Would You Like To Swing on a Star?

A Report to the Shakertown Roundtable Conference on Economic Development and Education in Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development

May, 1986

Swinging on a Star

Would you like to swing on a star?
Carry moonbeams home in a jar,
And be better off than you are,
Or would you rather be a mule?

A mule is an animal with long, funny ears,
He kicks up at anything he hears,
His back is brawny and his brain is weak,
He's just plain stupid with a stubborn streak.

And by the way if you hate to go to school,
You may grow up to be a mule.

Would you like to swing on a star?
Carry moonbeams home in a jar,
And be better off than you are,
Or would you rather be a pig?

A pig is an animal with dirt on his face,
His shoes are a terrible disgrace,
He's got no manners when he eats his food,
He's fat and lazy and extremely rude,

But if you don't care a feather or a fig,
You may grow up to be pig.

Would you like to swing on a star?
Carry moonbeams home in a jar,
And be better off than you are,
Or would you rather be a fish?

A fish won't do anything but swim in a brook,
He can't write his name or read a book,
To fool the people is his only thought,
And though he's slippery, he still gets caught.

But then if that sort of life is what you wish,
You may grow up to be a fish.

And all the monkeys aren't in the zoo,
Everyday you meet quite a few,
So you see it's all up to you.

You can be better than you are.
You can be swinging on a star.

From the movie, Going My Way, words and music by Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen, performed by Bing Crosby.

Would You Like to Swing on a Star?

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY'S FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

A Report to the Shakertown Roundtable Conference on
Economic Development and Education in
Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Few will argue with the notion that the economic future of a place depends upon the education and skills of its people. Places that grow, whether from locally stimulated growth or attraction of new industry, are places with good educational systems and a well-educated populace. People in Kentucky know this is true, and so do people in the Fifth Congressional District. But we also know that Kentucky is renowned for its "undereducated" population and that the Fifth District is notorious for its last-place standing.

Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District has the lowest percentage of high school graduates of any congressional district in the nation. The District is to the state what the state is to the nation--lagging behind on most measures of educational attainment and success. Fully 62 percent of the adults living in the District have not completed high school, compared to 47 percent in the state and only 34 percent in the nation. The Fifth District has fewer young people and more older people, fewer workers and more disabled people. If you are old, with little education and have a disability, you stay in the Fifth District. If you are young, educated, and able to work, you may well go elsewhere to get a job. An underdeveloped, nonindustrial economy--with the accompanying isolation--and the prevalence of poverty make the educational task more formidable. The District has the highest dropout rate, the lowest holding power, and the lowest standardized test scores in Kentucky.

The Fifth District's low education levels make developing or attracting modern industry difficult because today's growing industrial sectors require high skill and educational levels. At the same time, the lack of good jobs itself perpetuates the problems in the educational system, contributing to a low tax base, dampening students' motivation to finish school, and forcing educated graduates to migrate in search of rewarding work.

Conditions in the Fifth District led the Shakertown Roundtable and a committee of Fifth District media leaders to mount a response to the intertwined problems of poor economic conditions and educational attainment. Their premise has been that solutions will grow from the vision and energy of the District's citizens.

MACED talked with people in the District, exploring practical opportunities to raise the educational level, lower the dropout rate and improve the District's schools. MACED interviewed 155 people from 15 of the Fifth District's 27 counties, including 17 school superintendents, 3 school board members, 12 principals or other administrators, 27 teachers, 5 retired teachers, 26 business and professional people, 26 high school and college students, 33 parents, and 6 college administrators or professors.

People recognize that educational quality lags behind in the District. There are fewer resources to fund education and more of the "harder-to-educate" students--those from low-income families. But there are people throughout the District who care about education and have good insights about improving it. This report presents their perspective.

Problems

Expectations at Home and School

People emphasized over and over that the children in the Fifth District are just as smart as children anywhere, but they face greater obstacles because many of them come from poor families and many of their parents are not educated:

> Our kids--I would put our kids up against anybody in San Francisco or California, or anywhere in the world. Only thing our kids lack is the chance to do something with it. They've got the minds; they're not dumb. -- **Parent**

Parents blame schools for expecting too little of their children, and schools blame parents for not conveying the importance of school to their children. For example, parents and students alike felt that schools categorize students on the basis of their appearance and their family name from the first day they enter school:

> These kids walk in the door and are categorized by 90 percent of the teachers. "This is so-and-so over there; his mommy and daddy never did amount to a hill of beans. -- **Parent**

> Whatever a child has got on his back and no matter how ticky his hair is, no matter how nasty it is, no

> matter what hole it comes out of, it deserves the same chance as Sally sitting over here in a ruffled dress. -- **Parent**

Bright high school students told interviewers how they were grouped by appearance, and only after surprising the teachers and administrators with high grades were they given more encouragement. From several college students we heard that even when they performed well in school, they were encouraged to become beauticians and factory workers, not doctors, lawyers or teachers.

Many school people commented that the problem children are from welfare families, often one-parent families, often families with no one working. Everyone recognized exceptions--"poor families who see the need for their children to go on through and push them and encourage them in every way." But from the school's perspective, by and large, the students from poor families are those who fail.

> Parents trust the school--they don't know what they want, but they trust the teachers to be a bridge to the outside world. The real problem is a deprivation. People don't feel connected with the rest of the world. There may not even be a book or a magazine in that household. -- **Teacher**

People on both sides of the issue understood the complexity of the problem and its causes. There were parents who realized that kids do not get the encouragement they need at home, and there were school personnel, teachers and administrators, who saw that schools categorize children and work harder with those for whom they have high expectations.

Poor Communication Between Parents and School

Many parents reported frustration when they contact the schools. A number of parents who have themselves finished school, and who clearly value their children's education, complained that they must interrupt a class in order to speak with a teacher, because teachers in some systems do not stay after school or provide other times for parent meetings. Others were concerned that homework is sent home without instructions.

> If you send a note home to a parent, that parent is not going to come to school the next day, bring you that note say, "I can't read this. I can't read." They're going to sit at home and ignore it. That teacher is going to tell you that the parent doesn't care. What that teacher doesn't know is that the parent may have cried because they can't read. -- **Parent**

Teachers commented that some parents are intimidated by schools and teachers. Above all, many parents feel unwelcome in schools. Parents find teachers and administrators in some schools threatened by complaints and sometimes even by suggestions. Even teachers say that some principals actively discourage parents from visiting the schools.

Big Schools, Small Children

Some parents and teachers regret losing their community schools and feel that consolidation has contributed to the dropout problem:

> Now one reason why some have dropped out is that we used to have a high school at [X] for years, and with consolidation we moved to [Y]. And some of the students do not want to go up there. They go for a little while and then they quit. -- **Teacher**

Class sizes, particularly in first through third grade, are another aspect of the size problem. People from all the different sides of the issue commented that every child, the brighter as well as the slower, would benefit if classes in the early grades were limited to 12 to 15 children. This theme was presented by educators, parents, students, business people, the educated, and the uneducated. Teachers were unanimous in espousing small classes as a solution to the dropout problem, asserting that remedial teachers would be needed less at all levels if classes were small enough in the early grades. The current effort to lower maximum class sizes by one or two children is widely viewed as making little difference.

Teacher Education

No one in the Fifth District seemed happy with Kentucky's teacher education programs. Some superintendents criticized particular colleges. Others were concerned that linking a masters degree to salary leads to reducing the quality of masters programs.

> Teacher education is pretty poor. I think teacher education is terrible. You can buy a degree from [X] college--pay your tuition, and you show up, and you get a degree. On the graduate level it's worse. -- **Teacher**

Politics

Many regard politics as the primary obstacle to improving education. There are school systems in which people feel that decisions are

made on the basis of power and giving away coveted jobs--not on the basis of what is good for schools and students.

> It's been too much politics in it--sort of like state government. When a new group comes in, they change. They change superintendents, they change principals, and teachers are switched here and there. It affects the overall program drastically. Anytime you make changes purely for political reasons, you're certainly not--it's not a policy thing. -- **Businessman**

MACED found a direct correlation between destructive school politics and poor-quality schools. All the school systems in which politics was cited as a major obstacle to education had the lowest quality schools. Some poor-quality systems were not heavily political, but all good-quality systems did not appear to have political problems. Nonetheless, some counties in the District have, by all accounts, reduced the effect of politics on their schools. Their success indicates that the most harmful abuses can be overcome.

Funding

The highest quality educational systems are those in which local funding comprises a high proportion of the school budget. Overall, local revenues supply a smaller percentage of school-system budgets in the Fifth District than in the rest of Kentucky. While the property value assessment per student averages $89,000 across the state, the Fifth District averages only $64,000. Statewide, 17 percent of schools' funding is raised locally, but only 10 percent comes from local sources in the Fifth District.

Schools in which the community tries harder and puts more local money into education are the schools that have fewer dropouts and higher student achievement. Community support for education goes hand in hand with standard measures of school quality.

Almost all superintendents interviewed felt that money, or the lack of money, was the biggest obstacle to improving education in their school system. Parents, students, and educators alike deplored inadequate facilities and supplies that tie everyone's hands and leave the area's students less prepared.

Solutions

Broader Horizons

Everyone agreed that children in the Fifth District need to be exposed to a bigger world so they can reach higher and farther

for themselves. Children need to experience art and music and go on trips to museums and theater productions.

They need to hear people from their county talk about the value of education and meet people for whom education has worked. Such visitors not only raise expectations about what young people can become. They also are success stories you can touch in the flesh. One school's guidance counselor summed it up:

> Any time anybody that's important to the community walks through that door and goes to a classroom and shares his time and/or interest, whether it's from the vocational community or a parent with a slide show of another country, any person who shares his time and talents with our students has made a difference. -- **Guidance Counselor**

Many people suggested ways to expand parents' horizons as well--taking them to visit colleges, including them on field trips, building their expectations for their children and building their value for education. People had ideas for rewarding kids who graduate--giving them money, summer jobs, senior trips--a host of ideas.

Ideas, both inside and outside the District, are plentiful. The task is to build the momentum at all levels for implementing those ideas.

A New Educational Climate

In fact, everyone believes that the way to improve education in the District is to have the whole community emphasize that education is valuable, that all children can get a good education, and that all children need an education. People suggested "a massive campaign" to change attitudes throughout the region--television ads, businessmen and women stressing their need for educated employees.

> Business leaders have to start demanding that the people they hire are better educated. It's got to work hand-in-hand. -- **Businessman**

> Toyota's announcement about requiring a diploma made a big difference. They need to hear about the importance of a diploma from "real" people, not just teachers. -- **Teacher**

People MACED interviewed know that building a movement to value education--building a new educational climate--is a long-term process. In a new educational climate, destructive school politics would no longer reign. In an atmosphere that supports education,

school politics based on wielding power over jobs would be undermined.

> It's going to happen when the people want it to happen. . . it will not end until the people want it to end and until they hold their public officials accountable. -- **Businessman**

Throughout the District, MACED interviewers found people were ready to begin making the change. There is new leadership and energy.

> Our school board is improving, mainly because the attitude of the people is changing. They demand better education. I see the potential for changing the old-time politics. The baby boomers are becoming your new leadership--the old leadership is breaking. I see a new vigor for the survival of the mountains in this new leadership--they will make a difference. -- **Businessman**

> We now have three newly elected officials who are of a more progressive nature. I'm not saying they're not political, just that their brand of politics is more responsible--and they have the support of their peers. But we're still churning. We're not fully emerged. -- **Businessman**

> If we want change, the change has to come from within. If the people here in the mountains, in the Fifth District, don't want change, they're not going to have change. It's that simple. We've got to want to change ourselves. -- **Businessman**

Whether the issue is helping children find their place in a big world, helping parents help their children learn, or working with teenagers who can't read, there are people throughout the Fifth District with ideas and energy for tackling the problem. The central issue for citizens concerned about education is how best to harness this energy and allow the people with good ideas to put their ideas to work.

Some suggested that the way to build a new economic and educational climate in the District is to form an organization with that purpose. Our interviews make clear that an organization devoted to education and economic development in the Fifth District could make a tangible contribution to improving education. There was virtual unanimity among superintendents, teachers, parents, and business leaders on where the problems lie. People are ready to work on improvements, and in many cases already are. Common ground exists. But often neither the agreement nor the energy is visible day-to-day.

A Fifth District development and education organization could provide a forum in which solutions are developed to problems which may have sounded quite different when stated by various parties locally. It could build bridges between the schools and hard-to-reach families and communities. It could raise funds and help organize local efforts to carry out many of the proposals put forward here. It could give legitimacy and muscle to those who want momentum for educational change.

An organization with the explicit goal of improving the opportunities for both education and economic development in the Fifth District could involve teachers, administrators, parents, and citizens in numerous ways:

* Award small grants to teachers and administrators for efforts such as those discussed in this section.

* Organize a "hire high school graduates" movement among businesses.

* Help districts explore ways of encouraging parent involvement in the schools.

* Establish a "speaker's bureau" of people willing to meet with classes of children to talk about what they do on their jobs and how they use their education.

* Organize prestigious and challenging internships for students of widely differing interests.

* Promote summer jobs in businesses.

* Coordinate editorials and news articles on particular subjects, such as the importance of the family in education, the value of small classrooms, or higher education opportunities.

* Recognize outstanding teachers, students, and administrators across the Fifth District.

* Get presidents of the area's colleges together to brainstorm ways their institutions could reach out to young children and families.

* Assist in establishing local educational improvement groups.

An organization which carried out programs such as these within the Fifth District would be in a position to work on the larger educational issues as well, such as funding for smaller class sizes and improved teacher training programs. People in the Fifth District recognize how much economic opportunities are

entwined with educational standing, and many are ready to break the cycle. The existence of a District-wide development and education group would be a message in itself about the willingness and readiness of Fifth District to move ahead.

PART I: BACKGROUND

Introduction

> Our kids--I would put our kids up against anybody in San Francisco or California, or anywhere in the world. Only thing our kids lack is the chance to do something with it. They've got the minds; they're not dumb. -- **Parent**

> You know, it's hard, it makes a struggle here for me. I live on about $250 a month altogether, everything, and by the time I pay all my bills and then buy what I need to run a household, there's not extra, really. I don't have a car; I couldn't afford a car. I couldn't even afford to put the gas in the car. That's why I'm going to school, to try to make it a little bit better. -- **Parent**

> All I know--if you ain't got an education, you ain't got a future. -- **Student**

Few will argue with the notion that the economic future of a place depends upon the education and skills of its people. Places that grow, whether from locally stimulated growth or attraction of new industry, are places with good educational systems and a well-educated populace. People in Kentucky know this is true, and people in the Fifth Congressional District know it. But we also know that we are renowned for our "undereducated" population and that the Fifth District is notorious for its last-place standing.

