stands as an oasis of resources, connection, shelter, safety, and stability for many in the region.

Data Collection

This study draws on observational, interview, and survey data. Observations of the WTP class were conducted by a site coordinator seated in the back of the classroom recording field notes as a non-participant observer (Angrosino, 2007). This included 43 of the 47 lessons in the curriculum (91.5%), totaling over 35 hours of observation. The goals of the observations were to both identify potential revisions or improvements to the WTP curriculum and to record how the WTP unfolded in the classroom.

Near the completion of the WTP, we conducted a focus group interview with the students and individual semi-structured interviews with the school principal, the WTP teacher, and Dream Team members (Seidman, 2006). Each of these interviews was approximately 60 minutes in length and focused on participants' perceptions of the WTP curriculum and outcomes of participation. WTP students also completed a 74-item survey focused on perceptions of the curriculum and outcomes of the WTP at the end of the class.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed in conjunction with student survey feedback and site coordinator observations. Through open and axial

coding with the lens of the research questions (no a priori codes or frameworks were applied) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the authors developed themes to provide an overall understanding of the case. We also convened as a group to determine the extent to which themes supported or complemented extant literature on service learning and health promotion curriculum in rural schools (see Glaser, 1965).

Findings

The findings of this case describe how the WTP curriculum unfolded, illustrate its benefits for the school and students at Montaña Middle School, and outline the challenges to implementation. All findings are supported with the voices of participants in this study.

The WTP at Montaña Middle School

At Montaña Middle School, the course was offered to replace what would otherwise have been an elective period for students. The WTP course convened for 47, 50-minute lessons during the fall semester of the school year. The WTP teacher had over ten years of teaching experience and served as a firm but calm source of authority with his students. He served as their guide through the curriculum, which followed the three steps of AIM: Assess. Identify. Make it Happen.

The students who participated in the WTP curriculum were regarded by school staff as a capable, spirited group facing severe challenges outside of school. As the WTP teacher shared, "They have a past history of being a class that just was a tough group to work with. And getting them to get interested in something and buy into it, was what my main concern was." Students were also identified as a "high-risk" group facing adversity outside the classroom, as described by the principal and a Dream Team member respectively:

> I mean, they are high-risk in every kind of way you can be high-risk. They're high poverty, there's high number of issues in their home, a lot, of issues in their home life. They've been always known as the most difficult class, and they know that they have that reputation. … Many of their family members still have dirt floors, no indoor plumbing, no electricity, no running water, cloth ceilings, they make their Xmas presents out of cans and wood. I mean, it's extreme poverty. (Principal)

> We could write a book on every one of those students [in that class]. I think, as their former teacher, I think those students have a lot of potential, but I think that because of their home lives [and violence at home] … I think they bring a lot of that with them … But they are very capable. Each one of them. (Dream Team member)

The WTP teacher and principal both hoped that the WTP would engage these students because it was different from traditional topics of school in scope, process, purpose, and outcome. The principal noted, "We've just about tried everything else, and I thought, 'If this doesn't help, then I don't know what would.'"

Assess. Identify. Make it Happen.

As a service learning curriculum, the WTP class was structured with time scheduled for teacher-guided lectures, student-led discussions, student group work (e.g., planning presentations, drafting correspondence, researching practices, surveying their school), reflection, and celebration. Student reflections were structured through journals, which included prompts to consider the connection of WTP content to their own lives and experiences. Some students stapled pages together to keep excerpts private.

Assess. The students began by nominating, selecting, and recruiting a "Dream Team" of adults to support the curriculum. The Dream Team was comprised of 4 members, which included the WTP teacher and the school principal (as prescribed by the curriculum) and 2 other individuals based on the following criteria: adults who (1) encourage and value youth voice, (2) work in or are involved with the school, (3) work on issues related to health, (4) are able to join students in class occasionally, (5) can help support students in making changes. The curriculum provided a protocol for students to inform potential Dream Team members about the role and to invite them to participate. Students selected an elementary classroom teacher and a school board member to serve on the Dream Team. While information on the role was shared with Dream Team members, no formal training was provided to fulfill the responsibilities of this role.

Students then conducted an assessment of health in their school drawing on two sources of

information: data from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (a state-wide survey based on the Youth Risk Behaviors Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021)), and students' and the Dream Team members' views about seven health problems in their school (collected through a panel-style interview of Dream Team members in the classroom). Students weighed the information gleaned through these efforts and engaged in deliberations to inform their votes to select which of the seven health problems they would focus on in the WTP, ultimately selecting poor mental health.

