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Preserving the Future of Rural Schools and Communities in the Plains

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Abstract

There is a well-documented pattern in rural areas across the plains, as well as in other parts of the United States, of population loss and the associated consolidation or closing of literally thousands of rural schools. There is also dramatic evidence of the demise of a great many, once prosperous, small communities surrounding those same schools. It is time for more effective and sustained intervention, particularly in strengthening a sense of ‘citizenship of the place’ in those communities, especially among current school-aged children. Without this kind of thoughtful change in philosophy, the pattern of decline will continue to be repeated. Preserving the future of the remaining small schools and communities on the plains is a challenge this paper intends to begin to address.