Despite this poor national reputation, Kentucky's educational system has improved dramatically over the past 30 years. In 1953, only half of the public school teachers in Kentucky were college graduates. Today nearly all public school teachers have

college degrees. Thirty years ago the percentage of pupils who completed the eighth grade and stayed in school to graduate ranged from 12 to 81 percent among the school districts in the state; in 1984 the range was from 44 to 100 percent. In 1953, one-teacher schools outnumbered schools with four or more teachers. Today there are 1,363 elementary, middle and high schools, only two of them one-teacher schools.[1]

Kentuckians' educational attainment has also improved over the years. In 1960, only 28 percent of Kentuckians had a high school education, compared to 41 percent nationwide; by 1980, 53 percent had graduated, compared to 67 percent nationwide. However, Kentucky still placed last in educational attainment in 1984, just as it had in the early 1970s. Whereas in the past critics argued that Kentuckians lagged behind the nation because they were satisfied with the status quo and did not value education, today the individuals and organizations working for better education across the state are evidence that Kentuckians do care.

In recent years, Kentuckians have initiated numerous civic and state programs to upgrade both the educational system and the educational level of the state's citizens. The Governor has linked education to economic development and made it a primary focus of her administration. The Governor's Council on Educational Reform, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, and the Kentuckians for Excellence in Education Task Force all represent energetic efforts to reform education and move the state out of last place. Kindergarten is now mandatory, academic competitions are being emphasized throughout the state, and efforts to upgrade teachers' competency and opportunities are underway. But we have a long way to go.

Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District has the lowest percentage of high school graduates of any congressional district in the nation.[2] The District is to the state what the state is to the nation--lagging behind on most measures of educational attainment and success. For instance, the Fourth Congressional District--

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[1]Figures for 1953 are taken from Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, Kentucky's Education Puzzle: 5000 Citizens Report on Their Schools, Informational Bulletin No. 8, Kentucky (Frankfort, KY: Legislative Research Commission, August, 1953). Figures for 1980 are from Kentucky Department of Education, Profiles of Kentucky Public Schools, 1983-1984 (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Department of Education); and Kentucky Department of Education, Biennial Report, 1983-1985 (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Department of Education).

[2]Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Congressional Districts of the 98th Congress, Kentucky (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census).

which lies just up the I-75 corridor from the Fifth--had 106,872 high school graduates in 1980, representing 63 percent of the adults over 18. The Fifth District had only 71,804 graduates (38 percent), 35,000 fewer high school graduates in about the same size population. The Fifth District had 144,500 adults with less than eight years of schooling, compared to only 62,800 in the Fourth.

For many of these people, economic opportunities are not any greater outside the District. They do not have the education necessary to get jobs elsewhere, and so stay. But a great many others leave, and take their education with them.

> There used to be a lot of talented and energetic people in the mountains because of the pioneer background. Then when there was the big out-migration; the people who could, left. There went the talent. In [X] County, you have talented people leaving, but new people come in, too. In some of the other counties, you don't have anybody coming in. -- **Teacher**

> One reason why we're so low [in high school graduates] is not necessarily that we don't educate them, but that they don't stay here. So they're not here--they're gone--and they have to. It's a matter of economic survival. And it's left the others behind. -- **Guidance Counselor**

> Unfortunately, we find that the better ones leave the county. The ones that graduate have to leave, unless they have some family connection within the county with an oil company, a coal company. -- **School Administrator**

> I've often said that we export our youth. We train them; we send them; and they become leaders in other communities. You can go to Lexington or Louisville or any of your Blue Grass areas, and you will find mountain people doing very well. You will find them lawyers, doctors, ministers, engineers, teachers. So we export our best, really. And to me, that's tragic and sad that there's not that much for them to come back to. Because we have bright young people . . . and I know of so many that we keep in contact with that we've taught in school that have excelled. It is tragic that we lose them. -- **Businesswoman**

Older people and people receiving disability payments have a source of income that enables them to stay. Twenty-two thousand more people are disabled in the Fifth than in the Fourth District, 12,000 more are over 64, and 18,000 fewer are 25-54 years old. In short, the Fifth District has fewer young people and more

older people, and fewer workers and more disabled people. If you are young, educated, and able to work, you may well go elsewhere to get a job. If you are old, with little education and have a disability, you stay in the Fifth District. Those workers who stay have difficulty finding work, and it is discouraging.

> The way times are changing, it's hard to predict whether our kids will live here when they grow up. The main thing around here is jobs. Jobs are so hard to find any more. Any more, it's even hard to find those odd jobs. -- **Parent**

> A lot of people's got the attitude that if I go through high school, I'm still not going to get no job, so what's the use. There's just not no jobs here. So a lot's got the impression, it's no good, why am I going to go on through high school, when I'm wasting my time. When I get out, I'm still not going to have no job. And that is the truth. We've not got nothing here and we should have something here. There's just not something to look forward to. -- **Young Mother Who Had Dropped Out**

Like the Seventh District (mostly coal counties), the Fifth District has almost 60,000 fewer employed people than the other districts in the state. Similarly, these two districts have about 30,000 fewer in the labor force. These two Districts have half the number of professional people, half the number of technical workers, three-fourths the number of service workers, and twice the number of primary industry workers, such as farmers and miners. In short, their economies are vastly underdeveloped. Median family income is lower and poverty is higher.

An underdeveloped, nonindustrial economy, with the accompanying isolation, and the prevalence of poverty make the educational task more formidable. The Fifth District has the highest dropout rate (5.1, compared to 4.2 in the Fourth), the lowest holding power (62 percent of students entering ninth grade actually graduate, compared to 71 percent in the Fourth), and the lowest Kentucky Essential Skills Test (KEST) scores (54 overall, compared to 57 in the Fourth).[3] Twenty-four of the Fifth District's 38 school systems had higher dropout rates than the Kentucky average of 4.4 percent. In contrast, the Appalachian counties

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[3]See Appendix 1 for comparisons of economic and education indicators in Kentucky's Seven Congressional Districts.

of Ohio and Pennsylvania had dropout rates of only 1.8 and 1.9 percent.[4]

The Fifth District's low education levels make developing or attracting modern industry difficult because today's growing industrial sectors require high skill and educational levels. At the same time, the lack of good jobs itself perpetuates the problems in the educational system, contributing to a low tax base, dampening students' motivation to finish school, and forcing educated graduates to migrate in search of rewarding work. High dropout rates and low attainment levels are symptoms of problems in the Fifth District--problems which are so intertwined that just separating the strands is a difficult task. Eliot Wigginton, teacher and originator of the Foxfire concept, is familiar with schools in many states:

> The situation in Eastern Kentucky is as difficult as any I have seen. The kids face a lot of obstacles to learning--the politics in many systems, teachers sometimes poorly trained, bad physical conditions in some schools, and the poor economic circumstances of so many of them. -- **Eliot Wigginton**

And the complexity of the problem is recognized in the District also. A businessman put it this way:

> It is not a product of the mountains, because there are too many successful people in the mountains. There are too many people who have gone away and want to come back, but there is nothing to come back to. So they can't come back. So I don't necessarily think it is a product of the mountains. Is it a product of poverty? I don't know. To me it is not a factor because I have known too many impoverished people who have done quite well for themselves. It is so complex that I don't think you can put your finger on any one thing and reduce the problem to this or that particular cause. It's a host of factors, and God knows what those factors are. -- **Businessman**

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[4]J. Lamarr Cox and Rita Spivey, High School Dropouts in Appalachia: Problems and Palliatives, paper prepared for American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April, 1986.

The Fifth District and Its Public School Systems

Although the Fifth District stands out as a whole for its poor economic opportunities and its dropout and school achievement problems, there are wide variations within the area's 27 counties and 38 school districts.[5] Within the District, median family income in 1983 ranged from a low of $9,200 in Owsley County to highs of $24,400 in Jessamine and $19,900 in Taylor. The proportion of poor households ranges from 15 percent up to 48 percent, with an average of around 30 percent. In November 1985, unemployment ranged from a low of 5 percent in Jessamine County to a high of 20 percent in McCreary.

Income and work differences are reflected in the local resources available to schools for financial support: while the Fifth District's average 1984 property value assessment per student was $64,048, McCreary had only $28,745 compared to Garrard's $115,886. All of the systems operate on a combination of local, state, and federal funding, but the percentage of the budget coming from each source varies from school district to school district, depending upon property value and local tax effort. Local effort is measured by the state through a complex but well-respected "local financial index."[6] The higher the index, the greater the local effort to support schools, given available taxable property. In the Fifth District the index averaged about 310 in 1984, but in one school district it was only 63, while in another it was 671. These differences in local resources and local effort translate into different proportions of local funding, with Whitley contributing only 2 percent to its education costs in 1984, compared to an average of 10 percent, and Somerset Independent's high of 23 percent. State funding varied from 64 percent to 84 percent, and federal funding from 7 percent to 30 percent. Total per pupil expenditures ranged from $1,384 to $2,274; the District average was $1,620. This compared with an average $1,880 per pupil in Kentucky overall.

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[5]The total enrollment in the 27 county systems and 11 independent systems (most of those in county seats) is 96,514 students. The districts range in size from Science Hill Independent in Pulaski County with 292 students to Laurel County with 7,188. The average size is 2,540.

[6]The index is derived by dividing the local revenue per child in average daily attendance by the assessed property value per child in average daily attendance. It is used to measure the amount of effort a community puts into the support of its schools based upon its ability to pay.

There also is a wide variation among Fifth District school systems in the standard measures of school quality. Scores on the Kentucky Essential Skills Test (KEST), which was given to all public school children in Kentucky for the first time in 1985, ranged from a low of 47 to a high of 62. The average of 54 compares with a state average of 56 and a national average of 50. Dropout rates among seventh to twelfth graders also varied from a high in 1984 of 12 percent in one system to a low of 1.3 percent in another. Holding power, or percent of ninth graders graduating, is closely related to dropout rates. It varied from 45 percent to 83 percent, with an average of 62 percent.

These variations among the school districts are directly tied to economic resources and local effort to fund schools. The state Department of Education has developed an internal index to measure school quality in the state's 180 school districts. The Department ranked school systems on eight different measures, then combined the rankings into a composite score.[7] We used the Department's scores for the Fifth's 38 school systems to make up three categories of school systems--poor, average, and good quality. Then we examined how various other school factors differed between these categories. We found that good school systems are generally those in places with better economies. In good systems only 38 percent of the students are "economically deprived," while in average systems the figure is 47 percent, and in poor systems it is 63 percent. Educating more poor children means school systems get more federal funds for remedial education (Chapter 1 funds), and therefore the school systems in our "good quality" group average only $195,276 in Chapter 1 funds, while the average schools have around $323,326 and the poor quality schools around $590,286.[8] Good schools have the highest property assessment per pupil (averaging $75,400, compared to $69,200 in average systems and $46,500 in poor systems.) But the good schools not only start out with more resources, they do more with what they have. Good schools have a financial index score of 423, compared to 315 in average schools and only 220 in poor schools. Thus, while systems in poor places have a tougher job to do because they have to overcome the traditional barriers posed by lack of resources, they also are working with less community support. Building that support is the first step toward better education.

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[7]The measures used include percent of positive placements from vocational education; percent graduates going to college; the dropout rate; the retention rate; and test scores in the third, fifth, seventh, and tenth grades. This index is only for internal use in the Kentucky Department of Education.

[8]The Kentucky Department of Education provided information on Chapter 1 funds in April, 1986.

In short, economic conditions in the Fifth District lag behind the state and the nation and translate directly into education problems. However, as this report will show, there appear to be untapped energy and commitment to remedy both economic and education problems.

The Project

Conditions in the Fifth District led the Shakertown Roundtable and a committee of Fifth District media leaders to mount a response to the intertwined problems of poor economic conditions and educational attainment. Their premise has been that solutions will grow from the vision and energy of the District's citizens. The first step has been to look closely at what might be possible. Battelle Laboratories has taken a fresh look at the economic side of the equation--can the Fifth District develop higher paying industries which would reward a high school education? MACED's task has been to talk with people in the District, exploring practical opportunities to raise the educational level, lower the dropout rate and improve the District's schools.

During March and April, 1986, MACED interviewed people throughout the District to learn firsthand what issues confront school systems in the Fifth District and, particularly, what educators and others feel can be done. MACED staff talked with 155 people from 15 of the Fifth District's 27 counties, concentrated particularly in 6 counties representing different parts of the District.[9] Since we found we were hearing the same issues and concerns over and over in the different places we went, we believe that it is fair to draw broader inferences from the areas in which we concentrated our effort. Altogether, 93 people were interviewed individually, and in 5 cases we met with groups of 8 to 20. We talked with 17 school superintendents, 3 school board members, 12 principals or other administrators, 27 teachers, 5 retired teachers, 26 business and professional people, 26 high school and college students, 33 parents, and 6 college administrators or professors. (Many of the superintendents, teachers, and others were also parents, of course, and they contributed insights from that perspective as well.) MACED interviewers used an interview guide flexibly, adjusting questions to probe both for specific knowledge and to pursue questions which had been raised in other interviews. In almost every case the interviews were taped, with the understanding that MACED would not quote individuals by name or county.

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[9]References are also used from several interviews in the District conducted as part of a MACED study on changing conditions in the coal fields.

The fact that so many people were willing to talk with us, often at considerable length, is one measure of the concern the people in the Fifth District have for their children and schools. This report draws out themes we heard in the interviews. Part II deals with problems people told us about. Part III discusses solutions and concludes with a brief description of the role a District-wide organization could play in improving educational opportunities in the Fifth District.

PART II: PROBLEMS

Overview

If you were the president of a big company and thinking about moving here, and you saw what the schools are like, and the roads, and the medical care, cultural opportunities, you probably wouldn't want to live here. . . . I like the slower pace of life. I think my kids are growing up in an environment where there is not so much drugs and other harmful influences on them. I like the scenery. I like being out in the woods. That kind of thing. The drawbacks are if you want to go get a good steak, or see a good movie, or get good medical care, or get an education for your kids, you usually have problems. . . . But I worry about my kids' future. When I went to college I had a high grade point average and was in the top 10 percent [of my high school class], and I thought I was real smart, and when I got to college, I almost flunked out. And I know the same thing is going to happen to my kids. -- **Businessman**

Sometimes it does get awful down and depressing here when you see the way the economy is and so many people out of work, you think well, do I want to raise my child here to go through the same thing. I don't know. But I'd like to stay here if I could. It would be hard to leave. -- **Parent**

But the reason I really want to get out is I just don't think there are any advantages for my daughter here. I went through school here, and I don't know, I don't feel like my high school helped me train for the future. -- **Parent**

Economic underdevelopment and the consequent lack of opportunity for an economically better life permeate the Fifth District and its educational efforts. There are few jobs available in the area to make an education a worthwhile investment. Children know few adults for whom education is the key to success because people from the Fifth District who have succeeded through education have usually left.