Identify. Next, the students investigated this health problem at their school to identify the root causes of poor mental health in their school. They represented what they learned through a 4'x8' mural called the Looking Closer Model that featured images of students crying, captions of "depression", the long-term effects of living with this health problem (e.g., gravestones depicting suicide), students' behaviors and contexts that lead to that problem (e.g., alcohol/drugs, bullying), and the root causes of this health problem in their community (e.g., students not knowing what words to use or how to talk about mental health; students not knowing that being physically active can help them to feel physically and mentally healthier; students' belief that it is not cool or ok to talk about mental health). Students represented the causal relationships between the root causes, their behaviors and contexts leading to the health problem with yarn. Students then presented their Looking Closer Model to their Dream Team and received input before finalizing this work and moving on to the final step.

Make it happen. In this final step, students developed and implemented a plan for addressing the root causes of poor mental health in their school. They accomplished this by implementing a student-led change, as well as advocating for an adult-led change to be championed by Dream Team members and other adults in the school. Changes were selected with consideration of both importance (the extent to which the change would have the desired effect with the desired audience) and feasibility (the extent to which the change could reasonably be put into place). For the student-led change, students placed "positive message" cards on their classmates' lockers, with messages such as "You're Awesome", "Have Success in the Future" "You're a star" "Nothing is impossible. The word itself spells, 'I'm possible'" and "Be a Buddy, Not a Bully". The students decorated each card, adding a sense of personalization to the messages. Many students left these cards posted on their lockers for weeks to come.

For the adult-led change, students reviewed "menus of best practices," which were curated lists of evidence-based and promising practices based on a review of the literature of practices to address different health problems in K-12 school settings. Students researched the extent to which these practices were present in their school. This revealed several areas for improvement in the policies and practices of their school. Students learned that a tutoring service previously available to them was recently discontinued due to funding cuts. Also, they advocated for physical activity breaks during classes, after school tutoring, and a mental health team in the school; all evidence-based practices for improving student mental health (Booth et al., 2020; Frazier, Capella, Atkins, 2007; Lyon et al., 2014). They concluded their research by presenting their recommendations to the Dream Team and the school board. In response to these presentations, and with the support of the Dream Team, WTP teacher, and principal, policies were amended at the school to include physical activity breaks in the classroom. Administrators also researched and ultimately restored funding ($40,000 annually) to the after school tutoring program for students. However, the school was not able to implement the addition of a mental health team.

As a service learning curriculum, the WTP embodied explicit values of youth voice with the intention of developing youth as change-makers through a student-led and adult-supported process. Several students noted that this approach was different from their usual courses. As one shared, "We're helping other people instead of learning about history and math. We're helping other people with their problems." While another student pointed out, "[in] both of the classes you're basically learning. In this class, you're learning how to help people."

Benefits for the School

Our analysis showed that the WTP at Montaña Middle School generated two categories of benefit for the school: cross-generational collaboration between adults and students, and an opportunity for school introspection and improvement. We elaborate on each of these benefits below.

Cross-generational collaboration. Participants regarded the collaboration between adults and youth as particularly salient benefit of the WTP. Students described both the importance and value of cross-generational collaboration during a focus group interview:

Researcher: Why do we have adults involved in the Working Together Project?

Student: Because adults have a really good judgment and so do kids, but they don't really know that. So I think the Working Together Project helped us talk more to adults about the health issues and talk to them about how… about a lot of more stuff than we have because I think we're too scared to talk to them.

Researcher: Are you still scared to talk to adults?

Student: Well, not scared, but the fact that it's kind of hard to talk to them because they're a little more grown up and they know a lot more than us, so we'd probably think that it… they'll trust us by what we're saying.

Student: Adults can help us understand more about it so we don't have to try to do it by ourselves in case we don't understand it.

Researcher: Can you give me an example of when adults helped you understand something?

Student: Things that we can't do, like things that we don't understand. Things that we can't read or stuff like that. Or things that we don't think make sense, but they really make sense. So they can help us out.

…

Researcher: What else did the Dream Team contribute to the process?

Student: Things that we weren't sure of and had questions about asking and doing to make the change. We asked them and they gave us a lot of new ideas. Like we would ask them what about this idea and they would say, "Well this could happen and that could happen," so we would change it a tiny bit, but they would help us critique it.

The students in this discussion acknowledge the roles adults can play—as advocates and informational resources—in a collaborative process like the WTP. The principal corroborated this assertion, commenting on the adults' supportive roles in the adult-student collaboration and the collegial sense of working on something important with students.

> I think it meant a lot to the kids that they were listened to. In fact, [their teacher] told me that before we had our very first Dream Team meeting, [several students] said, "Do you really think they're going to listen to us?" and he said, "Yeah, I think they really will". And then, we really did.
>
> …
>
> They feel respected, you know? And therefore, maybe they don't have as much of a sense of the "us and them" thing, but "we're all here for the same reason."