The Fifth District residents with whom we spoke offered many views of the problems affecting education in the District. However, as we listened to people both in and out of schools, from classrooms and from businesses, at all income levels, we found a common ground. Below we group the themes we heard into four areas: Expectations at Home and at School; The Schools; Politics; and Funding. The following sections present interview excerpts illustrating the range of perspectives we heard on each topic and discuss the problems as we came to understand them.

Expectations at Home and at School

Both common sense and extensive research support the notion that the expectations of parents and teachers go far in determining a student's level of achievement in school.[10] Everyone--in the Fifth District and out of it--agrees that children who are expected to learn in school, to graduate from high school (or college), and to find satisfying, well-paying jobs are more likely to do all these things than children who are expected not to succeed. In the District, however, economic conditions make it difficult for teachers and parents to establish high goals for children. This is particularly true for children from low-income families who have had little experience outside the immediate area. Middle class parents are more likely to have gone to school or to have worked in another area, giving them a greater sense of their children's potential.

In this discouraging situation, schools blame low-income parents and parents blame schools for having low expectations for the children. Though an occasional spark of sympathy shines through, a remarkable amount of conviction goes into each side's belief that the other is at fault. Behind the blame, however, are some perceptive observations about just how schools and families

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[10]Robert Rosenthal, "Teacher Expectations and Pupil Learning," in N.U. Overly, The Unstudied Curriculum, pp. 53-84; Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, Pygmalion in the Classroom (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968); J.C. Brophy and T.L. Good, Teacher-Student Relationships: Causes and Consequences (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974); Eleanor Leacock, Teaching and Learning in City Schools (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

communicate low expectations for education to children. If the observations are viewed as coming from allies in the campaign to educate children--and parents and schools most logically are allies for each other--even critical comments can be examined for the germ of truth they may contain.

Expectations at Home

> These children are programmed to fail. When they do succeed they almost can't believe it. It does start out at home and they've not got a good concept of theirself or feeling good about theirself at home, you know. A lot of parents put their kids down, a lot of parents, they don't have to be poor parents to do it: "Get out of my hair, you'll never learn nothing." Then they go to the school and it begins there, and if they are put behind or get behind, then it's "You dummy, you're in the dummy class." -- **Parent**

> If you learn a new word in the 6th grade and you take it home and you get ridiculed at home for using it, because they don't know what that word means, then everything that's happened in the school setting is defeated. If your parent says, "What does that mean? I don't know what you're talking about"--that kind of thing--then the child does not have an incentive to use that [word] and it does not become a part of his vocabulary--it's gone. And when that happens a lot in school--which it does--it ends up affecting verbal performance on achievement tests; and I can see why it would. -- **Superintendent**

> The parents do want the schools to teach their children. They say, "Make them behave! Make them work!" But they don't seem to recognize the effect that they have as parents on their children's education--that usually, we can't do it without them. -- **Teacher**

> Mamas do want what's best for their children. Now, I hear teachers, occasionally, and certainly a lot of parents, say that parents don't care. I don't buy that. I never have, I never will. If I bought it, I'd resign. Parents do care about their children. But the kind of parent we're talking about just doesn't happen to agree with you and me on what is best for their child--but they want what's best. They don't have any reason to have the same values and aspirations that we have because whether we want to believe it or not, we're products of our experiences. There's no way around it. -- **Superintendent**

> Parents trust the school--they don't know what they want, but they trust the teachers to be a bridge to the outside world. The real problem is a deprivation. People don't feel connected with the rest of the world. There may not even be a book or a magazine in that household. -- **Teacher**

> . . . For many children, watching the teacher is like watching something in Spanish--it just has no connection with their world. -- **Teacher**

Often parents do not realize how much home life affects their children's success in school--a factor that teachers and administrators recognize day in and day out. Many children start school behind their peers because they lack basic experiences which their parents either are unable to provide or do not see as important. For instance, some children have not been to a library or had books read to them; they may not be familiar with pencils or crayons; they may not know their colors. School officials often point to attendance as a particular problem--parents often do not seem to realize the importance of coming to school every day. They may keep the child home to visit relatives or help with a yard sale. Frequent absences mean the child loses his or her connection to what is going on in class and eventually may drop out.

School personnel say they can go into a kindergarten or first grade class and predict which children will drop out. The factors that tip them off are largely determined at home and reflect the entanglement of economic opportunity and attitudes: lack of readiness for school, poor attendance, lack of parental involvement.

Superintendents and teachers link these indicators to poverty. Although they do not feel that poverty per se is a cause for failure in school--many poor rural Kentuckians have succeeded in school--they do believe that a cycle of welfare dependency in which parents see no need for education is at the root of many children's failures in school.

> The majority of them are from welfare families. In most cases are in homes with the mother only. Many of these kids that drop out--their parents haven't worked. If they have a place to stay, then they draw a check. -- **School Administrator**

> I teach in the southern part of the county, and we have lower income levels down there. Many of the parents did not finish high school or did not finish the eighth grade. Now some parents see the need for their children to go on through and they push them and encourage them in every way, but there's a

> large number of them, and many of these may be welfare recipients although it wouldn't necessarily go together, who do not see great importance that their children go on through school. They got through all right, and they just want to get on the draw. This is where the dropouts come from. -- **Teacher**

> In eastern Kentucky, a large number of our dropouts come from families that are economically deprived, socially deprived, and all the other kinds of deprivations that we can talk about, that we experience in eastern Kentucky. The bulk of our dropouts come from those areas. The kids on the upper end of the spectrum make it, because Mom and Dad push them. The home environment has more to do with it than anything. I think that if you want to deal with the dropout problem, that first you've got to deal with the socio-economic problem in eastern Kentucky. -- **Superintendent**

Nonetheless, we talked with some parents who had been dropouts and who had received welfare, and yet their children were in college:

> I quit high school and got married, but I got my GED. That's as far as I got. I guess that's the reason I was so excited about my daughter wanting to get an education. She made good grades you know and she always wanted to go to college. I said, "Well if you want to go to college, there's always a way." -- **Parent**

Another woman who was on welfare but participating in an incentive program described how proud her father was:

> My father <u>hates</u> the idea that I draw a welfare check, period. And when I decided to go to school, he would come and pick me up early in the morning, and he would have a smile on his face the whole time we was going. He's the quiet type; he doesn't talk a lot at all. He just smiles. And when he'd see me getting discouraged or something--'cause you do--he would say, "Oh, hang in there, honey. You can do it." He's real proud, he is. -- **Welfare Mother**

Poverty works against school success throughout the nation--only 50 percent of the 18-21 year olds below the poverty level finish school, compared to 77 percent above the poverty level. How much poor children are handicapped by the discouragement that comes with welfare dependency, and how much they are handicapped by plain lack of opportunity and resources, is a matter of national debate. What is clear is that poor children,

including those dependent on welfare, are less likely to see the point of an education and more likely to drop out.

> I've got one neighbor here. Seems like he is out of school more than he is in. I can see him going in the morning, and he's back by 12:00. . . . He comes over here and does work for me. He's a good worker. I talk to him a lot. He says, "I got work up here. I'm going to do for somebody." He feels like that might be more important--to make some money. . . . Maybe they don't look ahead. Their parents probably couldn't afford to send them to college. Do you know what I'm saying? They are more work-oriented. They know they've got to work to make money. -- **Parent**

Economic handicaps translate directly into educational handicaps. Reaching potential dropouts is both a more urgent task and a more formidable one than in places with largely educated middle class families.

Expectations at School

> These kids walk in the door and are categorized by 90 percent of the teachers. "This is so-and-so over there; his mommy and daddy never did amount to a hill of beans. They don't know how to read and they don't know how to write. There's no point in wasting my time on Johnny here because Johnny will never learn. Now this little group here, they're fairly clean and fairly well taken care of and their parents work for a living, you know, and have a little bit, so this bunch, well, we might could make a secretary or mechanic or anything of them." And then you've got these two or three and that's about the size of it here--that mommy and daddy has got an education, they've got a job, they live in the house on the hill, and they drive a car. "This youngster may be worth something. It might be worth my time to put a little effort in this child."

> Whatever a child has got on his back and no matter how ticky his hair is, no matter how nasty it is, no matter what hole it comes out of, it deserves the same chance as Sally sitting over here in a ruffled dress. -- **Parent**

I grew up in public housing, on welfare, the whole thing. I was a straight-A student. My guidance counselor said I should go into cosmetology. I was so mad, sometimes I think I went to college just to spite her. -- **Parent**

I think the attitude of the teacher--sometimes they think that they're too good to fool with some students and some think that if you didn't do so good the year before that they don't want to have you in their class the next year. -- **Student**

I had a home room teacher, and he would always get on me because I would wear a concert shirt and jeans--just cause I wasn't rich enough to go out and buy brand new clothes. He just stood up in class one day--in front of the whole class--and said that I was a bad influence on the whole school and he thought that I should dress properly. He criticized me in front of the whole class instead of taking me away--just me and him. He would just say in front of the whole class what he thought about me. -- **Student**

The teachers and the counselors are for the higher income student. They push them more. They look toward them as being a success. . . . Kids are divided into three income groups [in school]. Regardless of what anybody tells you--they are. If you are from a higher income group, you go to the better classes. If you're from the poor group, you go to remedial reading. And if they count you in the middle group, they'll ignore you, but place you in all the places they got left. -- **Parent**

From the first day [of student teaching], it was obvious how Mrs. [X] felt about different kids. If [one girl] didn't do well on a test, it was, "My goodness, let's look at this and see just what she isn't getting." With [another child], it was, "Oh, he just doesn't get this math."

It didn't have to do with income, so much--I think it was more what they wore. -- **College Student**

A couple of our teachers did a study on self-concept as it related to dropout rate and state performance and it showed a definite relationship. When I came here we had a procedure where we grouped everybody beginning in the first grade, and all you had to do was get a list of the parents and group the kids. That's not what happened, but it seems like that was what happened. Well, we changed that. We don't

group in the first grade. We need to give every student the opportunity to at least show his potential.

One of the things that had happened to us was that we were putting part of our kids in the low group and keeping them there for six years, and the expectations of our teachers became less and less. And of course, their own expectations of success had shown that--this study that these two teachers did--their self concept and their perception of their worth was very, very poor. It kind of perpetuated itself. It seems as if there is no particular constituency for this particular group.

It's like the poor will always be with you. We don't expect them to do anything. -- **Superintendent**

And then these children are taught, it may not even be spoken, but it's an attitude that permeates the system, that "You don't know anything, you're just a little dummy, you can't even read, and I don't have time to fool with you. I'll work with these that are not so much trouble." -- **Parent**

I think that the school board, the children in school, the teachers, and everybody else in eastern Kentucky right now are suffering from an image. Our children are told the day they get into school--not all of them, but the majority of these children--are told, "You're not smart enough to be doctors and lawyers and economic people, you know, bankers and all this type thing." Honey, you know, it's a feeling. This is the overall thing that these kids hear. "We are poor ignorant hillbilly kids," and, you know, "We're gonna teach you to be secretaries, and we're gonna try our very best to get you a factory job." And basically, our kids feel that this is all we're capable of. -- **Parent**

Until sixth grade I was classified on my clothes. Then I scored real high on a test and I was put in an advanced group. So I think they judge you on your clothes, really. -- **Student**

Teachers' attitudes have to change. In a rural area, when a youngster comes to school, and he's had older brothers or sisters, if they did well, then they expect him to do well. If they didn't do well, teachers have a tendency to say, "Well, the others weren't any account. They didn't do any good and he won't either." I'm not saying that critically. I'm

> saying that's a normal reaction, and I'm sure that it happens. -- **Superintendent**

> It's not being on welfare--it's being <u>treated</u> like you're on welfare. -- **Student**

Over and over we heard from low-income students and parents, both on and off welfare, that children who have nice clothes or particular last names are favored with attention. Many students with whom we spoke felt that lower income students are treated with less respect than others. Parents and students say that teachers communicate different career expectations for lower income children--that teachers hold up goals of being secretaries or hairdressers or working in factories, but never mention professions or management possibilities. Comments on "tracking by expectation" were much more common from parents than from school personnel. Nonetheless, several administrators acknowledged that when teachers are hard pressed, they may put more effort into those children where good results seem more likely and give up on the others. We heard this complaint more often in some counties than in others, and, in fact, in one area several families at the low end of the economic picture said their children were treated the same as others.

> There's people around here who are very poor, but with very intelligent kids. And they are treated just as equal as far as I can see. I've never seen any discrimination against any of them. I think they [teachers] go out of their way to help those. If they see there is a need, they will go out of their way to do something for that child. Make sure it has food. I've seen that happen. -- **Parent**

Several times we heard the claim that the favored students are "given" grades they have not earned or are disciplined less than others. It is our impression that generally teachers and administrators have little understanding of how deep the feeling that some are favored runs among those who feel left out.

> Basketball is your main giddup, you know. Basketball is <u>the</u> sport. Everybody practices during class time, and the ball players never did study anyway, still don't. So that really didn't make any problems either, you know, if you're a ball player, you get a good grade. -- **Parent**

Even among the better students, those who had finished high school or had gone on to college, and their parents, there was the feeling that they were lacking something in their education; that they had not been challenged sufficiently; that they were ill-prepared for competition with others across the state and from other states:

I felt left out because I felt that I wasn't ready to graduate. I think at my high school they were just more or less trying to get rid of you. I don't think I was ready to go. I lacked half a credit, and they let me go in gym to get that half credit and I didn't think that was what I needed. I thought I needed book credit. And so I know that a lot of my cousins--they just got out of there because they was too old to go any more. -- **Parent**

Now I know my sister went into the medical field, she's in medical technology, she'd had chemistry and all that in high school so when she went to college they thought she should be able to handle this certain class in chemistry. But they didn't realize that like the teacher we had, you didn't earn your grade. We did nothing in the class. So she had to go to summer school to make up, to be up with everybody else. I think a lot of kids had the same problem coming out of here. Although you had the courses in high school, but that didn't mean anything. It didn't help you when you got into college classes and tried to compete. -- **Parent**

My ninth grade year, I was on a sixth grade math level, I could read 170 words a minute, 60 percent comprehension. I was totally--I was in bad shape. I went to [a private school] which at the time was ranked one of the top schools in the nation. It was like third in the South of prep schools academically. For some weird reason I don't know how, I got in. I guess I showed aptitude on my test.

But at the end of my freshman year, I was reading, you know getting my specs there. My vocabulary increased 10 times. I was reading 750 words a minute, 100 percent comprehension. I was on an eleventh grade math level and then, still it was a struggle. People up here don't know until they get somewhere what type struggle you have. I absolutely struggled before I was a junior in high school to make the dean's list. -- **Businessman**

When I moved back here from Florida I was in the sixth grade. It seemed like the sixth grade was about the same as what I had in the fifth grade in Florida. It seemed like some of the teachers couldn't even spell good. I remember correcting them a lot and I was just in the sixth grade. But there was also some real good teachers there. -- **College Student**

When I went to college for my freshman year, I felt pretty dumb. In my literature-philosophy course, we had to write a three-page paper, typed. I was devastated. I don't remember writing a paper in high school. I didn't even know how to start. My roommate had gone to a small, private Catholic school and had been writing 10- to 20-page papers in high school, so she was a really big help. -- **College Student**

There's many a one in [X] County, right today that cannot write their name, cannot read one word. We have got so many children in [X] County that cannot read their name, can't recognize it if they see it on the paper. They can't write their names. Now, that's what kind of graduates that we got--that's went through high school and graduated--they can't read their name. -- **Parent**

The only way a child gets a good education here is they have to want it themselves. They have to do it on their own or their parents has to do it for them. If you leave a kid in the school system here, they'll graduate with an eighth or ninth grade education. . . . These children, they've got what it takes--some of these children do. They deserve so much more than what [X] County can give them. The achievers, they have done it without the help of anybody from [X] County. -- **Parent**

The Schools

We heard about many problems within school systems, from too much paperwork to poor maintenance to lack of guidance counselors. We have selected three areas many people identified as critical--communication with parents, the size of classes and schools, and teacher education.

Communication with Parents

[Where I came from] we had PTA meetings and the teachers all went to the PTA meetings--and most of the parents. Here, I went to the PTO meetings when our kids first started at [X] school, but I was so discouraged--23 people out of 8 grades, which would be 16 classrooms, at least 16 teachers. There were maybe three teachers there out of all of those--and the principal was always there--and a handful of parents.

Another thing that has frustrated me. I've always gone down and talked to our kids' teachers. The thing I never liked was there is no set time to go see a teacher. A lot of the other school systems I grew up in had a parent/teacher day. And a parent was given a certain time to come. And I think the parents and the teachers need to be acquainted with each other. We always had open house when I was growing up and we'd get all prepared, and our parents would come. That was the time for them to talk. When I've gone down to talk with the children's teacher, I had to go right during class time, and then I'd stand and talk to the teacher, "How's my child doing," and this and that. And the teacher would have to say, "Class, I told you to be quiet, I'm talking to Mrs. [X]." And you feel like you're depriving the kids of their school time. [Teachers won't stay after school.] The kids get in the bus about quarter to three. Most all of the teachers are gone before then. Just one or two teachers are left to put the kids on the buses. When I was growing up, teachers were always there after school for half an hour, straightening their desks, putting things up. And if a parent wanted to go and talk to a teacher, you always knew that teacher was still there--at least a half an hour after the kids were gone. -- **Parent**

If you send a note home to a parent, that parent is not going to come to school the next day, bring you that note and say, "I can't read this. I can't read." They're going to sit at home and ignore it. That teacher is going to tell you that the parent doesn't care. What that teacher doesn't know is that the parent may have cried because they can't read. And when you're like this [parent], you kind of get puffed up and you sit on your pride . . . . You have to take it out on somebody; you're mad. Your child is in trouble and needs help, and you have to get mad at somebody. -- **Parent**

With the dropout child, a lot of the contacts these parents receive is generally negative. The child has misbehaved in school; he has poor attendance. -- **School Administrator**

When I taught at [X] School, I had 27 kids, and I said [to the principal], "I need some extra people in here." He said, "You can't bring in parents. They tell tales out in the community, they will only criticize you, they'll get you in trouble with the school board, and they don't help any." -- **Teacher**

> He [the principal] won't let you have a PTO meeting: he won't let you have any kind of thing. . . . The parents at [X] school got together to form a PTO. They've got one everywhere except there. But everything is left up to the principal. If the principal says, "OK, you can," you can. If the principal says, "No," you can't. -- **Parent**

> I worked [over at the other school]--Mrs. [X] and I, we worked well together. She encouraged my help. But now, some teachers, as hard as it is to believe, some teachers do not want help. They would consider it interfering of a parent to come into their classroom. There might not be as much resentment if that parent did not have a child in that classroom, but, unfortunately, there are a few teachers who just don't want parents there. -- **Parent**

> You'd be surprised at the number of administrators that don't want PTA's. They don't want to answer to the parents. -- **Superintendent**

Parents often become frustrated when they contact the schools. Though the situation varies from district to district, there appear to be few mechanisms for communication. A number of parents who have themselves finished school, and who clearly value their children's education, complain that they must interrupt a class in order to speak with a teacher, because teachers in some systems do not stay after school or provide other times for parent meetings. Others are concerned when homework is sent home without instructions, making it impossible to help a child. Teachers commented that some parents are intimidated by schools and teachers. Above all, many parents feel unwelcome in schools. Parents find teachers and administrators in some schools threatened by complaints and sometimes even by suggestions. Even teachers say that some principals actively discourage parents from visiting the schools.

Big Schools, Small Children

> We're not a whole lot different from the stock yards, when it comes to--we herd all these children in here, put them in [X] County High School . . . . -- **Superintendent**

> Now one reason why some have dropped out is that we used to have a high school [at X] for years, and with consolidation we moved to [Y]. And some of the students do not want to go up there. They go for a little while and then they quit--but they would be the ones that are borderline, academically. The

attitude is: "I don't want to go up there," or "It's too big," or "I'll get lost," or "I just don't want to go up there, I want to stay at [X]." -- **Teacher**

I'll say one thing in defense of the big school that I have noticed: you can have a fight in one room and nobody knows about it in the other classes. It's just too big to keep up with. And a kid does feel like he has a fresh start. And we have more than two or three teachers teach the same subject, so if there's a conflict, that can be worked out. You don't have to stick with the same teacher all year. -- **Teacher**

At [X] County, one of the main problems with dropouts are drugs, because it's a larger school, than like [Y] City or [Z] or places like that, so there's going to be more drugs here. -- **Student**

In a small school you get to know them, and if you have them a couple years in a row, you get to know the child. I knew what to expect of a child and how to deal with them, whereas, you may see a child once in four years, or one semester maybe. He might just as well be a sardine in a can. -- **Teacher**

Probably the main reason this high school's hard on me is cause I come from a country school and the teachers and stuff were so close together, and if you needed help--boom!--you've got it. You'd get in there, and if it was after school, the teacher would stay with you till you got it down in your mind right. But at [X] County, you fend for yourself. "If you can get in the class, then you can do the work without asking any help for it." -- **Student**

This school's been consolidated [for a long time], and we still have it [kids refusing to go to a consolidated school]. That's not something I understand. . . . I recognize that it is a very real fact, whether I understand it or not. Many people have not bought into the concept of a high school education as being a worthwhile goal, for many reasons. . . . On the other hand, if you don't have a consolidated school, you cannot provide the programs that you must have to reach the kids, to prepare them. It's damned if you do and damned if you don't.

. . . I think you could build a good case, educationally, for constructing one-room schools. The problem is you cannot fund it. You go out and look what they spend per pupil in Kansas, where they have one-room schools, and they have good

> ones. Tell us we're going to fund something like that in Kentucky? We can't fund what we've got in consolidated schools. -- **Superintendent**

The consolidation of Kentucky's one- to four-room elementary schools and local high schools into larger, centralized schools is almost complete. Though the battles are over, the debate continues about whether the benefits of consolidation--money saved, course offerings increased--outweigh its problems in the form of long bus rides, less parent involvement in school, and, above all, some children's loss of a sense of belonging. Many parents still regret losing their community schools.

Class sizes, particularly in first through third grade, are another aspect of the size problem.

> In [X] school I've got 34 teachers and 560 kids. I've got about a 16.5 to 17 student-teacher ratio. Sounds real good, right? But if we look at the number of regular classroom teachers . . . it drops down to 19 and my ratio is nearly 30 to 1. -- **Superintendent**

> You know they put a limit on vocational classes; but in math, science, English, social studies classes there's no limit. So we take up the slack, and say we have an average class size of 34--they've got 15, we've got 40. I just know that you cannot teach in large quantities. I've got 48 in an analytical geometry class, 42 in advanced math. And those kids are aggressive children; they work you to death. Where a child is a slow learner, he probably is not aggressive enough, and so you give attention to the child that is demanding it, not meaning to. -- **Teacher**

> You can teach so much more if there is one teacher and 20 kids than you can one teacher and 30 kids. If there's one teacher and 30 kids, if the class is an hour long, you've really got two minutes per child on individual attention. If it's one to 20, it's three minutes per child. When you get down to thinking in terms of ratios, three minutes per child, that's not a whole lot of individualized English instruction. Thank goodness, you can do most of it in the broad scope. -- **Superintendent**

Many people commented that all children, the brighter as well as the slower, would benefit if classes in the early grades were limited to 12 to 15 children. This theme was presented not by educators alone, but by parents, students, business people, the educated, and the uneducated. Teachers were unanimous in espousing small classes as a solution to the dropout problem, asserting that remedial teachers would be needed less at all

levels if classes were small enough in the early grades. The current effort to lower maximum class sizes by one or two children is widely viewed as making little difference.

Teacher Education

> A lot of their graduate program comes out of [X] and [Y] Colleges--people going back for recertification and were trained there. One of the things I would like to see, as a board member, talking to some of our administrators, is these programs beefed up a little bit--a little more bite to them. Some of them teachers coming through these programs are a little weak. When you see people coming [long distances] to get this one professor at [X] school, that should tell you something--you don't have to do anything to get the grade. -- **School Board Member**

> Teacher education is pretty poor. I think teacher education is terrible. You can buy a degree from [X] college--pay your tuition, and you show up, and you get a degree. On the graduate level it's worse. I took a graduate course from [X]--an off-campus course--and I had harder classes in junior high school. And he said in class the first day: "If you come every time, you get an A, if you come most of the time, you get a B. I don't give anybody a C unless you don't show up at all." I had a friend who took a two-week course at [X] and got three hours of credit--you went every day--and he announced at the beginning of class, "You don't need to take notes, because we aren't having any tests." -- **Teacher**

> It is my understanding that if you pay your fees, you get the grade. The masters degree in Kentucky has been bastardized because the regulations require every teacher to have an advanced degree. The rank system in Kentucky is just its own invention. Tenure in some states is based on experience and on degree, masters degree, specialist degree, or doctorate degree.

> I think the system allows a teacher to get by with the minimum effort, and it perpetuates itself. Expectations of what they will do are passed along to their students.

> One of the things that that did was that it diluted the system so much that every college, even the small colleges, and the private colleges, offer teacher degrees. That situation doesn't prevail in all

> states. If you're competing against everyone in the state for masters degrees in education [at one or two universities in the state], you're going to have to perform at a higher level than if you're just competing against people from eastern Kentucky or from one or two counties. -- **School Administrator**

No one in the Fifth District seems happy with Kentucky's teacher education programs. Some superintendents criticize particular colleges. Others are concerned that linking a masters degree to salary leads to reducing the quality of masters programs. Elementary teachers complain of not getting a strong enough liberal arts background and having to take graduate level education courses which they find of little use.

Politics

For decades people have pointed to local politics as an obstacle to development in isolated rural areas with little economic diversity. The Fifth District is no exception.

> My problem is the school board in this county. . . . Education is not their problem. Their problem is keeping the people's jobs, appointing people to jobs. -- **Parent**

> Sure, there's politics and any time you're dealing with anything governmental, you're going to have politics because that's the nature of the beast. The question is how intense is the politics that you have. In [X] system, it's sort of a gentlemen's politics, but boy, out here in [Y] district, it's gladiators out there going at it.

> Right now we're going through a period where those who are out are realigning their forces, and they're setting the battle plans for the next campaign to become the ins. You know, we're caught in this vicious cycle--that's all there is to it. Every two years, it's turmoil. It makes [the teachers] paranoid. We have not had any direct complaints from the teachers, because, of course, the teachers are afraid they will lose their jobs--so they don't want to talk about it that much. But you don't have to have a Ph.D. in psychology or political science or anything else to sit back and see that the administration, the change in the political wind has an impact on the way your professionals perform. They don't know from one administration to the next where the priorities

lie, what the goals are of the administration, or anything else. -- **Businessman**

Your school boards are not supposed to act arbitrarily. They are supposed to take and make decisions that would be higher when it comes to school. In other words, if a concrete pillar would do and marble is available, when it comes to education, because of what it represents, you should get marble. That is how sacred a school board is [supposed] to act. Yet these people don't act that way. They are in the remodeling business. -- **Businessman**

Well, I think that in [X] County, [Y] County, [Z] County, any of them, the biggest problem you get into with the school board is the fact that they control more jobs and more people and more people's lives than any other thing in the county. They have the employees, and anytime that you have that type of situation, especially in a low economic area, you have a beautiful setup for bribery, corruption, and political power plays. And this is what happens in eastern Kentucky. -- **Parent**

Yeah, [there's] no communication. They hear all these rumors. Like, "If you go to the school board meeting, they'll fail your kids." That has nothing to do with it, but they think that. "If you go to the county judge, where the judge and the magistrates meet, and stand up and voice an opinion, they will send somebody over." What it goes back to is there used to be the county judge and the sheriff. If you stood out in the community--and this was up until about 1974, the county judge executive didn't have to have a law degree or anything--and if you went against him, you went to jail. Simple as that. So that's the attitude they have now. You know, "I'm not going to stand up to him or I'll go to jail." We're oppressed people. [We're] not used to being otherwise. -- **Businessman**

There's 180 superintendents in the state of Kentucky and 180 approaches to it. -- **Superintendent**

In some counties everyone--both inside and outside the school system--blamed politics for the education problems. When we asked about politics in other places, a common first response was, "You find politics everywhere." But we actually found that there are several different varieties of school "politics" in the District, and that some do far more damage to school systems than others. First, there is ordinary "knowing somebody" politics: A person on good terms with the superintendent can put in a

good word for a job candidate; other things being equal, this candidate will get the job. Generally the superintendent maintains that only well-qualified people are hired, but the people who do not get the jobs may complain that they lost out because of "politics!"

> When I came to [X] County, I think that the school board was basically involved in education for the wrong purpose--that was, their own personal gains, gains for their friends, for them personally. And we've had some changes since I've been here--some changes in the board. . . . They still make suggestions [on hiring] that I don't like. And sometimes when I ask them what's their purpose in this, their comments are, "Well, they call me at home; they bother me. So if you can help so and so, we'd appreciate it." I don't think any superintendent's free from that. But it's a whole lot better than "You will do this." -- **Superintendent**

> Politics is a term used by people that are unhappy. If we have one job, I've got 50 applicants. And 49 of those people will say it's politics determining who gets that job. -- **Superintendent**

In other systems, politics appears to consist mainly of "local chauvinism." Outsiders are rarely hired, especially for principalships and other administrative posts. People told us capable teachers from outside the area who aspire to become principals or administrators may leave when they see the situation, and consequently the quality of administration may suffer.