Dream Team members further supported these comments, identifying the need to serve this role in a youth-led, adult-supported curriculum. One Dream Team member described her role this way:

> I saw it as being there to be supportive in what they were working through. … They wanted to know what we thought. They wanted to know how we saw things. I think just providing that support for them and being honest with them and being somebody, at least for their first time, that they trust.

Another Dream Team member described her role in similar terms—to be a supportive, trusting, and attentive adult:

> I think that they know that somebody's there to listen. That it isn't just them doing it maybe in front of their class, that there's adults that are interested in being there and listening to what they have to say.

The principal felt that this process was the "right way" to make a change in that it was both collaborative and productive:

> [This is] the "right" way because they're basing their change on data, they're talking to adults—not in a controversial way, but in a way that's real collaborative—and they're coming up with something that they see needs to happen and a plan for how that could happen, but combined with talking to the adults about whether or not that's possible. So, all along the way, every step is really productive, instead of it's kind of a "us versus them" thing, it's a "we all see something that needs to happen and can we work together."

A Dream Team member supported involving youth in such collaborations that address matters of concern to the students stating, "The kids are in there. They're

the ones in there. They know what the issues are." And giving students the opportunity to collaborate with others and voice their perspective was credited for the success of the WTP. As the WTP teacher noted, "Their willingness to get excited about making a change in the school and knowing that it was their voice that was being heard. That's what really got them going."

School introspection and improvement. A second way in which the school benefitted from the WTP was that it provided an opportunity to critique and evaluate school policies and practices. For example, as the students presented their concerns to the Dream Team during one of three scheduled meetings, a school board member was surprised to hear that students could not schedule daily meetings with counselors. Consequently, this individual pursued this issue with her school board, which resulted in an immediate change to policy.

This example (as well as excerpts in the previous section) shows that the WTP offered teachers, students, administrators, and school board members the chance to evaluate the school's policies and practices related to student health. With busy teaching schedules and increased accountability measures being placed on the school, there is rarely time for such a review. As the WTP teacher explained, "With all the mandates on the teachers, every minute is so precious."

The WTP also provided the opportunity for the discussion of topics related to student health. For example, one Dream Team member recalled discussing the sensitive topic of high risk sexual behavior with WTP students:

> I think that's the hardest topic for them to talk about. They can talk about alcohol and mental health, and checking out of school, and those things but that's probably the one area … that's a hard thing to talk about for them. And that was something that we, even as teachers and administrators, know is an important issue to address in middle school.

Thus, the WTP brought into center stage an issue that students and adults alike may not discuss unless overtly prompted to do so, despite the acknowledged importance of such an issue.

The WTP teacher also noted how the WTP was an opportunity for both students and adults to evaluate recent survey data in order to reflect on the current state of student health at their school:

> Yeah, I think seeing the numbers. When we were talking to the Dream Team and said 6% of the students here tried to commit suicide. At first that number didn't really stick out to them, but then we said it might just be one person. And you just start thinking about "How would you feel if tomorrow, somebody—one person in your class—didn't come?" And so [the numbers] were eye opening to them.

While the WTP was "eye opening" for students, teachers, and administrators it was not at the expense of action. Rather this feature of the curriculum served as the springboard for implementation of changes that enabled the school to become a healthier place for students. The improvement of school practices or policies was the aim of the WTP; the premise being that engaging youth as change-makers would afford them the opportunity to make their school a healthier place (Belansky et al., 2020). As described above, the students' efforts led to two changes to the school: activity breaks in the classroom and the reinstatement of a tutoring program.

Benefits for students

The WTP is designed to benefit students in two ways: (1) by making changes to the school environment that will improve their health, and (2) by engaging students in the change-making process so that they may grow through the experience. The impact of the WTP on the school environment is concrete: students have physical activity breaks during classroom lessons and additional access to tutoring services, both of which promote their overall health. The benefits accruing for students because of their participation in the WTP, though less obvious, can be gleaned through the perspectives of those in the school community. Our analysis revealed three benefits of participating in the WTP: collaborative skills, professional skills, and growth and maturity.

Collaborative skills. We have already illustrated how WTP prompted collaboration between adults and students in the school. As a result, students developed skills to collaborate with others, both fellow students and adults. To the WTP teacher, this was the most significant outcome of the curriculum:

> The thing that stands out the most is having the students learn to get along and work through this project. [It] has really been something good for that class. I was really worried about doing this

project with this class, but they've really took it on head-on.

Explaining why he liked working together, one student said, "It brings us closer to each other as a class and we discuss more things together." Another student contrasted this feature of the WTP curriculum with other classes:

> In this class, we worked together more as a team than we do in others. Because in this class, we can't choose who we work with, so it is like bringing us together as a class. In other classes they let us choose sometimes and sometimes we don't get along. But in this class we get along all the time.