> All the principals contribute a percentage of their salaries to a campaign fund for the school board. -- **Teacher**

> Even when you have a good superintendent come in from outside, he gets embroiled in the board politics. Pretty soon he can't spend time on education even if he wants to. -- **Teacher**

> Perhaps even the superintendent isn't free to implement exactly how he feels because maybe it's the ties he'd had or the things he's gone through getting his job. I really would love to see an outsider at some point. . . a person apply for the job of superintendent who has no commitments with the county. We had some very quite capable men who are definitely capable of being superintendent, and as far as qualifications, they could do just fantastic jobs. But I often wonder, with the ties and all that's involved--I couldn't survive that either. -- **Teacher**

Then, there is a most damaging form of "politics" which forces education into the back seat while vested interests exercising power drive the system. The predominant factor guiding many decisions is control of spoils. There may be a powerful superintendent or group which has been the only power for decades, or there may be a long-standing division between alternating factions within a county. In either case, those out of power lose out in every conceivable way--businesses do not get contracts, teachers are moved around when they do not want to be, incompetent people are kept on, and money is wasted on top-heavy administration. When the power does shift, people and plans tied to the other side are shelved no matter what their merit.

> We had a superintendent that was really powerful. At one time, he ruled the county school system. So if a teacher wanted a job or wanted to keep a job, he had the final word. They made our future or broke it. It wasn't the quality that the teacher taught, it was who they knew. -- **Parent**

> . . . I've got a board member from [X] County, and he can't believe the difference between [X] County and [this] County. He thinks politics is very, very prevalent in [X] County. He said in [X] County when you have a change of administration and a change of board, there aren't any classified people that have had experience . . . . We looked at our figures; we've got 33 bus drivers and over half of them were here before I came. . . . What he's saying is [that in X County] they'll have limited experience because they change. -- **Superintendent**

> It's been too much politics in it--sort of like state government. When a new group comes in, they change. They change superintendents, they change principals, and teachers are switched here and there. It affects the overall program drastically. Anytime you make changes purely for political reasons, you're certainly not--it's not a policy thing. You may end up with a better teacher here and there, but not likely. -- **Businessman**

> . . . I don't know what the tenured teachers are afraid of. All the one-room schools are gone--they would have killed to keep from being sent to a one-room school. But still they act scared. -- **Teacher**

> They [school board members] keep people so upset and so excited about who is going to sweep the floors and scrub the toilets that they don't have time to worry about what's happening to the money. -- **Parent**

At bottom, to the extent that politics holds the reins in a school system, decisions are made according to noneducational criteria. The caliber of teachers and administrators may suffer because they are drawn from a smaller pool. Voters become jaded and suspect the motives of anyone who runs for a school board seat. Teacher morale is damaged and educational quality suffers directly. We found a direct correlation between destructive school politics and poor-quality schools.[11] All eight of the systems in which people told us politics was a major obstacle to education were in the poor-quality category. Some systems in the poor category were not heavily political, but all of the systems in the good-quality category were those which did not appear to have political problems.

Over and over we found that people believe that the kind of politics which prevails in their county is inevitable.

> Well, it's like a big wheel. It's started up, and how do you take a big wheel apart when everybody's in the same clique? You've got two cliques, a clique that wins and a clique that doesn't win. -- **Businessman**

> We have a system right here in this county that cannot be fought. We've tried. We have tried. There's too much money and too much power where they are at. And you just can't win. -- **Parent**

> If everybody wanted to make a change, me or you, we could do it. But if our neighbor don't care, or if the guy that's the magistrate in the next district doesn't care, what do you do? If we had more people that were optimistic, and I hate to say this, but maybe even better educated. . . . Maybe it goes back to that. That I just don't think that I can make the difference. Or maybe I just don't think that I want to make the difference. Maybe it's an excuse. I certainly want better schools for my kids. -- **Businessman**

Nonetheless, some counties in the District have, by all accounts, reduced the effect of politics on their schools. Their success indicates that the most harmful abuses can be overcome. By and large, counties which have succeeded have more diversified economic bases than those where politics still have a stranglehold. Town-based independent districts appear to be less political than county systems, and some people speculated it is because people have a greater diversity of occupations and may not be as closely tied to the family structure or to these sections of a

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[11] See page 7 for explanation of quality ranking.

county which vote in blocks, providing the basis for consolidating political power.

Funding

Not surprisingly, the counties with the highest quality educational systems are those in which local funding comprises a high proportion of the school budget. Places that have more property tax are generally more prosperous, have fewer of the low-income students who are more likely to have problems in school, and operate in a context that is more supportive of education. In other words, poorer places have a more difficult row to hoe and less to spend on hoes. Funding problems and inequitable access to educational materials and opportunities are part of the larger socio-economic handicap these poor districts face.

> Well, I hate to say, money, money, money, money, but very seriously, I can sum it up this way. . . . The most frustrating task I have is to start with a budget and work towards a program, instead of starting with a program and working toward a budget. To me it's going at it in reverse, because we are limited in so many things by budgetary constraints. That's all there is to it. I mean, you've just got so many dollars, and we can't do like General Motors can do. I mean we can't raise the price of automobiles without subjecting it to voter approval. And it really is a frustrating experience when you are trying. I think that records will bear out that we're getting good mileage for our dollars spent when we're significantly higher academically than we are in financial means. But it gets harder and harder every year. Because the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.
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> . . . Take textbooks for high school students. Our high school textbooks this year are going to cost us in excess of $30,000. We're only going to collect about $10,000 from student fees. The rest are nonpayment. Now you take a place like Fort Thomas, they collected all of theirs. So, for the reasons that this group of people that we talked about that goes around, not consciously, but with their hand out for everything, that don't feel any obligation to pay for a textbook. That's something that the great white father's supposed to provide and they don't seem to realize who the great white father is. -- **Superintendent**
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> I do not think that education has the support that it needs to have from just the common Joe on the street. That's demonstrated by a reluctance of school boards

to attempt to approve increased taxes, and it's demonstrated by the common Joe's negative reaction any time increased taxation is mentioned. I don't see people attending their school board meetings for the right reasons. They attend to gripe and to see whose head's going to hit the floor this week. There's a tremendous amount of apathy among the general population. [Even parents with kids in school] will not go to a school board meeting and express concern for the broader picture. They will not support an increase in the tax rate. They will not tell the board we're with you or such and such. There is not a groundswell of support for education and, quite frankly, that's what we need. -- **Businessman**

The battle that you find, of course, if you're in any eastern Kentucky district, is having enough funds to support those kinds of programs. So many times, you're so financially strapped for money to pay salaries and what not, that . . . anytime you start looking at [things like] the Commonwealth Diploma where you have to have extra English classes, extra math classes, extra science classes and advanced-type programs, it becomes expensive and you have to try to work around things in order to offer these.

. . . It [our tax rate] is 15 cents [per $100 valuation], but we'll have to up it--whenever it's a requirement, we'll have to do it. You see, it's very easy to pass a tax levy that says, you know, you don't have any choice. You've got to do it. It's like setting the speed limit at 55, if it's set there by the powers-that-be, and nobody really can influence those powers, then. . . .

Our 15 cents generates roughly $100,000. When you think about that, that doesn't pay our electric bill. So that's why I say if [X] County taxes at 30 cents, we would raise $225,000. What does $225,000 do? Sure, it's a lot of money. But in relationship to our total budget of $5 million, what can it do? It doesn't do anything. [X] County barely generates enough by its taxes to buy its buses. It doesn't generate enough to pay its gasoline bill or its electric bill. -- **Superintendent**

I think they're going to have to make a commitment. If they want a good system, the state is going to have to put some money in it. We have a Minimum Foundation Program and that's exactly what it is--minimum, period. Some communities can afford more and they do.

> . . . Some counties receive less per child and it's just unfair. If we had the money, you could buy a curriculum that would match anywhere and you could employ the teachers that you need--not only in numbers, but in qualifications.
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> . . . We're at 15.4 [cents per $100 valuation] right now. But if there was a law saying it had to be at 25, that's what it would be. There would be very little said about it. And that's good. That sounds like you're passing the buck somewhere else . . . but with what played in the extraordinary session of 1979--House Bill 44 . . . they dropped all means of keeping up. Millions of dollars--whatever--was lost by them. Whatever they're talking about reform this summer was lost by them, by that one move that no one seemed to object to at that time . . . . -- **Superintendent**
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> One thing I can't understand is why don't more of the coal severance tax money come back into [X] County and help education and everything. It seems to me that's not fair for them to strip the county of its minerals and rights and everything, and then say that we only get a little share of the money. I think each county should get its own severance tax. . . . . I wouldn't care if we paid more if it helped education. -- **Businessman**
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> That's how you do things in the mountains. You have to go out begging for the money if you want anything for the school system. -- **Businessman**
>
> I think you get what you pay for. I believe the state pays a lot less for education in this area than they do in the rest of the state. -- **Businessman**

Local revenues supply a smaller percentage of school-system budgets in the Fifth District than in the rest of Kentucky. This is partly due to the lower tax base and partly due to lower tax rates. The low tax base means that tax increases do not bring in as much money as they do elsewhere. For instance, a tax hike of 5 cents per $100 valuation would raise $102 per student in Fayette County. In the average Fifth District county, the same increase would raise only $32 per student. The average Fifth District system would have to raise the tax rate more than three times as much as Fayette County to provide the same benefit to students. McCreary County, with the lowest valuation, would have to raise taxes seven times as much to raise the same amount of money.

Local officials are generally reluctant to risk the wrath of the voters over a tax increase, but Fifth District school systems can justly point out that a tax hike would not bring in much additional revenue. However, voters' anger was much reduced, or at least directed elsewhere, by the 1984 legislative mandate to raise the minimum tax levy to 15 cents per $100 or lose state "power equalization" funds. And officials expect the same reaction to the 1985 legislative requirement that local districts levy a tax rate (property tax, occupational tax, or utility tax) sufficient to generate 25 cents of revenue for every $100 valuation. As long as the additional taxes are due to somebody else's actions, superintendents and school boards are happy to have more local money to spend, however little it is. They welcomed this particular state requirement.

PART III: SOLUTIONS

Introduction

In our interviews, we asked people for their ideas about ways to solve the education problems they were describing: low expectations at home and in school; problems within the schools; and politics and funding, where community traditions harm the schools. We were looking for ideas with enough local support to harness local energy.[12] The overriding message--within and outside the district--is that we do not lack ideas. What we need is focused and dedicated community effort.

Since the Fifth District's education problems, particularly the issues of politics and low expectations for children, are tied so directly to the area's economy, effective responses will depend upon involving the whole community, not school professionals alone. Change in these areas has come directly out of concerted community action in the past, and the people we interviewed saw that action as the key to the future. Over and over school personnel and business people emphasized that it would take action, not studies, to change things.

Initiatives suggested for children who are potential dropouts would also benefit other children. Many people believe that singling out children at risk would separate low-income children from others. They strongly prefer programs that keep children of all backgrounds and a wide range of abilities together, feeling

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[12]Most of the initiatives described below come from the interviews. In a few cases, where a problem was identified in the interviews but no solution was offered, we present relevant ideas from other places. In some cases, the initiatives proposed in the interviews have actually been carried out by one or more school systems; in other cases, they are untested.

that all children benefit from such mixing. This concern is stronger in the elementary grades. Therefore, we suggest, with any of the following proposals, that the short-run efficiency of targeting programs to the neediest children be balanced against the benefit to all the children and the wider community of designing programs in which everyone can participate.

Cooperative learning techniques, where children of different abilities work together and teachers promote and use this kind of learning, are one way to capitalize on differing student ability levels. Both high- and low-achievers benefit, while the pitfalls of ability grouping are avoided.[13]

The proposals that follow fall into three broad categories: strengthening the school-home relationship; improving the learning situation within the school; and strengthening the school-community relationship.

School-Home Relationship

Although diminished expectations for children are a product of the Fifth District's poor economy, schools and parents can still aim high. Since the area's current economy does not promise a good future, schools and parents need to make special efforts to think about the best possible future for the children, and then communicate these possibilities to the children. Along the way, parents and schools can change specific things they do now--or do not do--that hold children back.

Involving Parents in Education

> If we are going to have an impact on more than just the kids in school, but those yet to come, then we've got to have an impact on the parents. And that's why I say we've got to have a lot of communication between the home and the schools--just a lot. -- **Superintendent**

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[13] "Research on ability grouping shows that it often results in widening gaps in academic performance between high and low achievers, stigmatization of lows, loss of self-esteem and motivation for lows, and a restriction of friendship choices for cultural minorities. . . . Teachers' expectations can be reflected in grouping decisions, and grouping often reinforces such expectations. . . . Traditional ability grouping thus must be judged maladaptive, not adaptive, if the goal is to maximize each student's opportunity to reach the same common goal." Lynn Corno and Richard E. Snow, "Adapting Teaching to Differences Among Learners," in Handbook of Research on Teaching, Third edition, ed. Merlin C. Whittreak (New York: MacMillan, 1986), p. 613.

> At our school, the PTO had a project of sending home a flyer once a month on some topic or other. Some of them were on positive ways to discipline children. Parents used to say how much they appreciated them. -- **Teacher**

> Whenever I could get hold of one of those parents, I told them to subscribe to the newspaper, or Sports Illustrated, or anything, and to read along with their child. It always made an enormous difference. -- **Teacher**

> I know one woman, with three little boys, ages three, four, and five. She teaches them at home. She learns them their letters, the days of the week, how to write their names---all sorts of things. They're smart little boys. People should learn their children at home like that, you know, but most people don't think of it. -- **Grandmother**

> You know, years ago--I don't think this ever happens anymore, but it used to be--in the smaller school districts, that teachers, at the beginning of school year, would one way or another meet the parents of students, whether it was visits to their home or--I mean, they just didn't give up on that--that was really seen as important. Of course, you have to have fairly small class sizes, because if you have 40 students, that's twice the work you have if you've got 20 students in a class. . . . If you could do that in the early years, then at least you'd have some real awareness of what that child was dealing with [at home] and some more effort to hook the parent into seeing themself as a parent in the educational process. -- **Businesswoman**

School officials recognize how important a child's home is to his or her success in school. They also recognize how important it is for schools to work early with children who have learning difficulties. Early successes in school and parental involvement in the schools can go far in helping to keep children in school later on. Therefore, many school officials propose that schools begin working directly with parents while their children are in the first three grades.

A program to involve parents more in their children's education could take many forms. Interested teachers could receive extra pay to make home visits, either after school or during part of the summer, explaining the curriculum and specific ways that parents can help their children learn. In some cases, perhaps, home visits could be made by trained paraprofessionals or guidance counselors. Parents need to feel comfortable about being involved in their children's education and school work. If what school

officials see as apathy is actually parents feeling intimidated, unimportant, and unable to help, then special efforts to reach them may pay off. Small groups of parents with children in the same classroom could meet with the teacher occasionally, at the school, in homes, churches, or community centers. Even a pre-packaged series of flyers, sent home with children on a periodic basis, has been effective. Many curriculum packages include a sample letter to parents explaining the curriculum and how parents can help at home. These could be used more widely, or teachers could write their own letters. Good ideas could even be printed on grocery bags, modeled after the recent "Child Find" program for identifying handicapped children.

Any of these mechanisms could be used to show parents concrete ways in which they can help their children succeed in school. The importance of reading at home, discussing everyday events and TV shows with children, and pointing out when the parents and others are using math skills--all these could be stressed. Any parent can be shown useful ways to help with homework. All this would demonstrate to parents that they have a major role to play in their children's learning, and help stem feelings of powerlessness about their children's future. Involving parents should also lead to better attendance and better communication with the school when problems develop.

Field trips for parents to area vocational schools and colleges could expand their expectations for their children and show how many options their children can have if they finish high school. Trips could be arranged for parents of young elementary school children, as well as those approaching graduation. Accessible literacy, GED, and other adult education classes would provide parents the opportunity not only to set a good example but also to invest in education themselves. Those Head Start programs in which parents are upstairs getting GEDs and learning first hand how to work with their children at home have had the greatest success with the children. This suggests that similar programs in the lower grades of public school also would have good results.

Opening Avenues for Parent Concern

> Whatever it takes to involve them--if it's bringing them in for a meal--making more positive contacts with them. But we're talking personnel. Someone that has the time to go out and say, "Look, here's a school activity that involves all the children, we need some help on it. Would you be willing to come into the school and spend two hours--blowing up balloons, doing whatever?" -- **School Administrator**

We have wondered why it wouldn't be possible to develop a cadre of parents who were willing to donate a few hours a week to tutor, or act as teachers' aides, to help with some of the extra-curricular activities. Parents could help with some of those things. And if you had really enough involvement in the community, and had community support, you might be able to get an extended lunch hour, or leave at four in the afternoon--even some time off from work [to help in the schools]--that's not totally out of the realm of possibility.

To the extent that parents are actively asked to participate, I guess these fundraising efforts (PTO events) have some merit aside from the money they raise--just by actively seeking the help of parents to get them there. And once you get them in the door, you might be able to do a little bit more. -- **Businesswoman**

I brought some parents in and it was wonderful. And the next year, other teachers started bringing parents in, and now there are several teachers who ask every year for parent volunteers, and get parents in the school. And it's been--although it's been very informal and there hasn't been enough of it done--it's helped. -- **Teacher**

Last year, that school didn't even have a PTA until I went up there about my child and they said I needed a tutor. And I told that principal, "What we need is for parents to get together and talk about these things." Now this year they have one. -- **Parent**

I think Mr. [X] did a good job when he was principal at [X] school. He had a PTO meeting and explained the California Basic Skills scoring, and explained what they take and look at and what they do to try to help improve scores for the next grade. And I've really appreciated that. -- **Parent**

And I think that the teachers are going to have to turn the key loose. And the administrators and everybody, and let go and let the parents come in and help out. The parents are going to have to help the school system if we're going to get it off the ground. -- **Parent**

It's very difficult for me sitting here to put the children first in every decision that I have to make because I'm so far removed from it. But I have Advisory Committees now that advise me on things that we need to do, and I also am a great supporter of parent/teacher association groups. I have these influential

> parents who have children in school, and they serve on the advisory committees. If something's wrong, the school building's dirty, or the English teacher is not doing a very good job, or they think that the math scores will go down at the east, west, north or south because the math teacher has missed too many days, they come and tell me. Then I can consult with the principal to find out what's going on. They visited our schools and made a report to the Board of Education about a year ago. -- **Superintendent**

Even when parents are not intimidated by schools, they often feel there is no avenue for communicating their concerns. For some parents, involvement in a Parent-Teacher Organization is a way of keeping in touch and participating in improving their children's education. Traditional open houses and parent-teacher conferences are appreciated by some parents, and, where they are not held, schools might consider starting them. Where PTOs are not active, it may be important to inquire into the reason. In some cases we heard complaints that principals discourage them entirely. Other times people said principals prefer that PTOs maintain a limited role, generally fundraising for special equipment.

School systems could provide a variety of avenues for parent involvement in schools. Different parents feel comfortable in different situations, and different parents are concerned about different issues. For a parent concerned about curriculum, for instance, there are several avenues. An open-curriculum revision process can be designed with opportunities for parents and others to participate in workshops, perhaps serving on the committee making recommendations. Some districts make textbooks under consideration for adoption available to the public and encourage comments before making a decision. Parents might be challenged to help fill in gaps they perceive in the curriculum, rather than be told that there is no money or no time.

Inside the Schools

Most changes suggested for the schools themselves actually involve strengthening the schools' ties to the larger world. Whether the subject is field trips, teacher expectations, or dropout-prevention programs, the common thread is opening up the world for students in the Fifth District.

A Broader Vision

> My dream for the children of this county, no matter what their economic background, would be that via

> the education system . . . they could have a social experience, a cultural experience equivalent to what a mainstream American child experiences. -- **Guidance Counselor**

> It impressed me when Alex Haley came throughout some of the eastern Kentucky counties, and I would want to strongly suspect that that had a significant impact on some of the students in those schools. And if any project were undertaken, money should be put into efforts such as that--to bring the Alex Haleys, bring in some of the success stories from the mountains, let them talk to these kids. -- **Businessman**

> The difference is what we lack in cultural things. You know, you've got to take them to see a Walt Disney show, you know, a production, or whatever. Or the circus comes through, and a few things, but that's the one thing I think our schools are really lacking, more music, glee clubs and art. They do not have enough funds for that. -- **Parent**

> The visit from Alex Haley made a difference. Stephenson made an impression. Every kid in [X] County high school--you say, "You know who the president of Berea College is?" They say, "Oh, yeah, he came to see us." Ask who's the president of [Y]---it makes a difference. --**Guidance Counselor**

> The teacher of the gifted and talented kids had a storyteller come in who was a native Appalachian. Andreena Belcher grew up in Floyd County. Andreena did a lot of work in the elementary school. She took a lot of the folk culture and taught them that it's okay. If we could do more of this sort of thing at the elementary level, where, okay, we're just like people around the world. We have the same stories in our background, we have a dialect, poverty. That's true everywhere. -- **Guidance Counselor**

There are many ways to broaden children's view of the world and their own possibilities within it. Field trips, both with classes and as part of extracurricular activities, were often cited as ways to open up a world beyond the county--a world that many children would never see otherwise. Several people mentioned that the promise of a senior trip was a tangible incentive to stay in school. Artists in the schools, as well as other visitors and speakers who serve both as role models and as personable bridges to the worlds of architecture, geography, science, industry, and theater, can open up new possibilities and give children an incentive to learn.

Young children can learn to see college as an option. Area colleges could select hometown students to speak with classes in the middle grades of elementary school about their experience in college--why they decided to attend and how it is going. We often heard that children do not know about ways to attend college even if they are poor. It is important to make clear that with loans, summer jobs, and persistence (to say nothing of Berea College and Alice Lloyd offering free tuition), money need not be a barrier to attending college. Colleges could encourage schools to bring elementary school children to campus to see theater productions, planetarium shows, and other special events. This would combine a field trip with an opportunity to make children feel comfortable on a college campus. On such visits, professors and students could talk briefly about their work in ways that would interest youngsters.

Teachers praised the Upward Bound Program offered at Berea College to prepare promising students for college. This program directly widens opportunities for young people, both sharpening their academic skills and expanding their expectations for themselves. This model could be extended to reach more children.

Teachers see art, music, and other programs that go beyond the "3 R's" as important ways to improve self-esteem as well as open new possibilities for children. Often, being part of a chorus, dance group, club, or sports team gives a child a feeling of belonging and confidence while also offering an opportunity for trips and other special events. Sometimes participation in extracurricular activities, or even elective courses, is limited to students who are making good grades. More special groups could be aimed at young people who are not attracted to existing clubs, on subjects such as motorbike repair or first aid competition.

Sustaining Teacher Creativity and Commitment

> . . . and if we could change the attitude of teachers and cause them to demand more--to attempt to help more--this is the key to it. That and the attitude of the parent. So we feel like we've got three groups of people that have to have an attitude change: the parent, the teacher, and the student. I don't know how we are going to develop incentives for teachers' attitudes to change, but we have to. -- **Superintendent**

> We ruled out any monetary incentive to pay a person more. I don't think anybody's expecting that. But if I were a classroom teacher and I wanted to make a field trip--there's just so much money for field trips--but if I could request funds for a trip to something in Lexington or Louisville, or even here in our county.

And if you can give a teacher some recognition--teachers don't receive enough recognition. We have a tendency, if everything is going well--we don't go around and say, "Well, you're doing a good job!" Most of the time, if you're doing a good job, why, we don't say anything about it. -- **Superintendent**

I would bring in teachers and ask them "What do you want? How can we help you? What should the objectives for this building be? How can we meet them?" After involving teachers and administrators, then I would go to the community: "These are our goals. What do you want?" -- **College Administrator**

We have teachers who just get along with kids, period, that would volunteer to say, "Yes, I want these dropouts." But I think teachers are going through a fearful thing right now that if their kids aren't the top kids, they aren't good teachers. I think we need to say to teachers, whether you teach the dropouts or you teach the advanced kids, you are important to us. . . . -- **Teacher**

Maybe if you wanted someone to really do something with the dropout problem, I think there ought to be an incentive there. "You are a good teacher, that's the reason we'd like you to be in it." [The stigma of teaching slow students] ought to be changed. And I think that's education, as much as anything, among teachers and among administrators.

I think there ought to be more recognition. The principal could say, "I think it's great that you kept all 12 of those kids in class today--that they have not been to the office." Pats on the back or just compliments once in a while, or constructive criticism or suggestions made constructively, without putting you on the defensive automatically, and being fearful, would go a long way. -- **Teacher**

If I had a class--if y'all were in my classroom, I'd treat you all equally and if I seen you was a problem--see they spend all their time with those that already know it--and you that didn't know it, I'd try to spend more time with you.

> [If I were a teacher] I just wouldn't have no "picks" in my classroom. I'd try to give all y'all equal time; and the knowledge I had, I'd try to pass it on to all of y'all. I wouldn't keep no certain groups to give it to and then the others I wouldn't care about. I'd care. -- **Recent Dropout**

> Look at the difference in K from the little girl that come here. She's a different child. She had been taught that, "You're a failure, there's no need for you to try." In another year or two, she'd probably have been in reform school. She had such an attitude about herself. "I can't do nothing. I'm a failure, nobody cares about me. They wouldn't care no matter what I did." Now she makes a hundred on just about every spelling test, and I ask her, "K, you can do this, I see you can do this. Why didn't you do this before?" She said, "I don't know. I guess I just didn't care. I didn't study, and I just guess I didn't care." Now she does, because she gets rewards, but she also gets demerits for things that are done wrong, but she's praised, and she's built up, and she laughs and is just as full of life now. She cares about her appearance. -- **Parent and Teacher's Aide**

> If they have 10 children in the first grade that don't learn to read, somebody should be responsible for that. Somebody needs to know why. -- **Parent**

> What would I say to administrators? Respect the teachers! Listen to the teachers! -- **Teacher**

Even as changes in American society are presenting schools across the country with more poor children, much is being learned about teaching such children successfully. Research shows that schools in which poor children learn share a number of characteristics: they have strong leadership from the principal; high expectations for students; an orderly, quiet, and pleasant atmosphere; and strong emphasis on reading skills with frequent evaluation of pupil progress.[14] Parents and the wider community can make it known that they want their schools to work for all children.

In the Fifth District, we found substantial agreement that schools' expectations of students should be higher and that teachers are powerful in setting expectations as well as in teaching subject matter. Despite the repeated criticism we heard of schools having low expectations for children, our meetings with teachers

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[14]Ronald R. Edmonds, Social Policy, "Some Schools Work and More Can," March/April, 1979.

convinced us that many are energetic and committed to teaching all children, whatever their background. Parents recognize and value this energy and commitment. One low-income family described how much their little boy benefited from his teacher:

> We had heard a lot about that teacher. She was excellent. We made sure our boy got in her class. We don't want a teacher that will let him just go. We want him to learn. He surprised me. He couldn't read, really, when he went to the first grade. In no time at all, he was in here reading books for us. He can do his math and everything else. That's why I keep telling him he's going to be a doctor or a lawyer. -- **Parents**

And several adults remembered the difference that one special teacher had made:

> I had a third grade school teacher that was a very good school teacher. She was dedicated. She was intelligent enough to know what was going on in a child's life at the third grade level. I kind of look back on her and I get a good feeling. I get a smile knowing that someone directed me at that time. -- **Parent**

Establishing conditions in which teachers' own development can flourish will help teachers turn the commitment they already feel into the reality of high achievement for all their students. Teachers in particular emphasized the need for good leadership from principals, because they set the tone for a school. But parents and business leaders made the same point: strong school leadership and accountability are widely viewed as critically important.

In order to stay committed and creative, teachers need opportunities to keep on learning and to follow through on their ideas. Special summer programs would be welcome. Berea College and other institutions offer such enrichment now, and school leadership could promote attendance among their teachers. Several teachers expressed interest in taking more liberal arts courses, commenting that in teaching elementary school, they draw on everything they've ever learned. A chance to observe in other schools was suggested. It is important that teachers themselves be able to decide on how to continue learning. They emphasized that they need more opportunity, not more requirements.

Some schools set up honorary teacher fellowships. Outstanding dedicated teachers are recommended by their peers and chosen by a committee of administrators for this award. They receive several thousand dollars to spend on an enrichment activity--going to a poetry seminar, returning to school, traveling--any

sabbatical activity for the summer which gives them the opportunity to grow in their discipline.

Both school administrators and teachers said that teachers would respond to opportunities to follow through on their ideas. Budgets are so tight that money for special materials or field trips is often unavailable. Many said that just having the opportunity and resources to carry out an idea is an incentive for continued teacher creativity.

Teachers are integral to any movement for change in schools. Community educational movements can be an important vehicle for keeping teachers committed and excited about their work. As much as anyone else, teachers need to see that their efforts and thoughts make a difference and have an effect. A teacher responded to one of MACED's group interviews:

> I wish to thank you for the opportunity to communicate with fellow educators and to actually have my opinions listened to. One would probably be very surprised at how seldom that occurs. In fact, I would be safe in saying that in the 10 years I have been teaching this was the first time that questions were asked and responses appreciated and recorded for possible future use. -- **Teacher**

By taking leadership in school improvement efforts, teachers can have an effect beyond their classrooms. School systems can encourage teacher involvement by allowing them time to attend meetings and paying travel expenses, as is done now for administrators.