Students also noted the differences in the ways they worked together as a group in the WTP as opposed to previous years. One student said, "Last year we wouldn't get along at all because a bunch of people would yell at each other and we would have bad attitudes," while another student agreed saying, "Yeah, there was [sic] a lot of people by themselves all the time. Like not wanting to hang out with any of the others because there was a lot of drama." When asked what caused this change, one student replied:

> I think what's changed is our attitudes and that's what really helped us work together. Because last year, our attitudes used to be bad and we wouldn't want to work with each other. But this year we actually want to have partners and things like that.

This comment is also supported by student responses to a survey question asking them what skills they developed or improved by participating in the WTP: "Working together more" "Nothing" "To work together and I would like to learn a little more" "Two skills I developed participating in this class are working together as a class and getting along with students in our class." "Working together" "To stop [bullying]" "Bullying. Brain Breaks" "Working together" "People being comfortable" "Working with classmates more and getting along with everybody."

The students worked not only with one another but also with adults. Referring to their "maturity level" the principal shared: "They're a lot better at communicating with adults. They got some practice on what that could look like and should look like when you do that in a professional, more adult way." These quotations illustrate that students, the teacher, and the principal all felt the WTP brought them together and improved their skills as collaborators.

Professional skills. Another theme that emerged from conversations with student and adult participants in the WTP at Montaña Middle School was the students' development of professional skills. Many professional skills were attributed to the WTP, including presenting to adults, writing professional letters, advertising and branding, and gaining understandings of school human resource and financial systems. One Dream Team member believed the tangible "tools" developed by students was the most important aspect of the project. She stated, "I think the greatest thing I liked about the program itself is that it's actually teaching them some tools." Another Dream Team member agreed saying, "I think the project is helping to give them new insight and new tools and new resources."

Though several skills were mentioned, the most salient one, brought up by students, the WTP teacher, and the principal, was that students learned how to review and make decisions based upon data. As one student shared:

Student: Before this class, I didn't know that there was kids that felt that way in our school and that we had the percentage of kids that wanted to attempt suicide. And 32% that were feeling sad or hopeless. I didn't know that at all—now it made me realize it. And that one kid can cause big problems.

Researcher: And when you realized that, how did it make you feel?

Student: Like this class could really make a change and stuff.

Adults in the school also commented on students' ability to leverage data to inform a decision. The WTP teacher noted students' ability to evaluate the meaning of data: "Once they started seeing some of the data about bullying and suicide it opened their eyes to some of the stuff that they were doing." The principal recalled a Dream Team meeting which illustrates students' ability to both understand and use data to make an argument:

> They quoted a lot of facts from the surveys about the kids in our school and how they felt about their mental health. I don't know that there was too much in there that they were too surprised about. I know that part of the reason that they chose that subject, was partly because of the suicide piece. That really worried them.

Perhaps because understanding and using data to drive decision-making was a formal aspect of the WTP curriculum, we heard repeated reference to this

skill. That said, using data to drive decisions was but one example of the professional skills students developed through the WTP. A Dream Team member explained her perception of a meeting with students, which notes a wide array of professional skills:

> I thought it was really well-organized. They definitely managed their time well because we were all within a certain timeframe and they could only ask those questions while they were in class, as well as our time, so I thought that they did a really good job at doing that. And obviously, part of that was help from the teacher really keeping them on task. They were really good at listening and moving forward and asking questions, interactive.

The WTP teacher explained at length the skills he believed his students had developed as a result of the WTP:

> I think they learned a lot about research, what it takes to make something happen. Just all the steps involved. They're always asking me 'Why don't we have this, why don't we have that?' Now they see how much it actually takes to make something happen. … [They learned about] note taking, some computer skills making PowerPoint presentations, writing letters. There was so much that they got to do. Look at data… … This is just a big science fair project. Being able to—for me, being able to analyze data—it's huge in science class. So that helped a lot in science. And then the reading and writing, it's a lot.

Growth and maturity. All interviewees referred to students' growth or improved maturity. As their principal confided, the students' history as a difficult group seemed to fade when they were charged with the responsibilities of the WTP:

> [This is] a group that had been kind of ornery, and those kids have really matured so much over the course of this semester. They still have a ways to go, but certainly [the WTP] gave them a lot of skills and hopefully that's gonna carry over for them. I'm just so impressed to hear them when they're asking the questions and they're doing the interviews that have to do with this particular project. They've just risen to a level that they have not ever been at before, so it's been really neat. … This particular class has not had a good history of following through on things and with this, they do.

The WTP teacher also attested to the change in students through the WTP:

> One of the biggest highlights was when the Dream Team would come in. And we had a really good Dream Team but they were also well aware of this class's past. And then after the Dream Team meetings, them coming up to me and saying, "Wow, these kids are a whole different group of kids!" I think that was a definite highlight for me. … They didn't recognize that class. They were so polite and organized, and excited.

The students corroborated their teacher's perception, noting their growth over the year. As one student explained:

> In the past years we weren't as mature as we are now, but now we're kind of getting, like, more mature and wanting to grow up, so we try to look past all this drama. So if there is any drama in the class, we try to avoid it because we'll have to be with this class for a long time, so you might as well get comfortable.

When pressed for why this growth or maturation had occurred, a student responded: "Probably because we have to work a lot in this class together. That's why it's called the Working Together Project." Another chimed in:

Student: I think this class really brought us together.
Researcher: How did it bring you together?"
Student: I think we got a little bit older and with all these projects we had to do working together, we just started to get along."

While these perspectives cannot be solely attributed to the WTP, it appears that the opportunity to collaborate played a role in the group's improved maturation.

This broader theme of growth and maturity has been the subtext of other categories discussed to this point (e.g., attainment of professional and collaborative skills). As one Dream Team reflected:

> Knowing those students, watching them grow, and then seeing them undertake some of these responsibilities and leadership roles, I think it was a really, really positive influence for those kids because I saw so much growth. And the way they interacted with each other and worked together was much more positive than I had seen in the past. So, I think it was great for those kids. I think they chose a great class to offer it to.

Other Dream Team members described the group's growth in similar terms, as illustrated through a few excerpts:

> I just really felt like they had taken ownership and had really come together to do that, and I think they really learned a lot from it. Personally, I think it will just help them move forward and maybe even look at things differently and how they would deal with things not only at school, but at home. There's a lot of growth to be had in that.
>
> They were very mature in the way that they handled some of the issues [that] were personal and very private, and they presented their questions and their issues in a very professional manner and educated. It was obvious that they had actually done some research and they had some background.
>
> They've definitely looked at things differently ever since the project started, you could see a difference. Just in how they related to each other, you know, because bullying is a huge issue as well as other things and you could just tell that there was a lot more support coming from them towards their fellow friends and other people in the middle school. Yeah. I think more compassion. They start[ed] thinking about things a little differently. So, I think it's had some great outcomes.

Notations of students' "maturity", "professional manner", "looking at things differently", or the fact that "you could see a difference" all further support the influence of the WTP's on their growth and maturity. However positive these comments may be, the extent to which these skills will remain with students is unknown. Referring to this issue, the principal noted:

> We'll have to see, you know? It's kind of quick to say, "Wow, it turned their life around." I don't know if I could say that right now, but over time I'm hoping that we've planted some seeds that'll grow as they grow. … Particularly these kinds of skills, it's not something that you can give a final for and go, "Oh, they got it". This might be something that may just be stored inside of them and it comes up later on. These kinds of skills, where they advocate for themselves and where they go about making change in a productive way—that may happen later in their family life, or it may happen in their working life. I hope it will be something that we'll be able to see in school, but we may not know. We don't always know.

Challenges of the WTP

While the description of events and perspectives from Montaña Middle School paints a positive picture of the WTP curriculum there were also some difficult moments. As the WTP teacher shared:

> There are some days where it is tough. … Honestly, it's a group of ten kids, but there are days when it feels like there are forty kids in there because they're a very needy group that are very low academically.

In addition to the challenges presented by students, the WTP teacher was also tasked with teaching a new curriculum in a format unfamiliar to students. While we have emphasized the benefits associated with service learning, the WTP may be viewed as different from the status quo approach to curriculum and instruction in many US schools. Further, the WTP presented the teacher with several logistical concerns, not only overseeing the group work of students, but also coordinating partnerships and meetings between students and the principal, Dream Team members, and school board. These tasks are beyond the typical role and responsibilities of a sixth-grade teacher and required that he put in extra time to ensure the curriculum was a success. The WTP does not neatly align with the curriculum of many rural public schools and we would be remiss not to acknowledge the considerable effort required to reconcile this difference. Accordingly, the benefits and successes outlined here are a testament to the efforts of the teachers, administration, principals, and students.

A number of contextual factors facilitated the successful implementation of the WTP despite these challenges: a strong, experienced teacher committed to implementing the WTP with fidelity; a supportive principal; an engaged group of adults serving on the Dream Team; and a creative, hard-working group of students. Although the principal noted, "If it could work [here], it could work anywhere, because of our high poverty and our high at-risk population, high EEL, all of those things," we believe that it "worked here" precisely because of the facilitating factors in the school's context.

Discussion

Although the case of the WTP at Montaña Middle School raises several topics of interest, this

discussion focuses on two points: (1) the promise of service learning as a means of democratic citizenship, and (2) the potential of service learning and health promotion in rural schools. We discuss each in turn.