Smaller Classes

> I think that lots of times we would do more if, instead of taking those teachers for remediation and pulling children out of the classroom and placing them in remediation, we would do more for the student as a whole to take the total student body, divide by the number of teachers we've got and have each teacher with 16 kids in the classroom. Because if you've got 15 or 16 kids in the classroom, you're going to be able to do much more than you are if you've got 28 or 30. -- **Superintendent**

> There is nothing that improves education like a small pupil/teacher ratio. I would like a teacher for every 12 on all levels. I may have them in large groups for a lecture [at the high school], but I want them in groups of 12 to do their written work.

> One thing I detest in federal programs everywhere is they pull them out so they are never in a regular classroom. They miss their regular class work. If you took all the remedial teachers in a school and you did away with everything except what--hearing impairment or speech therapy, maybe--and you divided the number of teachers into the number of students and gave them all classrooms and cut down the students, you would see the school progressively change. You'd see happier kids, you would see students more comfortable with being at school. It's rough to be in the third grade and be in a class of 30 kids.
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> If I were in an elementary school and I had 15 kids a day, and I hadn't any other funds, I could come up with programming. If I had an interest in science, I could have all kinds of science projects from homemade things. . . . I don't care if they were all--in fact, I would rather have different levels. The reason you want them on the same level, if you've got large classes, you want them more on the same level, so you do the grouping, so then you can move them in masses. But I'm not sure I wouldn't rather have my son in classes where he's seeing all kinds of kids, even one in special ed. In the long run, over 12 years, he would have a broader, stronger experience. -- **Guidance Counselor**

Achieving significantly smaller classes, in the range of 12 to 15 students in the first three grades, is a major funding issue. If all the teachers now assigned to remediation and other special classes were assigned to classrooms, some counties would have enough teachers to attain a ratio of 1 to 15 today. However, even in these counties, there would not be enough classrooms to house the smaller classes. Since the expense is so great, state--and probably federal--action would be needed. However, a demonstration project in the Fifth District may be possible in the meantime. Such an initiative would represent a bold, progressive approach to the difficulties of teaching in a low-income area.

Other schools have addressed the problem of schools so large that students lose identity by establishing "schools-within-a-school." A school of several thousand students can be broken down into half a dozen multi-grade, mixed-ability groups with a few hundred students each. Students and teachers spend most of their day in classes composed only of their group, but highly specialized courses are offered to students from all groups, so that the benefits of a larger school are realized. Specific attention is placed on developing an identity and esprit-de-corps within each group.

I contend that a basic nonreader: give him something that he is really interested in and he'll find out what it says. . . . I say if we could--during the middle school--identify these kids and give them a different program. First of all, try to identify an area of interest or aptitude--whatever it might be--then, when you teach them math, relate it to that. You can still teach them the basic math--only relate it to that. When you teach them English, teach them communication skills. . . . And I think you can tie those basic skills to that interest and make it meaningful. -- **Superintendent**

We've got 30 of them going to finish this year. [We're paying them] a hundred dollars. They're sophomores, juniors, and seniors. May 24th we're going to hand them a hundred dollars, if they finish the school year. It's just a one-year grant.

If I had the money, I would establish an alternative school, in cooperation with [X] school district. And I would make it [separate from the regular campus]. I'd put it right in town. I'm really not opposed to radical ideas to keep kids in school. [For instance,] Johnny, if he has to come every day, he's just not going to make it. He just can't stand five days of school. Why don't you make his week three days--make it individualized. . . . Billy may do better in school if it were a three-hour day or break his day up. Some kids can't handle six hours a day. Billy may do better if he went to English, math, and science, and then you let him go to the pool room for an hour. I know that sounds foolish--I can handle it. I could design it and handle it. -- **Superintendent**

The teachers [here] pay more attention to you and help you with your work. They make you feel like a special person. They treat you as a friend and they don't jump on you and they ask you and they try to understand what your problem is. They don't make a fool out of you in front of everyone. They don't base their grades on how well they like us or anything. If we don't do our work, we don't get the grade. And if we don't work, we [get expelled]. -- **Student at Alternative School**

> I do group work on self-concept, that's the thing I think is most important. And I feel like this is the key to our success with dropouts. -- **Guidance Counselor**

> We try to do two things--work on self-concept and try to give them recognition of the value of education. The self-concept, we do that with counseling and with the Director of Pupil Personnel. We have also purchased the "I can" program for 7th and 8th grades. -- **Superintendent**

> A bunch of us got together and started a Teenagers Against Drinking and Driving . . . . It has helped a lot of people. Maybe if some of us students--if the teachers and counselors could get together--maybe some of these kids that's dropping out won't be dropping out cause it'll give them something to look forward . . . . Cause other students know what the other students are going through. -- **Student**

Many people pointed out that if schools are going to prevent dropouts, they need to offer programs in which students can be successful and feel good about themselves. National studies and program evaluations make the same point. By the time they are 16 years old, dropouts tend to feel out of place in school, both academically and socially. Sometimes they are in classes with younger students because they have failed one or more grades. Other times they feel "different" and isolated, often attributing this to not having the "right" clothes or to being "country." They are rarely doing well scholastically. They are not involved in sports or other extracurricular activities. They almost always feel that the teachers don't like them. School is "not for them."

Whatever the reasons, dropout prevention programs at the high school level help students for whom the traditional high school is not working. Almost every school district we visited either had established a dropout program or had applied for funds to do so. Most educators we interviewed espoused dropout programs centered around counseling and tutoring. Some use a buddy system: a potential dropout is paired with an older student (sometimes a student who had dropped out and returned, but more often an honor student) or with a teacher. The "buddy" or "pal" tutors, encourages, and shepherds the troubled student in an effort to enhance his or her self-image, improve attendance, and reduce discipline problems.

Many felt that an alternative school was the ideal solution for potential dropouts at the high school level. Only one district we visited had established one, and it has not been in operation long enough to assess its success. But it was evident that students liked it and were developing a better attitude toward school--

as long as they could remain in the alternative school, they were eager to stay. Again, national studies suggest these efforts can be effective, and there are many sources of guidance about features to stress and to avoid.

Rewards for perfect attendance were common and many times instituted or augmented by local businesses which contributed prizes or money for prizes. Aside from these attendance awards, which were for all grade levels, only two districts had dropout programs aimed at the elementary level. One used a buddy system, and another had a counselor make home visits to involve the parents in encouraging their children to come to school. However, every educator we interviewed felt that the elementary level was where programs could be most effective.

Nationwide, studies show that successful high school dropout prevention programs have a "real-world" orientation. Work experience is an integral part, frequently involving closer relationships with business and industry than normally occurs in more general work-study programs.[15] Successful dropout prevention programs teach students specific rather than general vocational skills--heating and air conditioner installation and maintenance, for instance, rather than an introduction to industrial arts. We heard several people praise Kentucky's participation in "distributive education"--a program which emphasized specific job skills and experiences in service industries. Programs like these have potential for high risk students who have not found their niche in the school world.

Wider Community Involvement

Community and Business Involvement

> Any time anybody that's important to the community walks through that door and goes to a classroom and shares his time and/or interest, whether it's from the vocational community or a parent with a slide show of another country, any person who shares his time and talents with our students has made a difference. -- **Guidance Counselor**

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[15]"Research Findings on Dropouts," National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210, a paper developed for the Conference on State Legislative Strategies to Prevent School Dropouts, sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, San Francisco, CA, March 7-8, 1986.

> The Chamber of Commerce needs to do a county-wide recognition of graduates, just to show recognition of those who succeed. Because that's elementary, that's basic . . . Now one person [company] will put it on the billboard, two or three days later somebody else'll put it up. You know, "Congratulations, Graduates!" But it needs to be a multilateral effort and the newspaper, all the media, need to pick up on it. I tell you something else that's not--every year there are a certain number of teachers that retire. I think all they do for them in the county is pass a proclamation of thanks for their years of service. They don't even have a small tea, give them a cup of tea or two cookies. I'm hoping there's a change and we'll pick up on that and do that. . . . -- **Businessman**

> I think that it's a long-term process and if the students--if there are career days when businessmen, bank presidents come in and say, "Hey, if you're going to borrow money to buy a car," and you know 16 year olds, getting their license and driving is their profession, if a bank president will go in and say, "Hey, those of you that drop out have less likelihood of making it in this world and, therefore, you're not a good loan risk--you better think seriously about it." Now that's not done, to my knowledge. -- **Businessman**

Children living in a community that values education, and where the school is part of life, cannot fail to notice. Parents, neighbors, and community organizations can participate in school activities--clean-ups, PTO fundraisers, art displays. Churches could throw their weight behind widespread educational improvement. Clergy can preach on the importance of developing minds, and churches can distribute books to children in Sunday School or in Christmas baskets. Schools can promote community interest by opening special assembly programs to the larger community, sponsoring evening entertainment events both by students and by professionals, and encouraging community organizations to use school facilities for sports, meetings, and entertainment events. Many schools have had great successes sponsoring "Grandparents' Day," where grandparents come to school with their grandchildren. Newspapers could feature a student and a teacher on the front page each week, focusing sometimes on students who do not often get positive attention for their achievements as well as those who do. Improved grades and hard work could be rewarded in addition to academic excellence. Communities can create a climate in which everything conveys to children the importance of developing their minds.

> Quite frankly, most of our industries require a high school education--almost all of them. They won't talk to anybody that hasn't completed high school.

Every employee from this area--we have to validate that they are high school graduates. In our GED programs right now, in our adult education programs, we've got some people 40, 50 years old trying to get their diploma so they can go assume a job. They already know how to weld, and how to paint, but they are not welcome without completing that. Our industries here, basically, are demanding high school graduates, and I'd say that has a lot to do with the drop out rate, too--that you can't run out here and get a job after quitting as a freshman. -- **Superintendent**

This year, for the first time, we have hired sports correspondents--high school students who come in and help us write, report, and take photos of sporting events. It has been our experience this year, this one time, on the news side, anyway, it's been a very favorable experience. The students have done quite well. And last week, one of our sports high school students--one of our stringers--won a national award for his photograph. So while I'm sitting back here, saying that I think the schools are in worse condition today than they were 20 years ago, our direct experience with them says that these kids are capable of writing; they are capable of taking a good photo; they are capable of handling the technical aspects of it, and what-have-you. -- **Newspaper Editor**

I would have something in this county where he would know that there'd be [something here for him]. . . . If you had something like that where they could go to work and know that they are going to be able to go to work, and see that. You see, a child needs to grow with that opportunity around him, where nobody has to tell him--he knows it--it's part of his heritage that he's going to go to work. Then I think that there might be a difference. -- **Guidance Counselor**

If you're sitting 20 miles away from school and you're drawing unemployment and on food stamps and you got four kids, you can't afford to go for six months down to a vocational school. It's just too expensive, you know, getting back and forth. And if it's something that there's not a future for . . . you know, you go and offer a fellow that and say to him, "Now, here's a school you can go to, but we don't know if you can get a job or not." You know, you've got his attention just long enough to tell him that. But if you go up to him and tell him that, "Here's a school that has a demand for graduates that could place you, or something," I'd say you could get his attention. You could get anybody's attention with that. -- **Parent**

Business leaders have to start demanding that the people they hire are better educated. It's got to work hand-in-hand. -- **Businessman**

Toyota's announcement about requiring a diploma made a big difference. They need to hear about the importance of a diploma from "real" people, not just teachers. -- **Teacher**

If passing were tied to a summer job? My students would do anything for a summer job. -- **Teacher**

Not everybody needs a college education. . . . [A vocational school in our county] would give us the ability to let these kids go away with a marketable skill. Every county around us has a vocational extension center. In this county, a kid is expected to go to another county. We have very limited participation, so what they say to us when we start hollering that we want a vocational school is that you don't have anybody interested. You see they [our students] have to give up two periods a day to travel. They don't like that bus ride down there and back everyday. They have to leave their high school, and if there's a pep rally that afternoon, they miss it. Or if there is something going on at their school, they miss it. . > . So we are writing a grant application--we're combining community partnership, what-have-you--we've already talked to the hospital, and, if we get the grant, we're going to expand into the health services area. These kids will go up to the hospital--that will be their lab and they will have a classroom up there and they will actually work in the hospital in health related fields. . . .

We've been in communication with Ashland Oil to secure [an old Ashland station]--Ashland's very active in support of education and we have high hopes that we will open up some combination of auto mechanics and auto body shop that will be on that site and in that building. We'd like to do the same thing in carpentry and related fields also. -- **Superintendent**

Back when we had a lot of employees--we had 150 employees at one time--sometimes people would come in here to apply for a job, and the secretary would read the application, and they would give the answers and she'd write them in because they couldn't read and write, and I still let them do this, too, 'cause I didn't want them to feel rejected. But I would never hire anybody like that. I just put an X on the

> application and file it away, because I figure if they can't read a warning sign, then they would just not be safe in our jobs, probably couldn't watch out for the safety of those working around them either. -- **Businessman**

In the Fifth District, everyone recognizes the need for businesses to actively support the schools in their communities. Businesses frequently make contributions to school fundraising events, and some are directly involved in vocational education programs. But much more is possible.

More businesses could go out of their way to provide summer jobs. Professionals could offer internships where a high school student helps a doctor or a lawyer, or sees what being a pharmacist, veterinarian or social worker would be like. Many people suggested that more students would be motivated to finish high school if local employers (including the school board!) let it be known that they would not hire anyone without a high school diploma. Employers could also encourage current employees to make progress toward a diploma or GED. Employers could contract with the school system to teach classes at the business, both for basic education and to upgrade the skills of employees who do have degrees. In thousands of small and large ways, communities and economies work better if people are educated. This is true even when people can "get by" in their jobs without an education.

> I feel about it a lot different than I probably can convey it, but I see the coal business as not a very good thing to get into to. If I had went on to college and had a trade, I would have probably been more at ease with my life style. Right now I don't have that sense of stability. I mean I'm 36 years old, and I don't have that sense of stability, because there's not stability in it. I don't know whether it's making any sense or not, but it's a very unstable life right now. You don't really know, you just got to live one day at a time. But you want a future and you want a future for your kids. -- **Parent**

Many people believe that selling education through advertising and other media emphasis would be successful. UK basketball stars and other celebrities could urge students to stay in school. Kentucky business leaders and KET might sponsor some flashy advertisements--even attract national figures to appear and emphasize that education is "in."