Service Learning and Democratic Citizenship

As we outlined early in this work, service learning can offer numerous benefits for students and teachers (Moely et al., 2009). The case of the WTP at Montaña Middle School provides a concrete example of how a service learning health promotion curriculum can be implemented in a rural school. This case, as articulated by participants in this school, reveals four ways in which the WTP curriculum was aligned with central principles of democratic citizenship in education.

First, the participants' beliefs that students developed collaborative skills, professional skills, and growth and maturity supports Ohn and Wade's (2009) findings that service learning classes promote skills of listening, communication, and compromise. Second, the cross-generational collaboration prompted by the WTP contrasts with the sometimes-adversarial relationship between teachers and students in schools (Holt, 1972; Noddings, 1992; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), which is antithetical to a democratic conception of education (Dewey, 1916/1944). Third as a service learning curriculum, the WTP was designed to cultivate and honor youth voice and this study suggests that providing students with the opportunity to express their perceptions in collaborative efforts with adults can be among the most important benefits of the experience (see Battistoni, 1997). In the words of one Dream Team member, "I mean, students just want to be heard." Fourth, the engagement of students in a collective effort to analyze the root causes of students' poor mental health to influence features of their school supports the development of the "participatory citizen" and the "justice-oriented" citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 242). This also aligns the curriculum with more critical orientations to service learning (Mitchell, 2008). Fifth, these experiences align with a broader theme of growth which is deeply intertwined with democratic education (Dewey, 1916/1944). Growth is central to Dewey's (1938/1997) conception of educative experience, which are marked by satisfaction of two criteria: interaction (interplay between students and the content) and continuity (connection with life trajectory in a direction of growth). The WTP curriculum appears to have provided the conditions for this quality of experience for some students.

The Potential of Service Learning in Rural Schools

As we noted, service learning presents both internal logistic challenges (e.g., providing meaningful service activities, or gaining student or teacher support) as well as external challenges (e.g., skepticism of the approach, pedagogical unfamiliarity) (Ohn & Wade, 2009). These challenges are compounded by the obstacles often faced in rural schools, such as multiple roles for teachers and unresponsive national or state policies (see Gallo & Beckman, 2016; Glover et al., 2016; Wilcox, 2014). Further, as we noted, there are few examples in the literature of service learning curricula implemented in rural schools. These factors may lead rural educators to regard the task of implementing service learning in their schools as a daunting one. Indeed, the WTP curriculum was not a success with all schools participating in the broader intervention, and more inquiry is necessary to understand the critical contextual factors of what may facilitate successful implementation.

Despite the challenges to implementing service learning and a lack of evidence that such an approach has been effective in rural settings, the case of the WTP at Montaña Middle School is compelling and provides grounds for optimism. As this work illustrates, the curriculum was successful on a number of counts. The prevalence of skills attributed to the WTP when implemented in a rural high-poverty 6th grade class, and its credit as transformational for many students suggests the untapped educational potential of this approach in this context. Further, the fact that hidden poverty and experienced racism have compounding detrimental effects on health and educational outcomes in too many rural settings (Norris et al., 2010) underscores the importance of engaging youth in rural schools as active agents to expose and correct these systemic inequities. Such an exploration could be extended beyond the implementation of health and wellness issues to address other foci through service learning, such as civic engagement, advocacy, or place-based perspectives. Indeed, the WTP curriculum could be adapted to address other topics, which may position the curriculum for much broader application and influence.

The successes of the WTP also suggest that the ongoing discussion of the challenges faced by rural schools and communities may be at the expense of identifying their strengths and potential for implementing innovative educational approaches. Many of the assets common to rural settings, such as small class sizes, strong relationships, tight-knit communities, and ease in implementing changes (relative to urban districts), position rural schools as conducive to innovative action-oriented curricula such as the WTP. Such a setting is conducive to engaging youth in understanding and addressing issues or concerns in their community (health-related or otherwise). Pursuing action-oriented curricula in this way has the potential to mobilize youth as critical agents of positive change across rural settings.

Limitations

The same team implementing the WTP initiative collected and analyzed data for this study. While this presents benefits in understanding the schools, curriculum, and context of implementation, it presents challenges in bracketing biases in evaluation. Efforts were taken throughout to ensure participants were candid in their expressions of the curriculum and we sought to remain reflexive and engage critically with the data in light of this context (Macbeth, 2001).

Conclusion

The benefits that occurred as a result of the WTP were made possible through the considerable efforts of the students, teacher, principal, and adults in the school community in collaboration with a university partner. Service learning initiatives are not always successful undertakings and more inquiry is needed of the conditions that contribute to their success in rural schools. The case of the WTP at Montaña Middle School, however, may help other educators and researchers consider the possibilities of applying similar curricular approaches in rural schools.

Acknowledgements. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Cooperative Agreement DP001938) funded this study (Principal Investigator: Elaine S. Belansky).

References

Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing ethnographic and observational research.* Sage.

Autio E., & Deussen T. (2017) Recruiting rural schools for education research: Challenges and strategies. In: Nugent G., Kunz G., Sheridan S., Glover T., Knoche L. (Eds.). *Rural education research in the United States.* Springer.

Barley, Z. A. (2009). Preparing teachers for rural appointments: Lessons from the mid-continent. *Rural Educator, 30,* 10-15.

Battistoni, R. M. (1997). Service learning and democratic citizenship. *Theory into Practice, 36*(3), 150-156. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849709543761

Bardwell, G., Morton, C., Chester, A., Pancoska, P., Buch, S., Cecchetti, A., ... Branch, R.A. (2009). Feasibility of adolescents to conduct community-based participatory research on obesity and diabetes in rural Appalachia. *Clinical and Translational Science, 2*(5), 340-349. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-8062.2009.00155.x

Belansky, E. S., Cutforth, N., Chavez, R., Crane, L. A., Waters, E., & Marshall, J. A. (2013). Adapted intervention mapping: A strategic planning process for increasing physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in schools via environment and policy change. *Journal of School Health, 83*(3)*,* 194-205. https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12015

Belansky, E. S., Cutforth, N., Chavez, R. A., Waters, E., & Bartlett-Horch, K. (2011). An adapted version of Intervention Mapping is a tool for conducting community-based participatory research. *Health Promotion Practice,* (3), 440-455. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839909334620

Belansky E. S., Cutforth, N., Delong, E., Ross, C., Scarbro, S., Gilbert, L., Beatty, B., & Marshall, J. A. (2009). Early impact of the federally mandated Local Wellness Policy on physical activity in rural, low-income elementary schools in Colorado. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, *30*, S141-S160. https://doi.org/10.1057/jphp.2008.50

Belansky, E. S., Lohmiller, K., Ingman, B. C., Cutforth, N., Scarbro, S., & Borley, L. (2020). Creating healthy schools with middle school students as change makers. *Health Behavior and Policy, 7*(3), 260-270. https://doi.org/10.14485/HBPR.7.3.10

Billig, S. (2000). Research on K-12 school-based service learning: The evidence builds. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 658-664.

Booth, J. N., Chesham, R. A., Brooks, N. E., Gorely, T., & Moran, C. N. (2020). A citizen science study of short physical activity breaks at school. *BMC*

Medicine, 18, 62. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-020-01539-4

Brenner, D. (2018). Rural educator policy brief: Rural education and the every student succeeds act. *The Rural Educator, 37*(2), 23-27.

Bryant, J. A. (2010). Dismantling rural stereotypes: One-size-fits-all solutions don't meet the needs of ignored and misunderstood rural schools. *Educational Leadership, 68,* 54-58.

Caldwell, J. T., Ford, C. L., Wallace, S. P., Wang, M. C., & Takahashi, L. M. (2016). Intersection of living in a rural versus urban area and race/ethnicity in explaining access to health care in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, *106*(8), 1463-1469.https://doi.org/10.2105%2FAJPH.2016.303212

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questionnaire. www.cdc.gov/yrbs.

Colby, M., Hecht, M. L., Miller-Day, M., Krieger, J. L., Syvertsen, A. K., Graham, J. W., & Pettigrew, J. (2013). Adapting school-based substance use prevention curriculum through cultural grounding: A review and exemplar of adaptation processes for rural schools. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*(1-2), 190-205. https://dx.doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10464-012-9524-8

Colorado Department of Education. (2021). Fall 2012 pupil membership. http://www.cde.state.co.us /cdereval/rvprioryearpmdata.

Cox, J. (1998). Poverty in rural areas: Is more hidden but no less real than in urban areas. *British Medical Journal, 316*(7133), 722–722.

Dewey, J. (1944/1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* Macmillan Company.

Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience and education.* Kappa Delta Pi. (Original work published in 1938)

Eppley, K. (2009). Rural schools and the highly qualified teacher provision of No Child Left Behind: A critical policy analysis. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 24*(4).

Frazier, S. L., Capella, E., & Atkins, M. S. (2007). Linking mental health and after school systems for children in urban poverty: Preventing problems, promoting possibilities. *Adm Policy Ment Health & Ment Health Serv Res, 34*, 389-399. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-007-0118-y

Gallo, J., & Beckman, P. (2016). A global view of rural education: Teacher preparation, recruitment and retention. *Global Education Review, 3*(1). 1-4

Giles, D. E., & Eyler, J. (1994). The theoretical roots of service-learning in John Dewey: Toward a theory of service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 1*(1), 77-85.

Glaser, B. G. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems, 12*(4), 436-445.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Sociology Press.

Glover, T. A., Nugent, G. C., Chumney, F. L., Ihlo, T., Shapiro, E. S., Guard, K., Koziol, N., & Bovaird, J. (2016). Investigating rural teachers' professional development, instructional knowledge, and classroom practice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 31*(3), 1-16.

Holt, J. (1972). *Freedom and beyond.* E. P. Dutton.

Holton, N. (2003). *Service learning in the rural community college.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 480576).

Ingman, B. C., Lohmiller, K., Cutforth, N., Borley, L., & Belansky, E. S. (2017). Community-engaged curriculum development: Working with middle school students, teachers, principals, and stakeholders for healthier schools. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue, 19*(1), 9-34.

Lyon et al., (2014). Taking evidence-based practices to school: Using expert opinion to develop a brief, evidence-informed school-based mental health intervention. *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion, 7*(1), 42-61. https://doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2013.857903

Macbeth, D. (2001). On "reflexivity" in qualitative research: Two readings, and a third. *Qualitative Inquiry, 7*(1), 35-68. https://doi.org/10.1177 %2F107780040100700103

McConnell, T. J., Parker, J. M., Eberhardt, J., Koehler, J., & Lundeberg, M. A. (2012). Virtual professional learning communities: Teachers' perceptions of virtual versus face-to-face professional development. *Journal of Science Education and Technology, 22*, 267-277. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-012-9391-y

Mitchell, T. D. (2008). Traditional vs. critical service-learning: Engaging the literature to differentiate two models, *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *14*(2), 50-65.

Moely, B. E., Billig, S. H., & Holland, B. A. (Eds.). (2009). *Creating our identities in service learning and community engagement*. Information Age Publishing.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Locale classifications.* Institute of Education Statistics. www.nces.ed.gov

National Commission on Service-Learning. (2002*). Learning in deed: The power of service learning for American schools*. W. K. Kellogg Foundation.
Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education.* Teachers College Press.
Norris, A. N., Zajicek, A., & Murphy-Erby, Y. (2010). Intersectional perspective and rural poverty research: Benefits, challenges and policy implications. *Journal of Poverty*, *14*(1), 55-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/10875540903489413
Ohn, J. D., & Wade, R. (2009). Community service-learning as a group inquiry project: Elementary and middle school CiviConnections teachers' practices of integrating historical inquiry in community service-learning. *The Social Studies*, 100(5) 200-211. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377990903221988
Rogers, C., & Freiberg, H. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn* (3rd ed.). Merrill.
Schafft, K. A. (2016). Rural education as rural development: Understanding the rural school–community well-being linkage in a 21st-century policy context. *Peabody Journal of Education, 91*(2), 137-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1151734
Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Sage Publications.
Stern, J. D. (Ed). (1994). *The condition of education in rural schools.* US Department of Education.
Sturgill, A., Motley, P., & Saltz, S. (2013). Using service learning to teach communication skills in the context of economic diversity. *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication.* A Journal Published by the Small Programs Interest Group.
Smith, M. U., & DiClemente, R. J. (2000). STAND: A peer educator training curriculum for sexual risk reduction in the rural south. *Preventive Medicine, 30*(6), 441-449. https://doi.org/10.1006/pmed.2000.0666
U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas. www.census.gov
Wallin, D. (2003). Student leadership and democratic schools: A case study. National Association of Secondary School Principals. *NASSP Bulletin, 87*(636), 55. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F019263650308763606
Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal, 41(2), 237-269.* https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00028312041002237
Wilcox, K. C., Angelis, J. I., Baker, L., & Lawson, H. A. (2014). The value of people, place and possibilities: A multiple case study of rural high school completion. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 29*(9), 1-18.
Yettick, H., Baker, R., Wickersham, M., & Hupfeld, K. (2014). Rural districts left behind? Rural districts and the challenges of administering the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 29*(13), 1-15.
Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods.* Sage.

Authors:

Benjamin C. Ingman is Research Assistant Profesor and Director of Research and Evaluation at the Center for Rural School Health & Education, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver. Contact: benjamin.ingman@du.edu

Katie Lohmiller is Co-Founder and Director of Programming and Evaluation at Educational Access Group. Contact: katie.moseley@gmail.com

Nick Cutforth is Profesor and Director of Community Engagement and Outreach at the Center for Rural School Health & Education, University of Denver. Contact: nicholas.cutforth@du.edu

Elaine S. Belansky is Research Associate Profesor and Director at the Center for Rural School Health & Education, University of Denver. Contact: elaine.belansky@du.edu

Suggested citation:

Ingman, B. C., Lohmiller, K., Cutforth, N., & Belansky, E. S. (2022). The potential of service learning in rural schools: The case of the Working Together Project. *The Rural Educator, 43*(2), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.55533/2643-9662.1326

© 2022. This work is licensed under a CC BY 4.0 license. See https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/