> I sometimes think if you could have a massive campaign to change that attitude, directed at parents. Television would be a key. So many of them can't read. But almost every family has a television. And I think the less they read, the more they keep it on. I think

some sort of Public Service Announcement. I think those Ashland public service announcements about the importance of high school were very, very good. But we need something that becomes almost a subliminal message--frequent, different messages that it is important and why it is important. I think probably the most prosaic approach is that it is important if you want to make money and to survive. . . . When you think of the cost of production of those, it would almost have to be done on a statewide basis, or something which could then be used on a variety of stations. And there would have to be spots available on network television. -- **Businesswoman**

We got a kid, a basketball star, to do a tape for us, "Hey, if you're thinking about dropping out, you better think about it long and hard. Be a winner, stay in school," that type of thing. And we did something with that. Whether it had any impact, I don't know. -- **Businessman**

Politics

You would have to put a board in there that controls and that are unable to get a personal gain out of it. And they would have to separate the hiring and the firing. Maybe an administrator in the school that would be responsible for that school. If you've got five board members sitting there, and everyone of them wants a brother's girl and their nephews and stuff working, and they put them to work, then the administrator of the school has to deal with them. . . . The only thing the school board should do is appoint an administrator for that school. Some means of keeping the integrity. You've just got some deadbeats up there that keep their job simply by the fact of their connections with the school board. -- **Parent**

It's going to happen when the people want it to happen. I have a perception that the people in this county stand back and let a lot of things happen in their school system that they don't have to let happen--one of those things is this malicious, vicious type of politics that we are seeing invade and permeate the school district. That happened because the people let it happen and it will not end until the people want it to end and until they hold their public officials accountable and hold them accountable in a reasonable and authoritative sort of way to make sure that these folks don't behave as they are behaving now. -- **Businessman**

> The public won't have it [the way it was before]. They were tired of it. They were sick of it three or four years before I came here. They were sick of it 10 years before I came here. They couldn't pass a tax. They couldn't build school buildings. They couldn't house their curriculum. They could not accomplish anything in the school district except in-fighting. They were sick of it long before I came. I just happened to come at the right time. It was time for a change--the people wanted it. You can ease politics out of your school system by putting the children first. -- **Superintendent**

In the Fifth District, we heard a number of ideas about how to take politics out of the schools, many resembling ideas that are being promoted throughout the state: appointing rather than electing school boards, making school board members at-large rather than from districts, not permitting superintendents to serve in the counties where they grew up, or establishing a civil service system for nonteaching employees. Time and time again people pointed out that an improved economy would dilute the power of school boards as a large employer. But many felt that the most direct solution was to build community commitment for good education.

Conclusion

The overwhelming message we heard during our interviews is that people are ready now for a change. Whether the issue is helping children find their place in a big world, helping parents help their children learn, or working with teenagers who can't read, our interviews showed that there are people throughout the Fifth District with ideas and energy for tackling the problem. The central issue for citizens concerned about education is how best to harness this energy and allow the people with good ideas to put their ideas to work.

Return migrants who believe in education and are dedicated to their home place are ready to play a role in building better education for a new economy.

> More of us who are native to the area have come home--especially those of us on the teaching staff--and we say, "You are OK, you are as smart as anybody else; it's OK to be an Appalachian. You're different, but you're not any less smart than anybody else. . . . From age 38 on down there is a more positive philosophy among the educational staff--especially those of us who are native and who have come home. -- **Guidance Counselor**

> Well, I see a lot of people just like myself, who left this county 20, 30 to 40 years ago, so that they could feed their family, and now are retired and can come back to the county. They know what's out in the big world, and it helps.
>
> Yeah, I can see some hope. But I don't think it's fair to those kids, in the meantime, for us to sit back and say, "OK, it's going to be fine 10 years from now." We still have a lot of kids coming down the road that's going to be affected by the system today. -- **Businessman**

People told us that opportunities are brighter for those who want to succeed:

> Now if you want to go to Alice Lloyd, you don't have to pay anything. If you want to go to Berea, you don't have to pay anything. If you want to be educated, and you are from eastern Kentucky, you could be educated. But if you don't, you know, the thing that, "I don't have the money to get educated," that is out. Now there's just too many things for eastern Kentucky kids. You know, you can't say that you want to go to Harvard or whatever. But you can go to Alice Lloyd which is a fine school. Berea is known now as the Harvard of the South and a fine institution which makes us proud. -- **Businessman**

And even within the most troubled areas, new leadership, new expectations, and new attitudes are emerging:

> Our school board is improving, mainly because the attitude of the people is changing. They demand better education. They now realize that education is important for getting jobs--even for farming. We had this town meeting because we were concerned over the direction of the county--the lack of our county's ability to attract industry. So we got together a group and began talking and discussing the problem and the direction we were going. We gave everybody a piece of paper and had them list 10 areas of concern. Then we went into 10 groups to discuss and narrow the ideas. Those 10 groups came up with 10 ideas, and we ended up with education on top. -- **Businessman**
>
> I see the potential for changing the old-time politics. The baby boomers are becoming your new leadership--the old leadership is breaking. I see a new vigor for the survival of the mountains in this new leadership--they will make a difference. These are mainly the

> people, like myself, who went away, got educated, and came back. They have a broader vision.
>
> We now have three newly elected officials who are of a more progressive nature. I'm not saying they're not political, just that their brand of politics is more responsible--and they have the support of their peers. But we're still churning. We're not fully emerged. -- **Businessman**

These Fifth District residents know that change must come from within the District:

> If we want change, the change has to come from within. If the people here in the mountains, in the Fifth District, don't want change, they're not going to have change. It's that simple. We've got to want to change ourselves. . . . The problem rests not so much with what they are doing in Frankfort, but with what the attitude back home is. If your county judge executive doesn't support whatever, if your school superintendents don't support whatever, if your school board members don't, if your fiscal courts don't, if your mayors and city councils don't--if your local grassroots elected public officials don't support these things, how in the world can we expect our elected officials in Frankfort to support them? If you had every county judge executive in Kentucky standing on the front lawn of the mansion in the morning telling Martha Layne that they wanted such and so done, don't you think that Martha would do such and so? I would. -- **Businessman**

Some suggested that the way to build a new economic and educational climate in the District is to form an organization with that purpose. Our interviews make clear that an organization devoted to education and economic development in the Fifth District could make a tangible contribution to improving education. There was virtual unanimity among superintendents, teachers, parents, and business leaders on where the problems lay. People are ready to work on improvements, and in many cases already are. Common ground exists. But often neither the agreement nor the energy is visible day-to-day.

A Fifth District development and education organization could provide a forum in which solutions are developed to problems which may have sounded quite different when stated by various parties locally. It could build bridges between the schools and hard-to-reach families and communities. It could raise funds and help organize local efforts to carry out many of the proposals put forward here. It could give legitimacy and muscle to those who want momentum for educational change.

An organization with the explicit goal of improving the opportunities for both education and economic development in the Fifth District could involve teachers, administrators, parents, and citizens in numerous ways:

* Award small grants to teachers and administrators for efforts such as those discussed in this section.

* Organize a "hire high school graduates" movement among businesses.

* Help districts explore ways of encouraging parent involvement in the schools.

* Establish a "speaker's bureau" of people willing to meet with classes of children to talk about what they do on their jobs and how they use their education.

* Organize prestigious and challenging internships for students of widely differing interests.

* Promote summer jobs in businesses.

* Coordinate editorials and news articles on particular subjects, such as the importance of the family in education, the value of small classrooms, or higher education opportunities.

* Recognize outstanding teachers, students, and administrators across the Fifth District.

* Get presidents of the area's colleges together to brainstorm ways their institutions could reach out to young children and families.

* Assist in establishing local educational improvement groups.

An organization which carried out programs such as these within the Fifth District would be in a position to work on the larger educational issues as well, such as funding for smaller class sizes and improved teacher training programs. People in the Fifth District recognize how much economic opportunities are entwined with educational standing, and many are ready to break the cycle. The existence of a District-wide development and education group would be a message in itself about the willingness and readiness of Fifth District to move ahead.

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APPENDIX 1

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Table 1. Kentucky School Systems by Congressional District

	Kentucky	First District	Second District	Third District	Fourth District	Fifth District	Sixth District	Seventh District
ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS, 1980								
Population	3,660,777	525,844	520,634	522,252	523,090	523,664	519,009	526,284
Per Capita Income	$5,978	$5,999	$5,574	$6,655	$7,482	$4,470	$6,539	$5,134
Labor Force as Percent of Persons Aged 16 Years and Over	57	56	61	62	62	49	63	48
Employed Persons Aged 16 and Over as Percent of All Persons Aged 16 and Over	51	48	50	56	58	43	59	42
Percent of Population Aged 18 to 54	50	49	51	51	51	47	54	49
Percent of Population Aged 55 and Over	20	14	18	22	19	21	19	19
Percent of Population Disabled	11	11	10	10	8	16	9	16
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 1980								
Percent of Persons Aged 18 to 24 With High School Degree	63	67	68	73	65	55	69	60
Percent Adults With High School Degree	53	53	54	60	63	38	61	42
Percent Adults With Less Than 5 Years of School	8	6	7	3	4	12	5	11
Percent of Adults Who Have Attended Some College	22	19	20	26	48	14	31	15

Appendix 1 continued.

	Kentucky	First District	Second District	Third District	Fourth District	**Fifth District**	Sixth District	Seventh District
SCHOOLS								
Assessment per Pupil, 1984	$89,264	$96,768	$95,864	$217,258	$106,647	**$64,082**	$107,475	$71,913
Percent Children Economically Deprived, 1984	36	28	35	22	27	**46**	31	46
Local Financial Effort, 1984	604	402	457	925	639	**313**	465	392
Percent Local Funding, 1984	23	17	19	55	26	**10**	21	14
Percent State Funding, 1984	66	72	70	41	66	**73**	69	71
Percent Federal Funding, 1984	11	12	11	5	8	**17**	11	15
Expenses per Pupil, 1984	$1,880	$1,800	$1,813	$3,085	$1,949	**$1,620**	$1,864	$1,708
Instruction per Pupil, 1984	$1,342	$1,301	$1,310	$2,164	$1,434	**$1,176**	$1,357	$1,225
Dropout Rate, Grades 7 through 12, 1985	4.4	3.9	3.8	4.0	4.2	**5.1**	4.0	5.0
Percent 9th Graders Graduating, 1984	66	73	74	57	71	**62**	69	66
Percent Graduates Going to College, 1984	44	41	41	52	44	**40**	42	44
Test Scores, 1985	56	58	58	68	57	**54**	57	54
Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Reading, 1985	81	82	83	89	85	**77**	83	75

Appendix 1 continued.

	Kentucky	First District	Second District	Third District	Fourth District	**Fifth District**	Sixth District	Seventh District
Percent 7th Graders Mastering Reading, 1985	73	76	76	86	76	**66**	73	69
Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Math, 1985	88	91	90	96	91	**85**	92	84
Percent 7th Graders Mastering Math, 1985	88	90	90	93	91	**84**	87	86

Table 2. Fifth District School Systems, 1984

	Good (N=9)	Average (N=18)	Poor (N=11)
Assessed Property Per Pupil	$75,400	$69,200	$46,500
Percent Children Economically Deprived	38	47	63
Chapter 1 Funds*	$195,300	$323,300	$590,300
Local Financial Effort	423	315	220
Expenses Per ADA	$1,700	$1,600	$1,600
Instruction Per Pupil	$1,300	$1,200	$1,200
Materials Per Pupil	$32	$29	$27
Administration Per Pupil	$69	$72	$56
Transportation as Percent of All Expenditures	5	6	7

*Data for 1985-1986.

Appendix 1 continued.

Table 3. Comparisons of Economic and Quality Indicators, Fourth and Fifth Districts, and Kentucky

	Fifth District	Fourth District	Kentucky
Assessment per Pupil, 1984	$64,082	$106,647	$89,264
Percent Children Economically Deprived, 1984	46	26	37
Local Financial Effort, 1984	313	639	435
Instruction per Pupil, 1984	$1,176	$1,434	$1,297
Dropout Rate, Grades 7 through 12, 1985	5	4	4
Percent 9th Graders Graduating, 1984	62	71	68
Percent Graduates Going to College, 1984	40	44	42
Test Scores, 1985	54	57	56
Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Reading, 1985	77	85	81
Percent 7th Graders Mastering Reading, 1985	66	76	72
Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Math, 1985	85	91	88
Percent 7th Graders Mastering Math, 1985	84	91	88

Table 4. Economic and Demographic Characteristics And Educational Attainment in Fifth Distict Counties, 1980

County	Population	Per Capita Income	Labor Force as % of Persons 16 & Over	Employed Persons as % of Persons 16 & Over	Percent Population 18-54	Percent Population 55 & Over	Percent Population Disabled	Persons Aged 18-24 With High School Degree	Percent Adults With High School Degree	Percent Adults With Less Than 5 Years of School	Percent Adults Who Have Attended College
Adair	15,233	$4,482	54	50	74	26	1	64	35	10	8
Bell	34,330	$4,573	88	36	79	21	3	52	36	16	7
Casey	14,818	$3,375	48	44	75	25	4	49	33	12	7
Clay	22,752	$3,481	41	34	83	17	4	43	28	20	6
Clinton	9,321	$3,330	50	45	75	25	5	60	31	13	6
Cumberland	7,289	$4,177	54	49	72	28	5	48	29	18	7
Estill	14,495	$4,440	47	42	79	21	4	61	38	12	7
Garrard	10,853	$4,965	57	52	76	24	2	60	45	8	9
Green	11,043	$4,636	55	51	73	27	3	59	36	12	15
Harlan	41,889	$4,952	43	39	80	20	2	55	38	13	7
Jackson	11,996	$3,560	42	34	78	22	4	45	25	17	5
Jessamine	26,146	$5,806	64	60	85	15	1	77	60	5	15
Knox	30,239	$3,988	43	37	79	21	3	50	36	13	7
Laurel	38,982	$4,807	51	47	80	20	2	56	43	7	8
Lee	7,754	$4,004	39	33	77	23	2	53	35	13	7
Leslie	14,882	$4,055	37	32	85	15	3	47	31	15	6
Letcher	30,867	$4,546	41	36	81	19	3	48	38	11	7
Lincoln	19,053	$4,431	52	47	77	23	2	51	37	9	6
McCreary	15,634	$3,246	42	32	82	18	1	35	39	14	5
Metcalfe	9,484	$4,752	55	50	74	26	2	55	33	14	6
Monroe	12,353	$4,243	54	49	75	25	2	63	32	15	6
Owsley	5,709	$2,946	36	29	77	23	1	51	29	14	7
Pulaski	45,803	$5,064	52	47	76	24	2	61	45	8	9
Rockcastle	13,973	$3,889	46	41	78	22	2	55	34	13	6
Russell	13,708	$4,350	50	43	74	26	2	61	37	9	8
Taylor	21,178	$5,456	62	57	78	22	1	72	44	7	18
Wayne	17,022	$3,670	48	41	78	22	2	44	40	17	6
Whitley	33,396	$4,673	48	41	79	21	1	58	41	10	9
KY	3,660,777	5,978	57	51	50	50	11	63	53	8	22

Table 5. Characteristics of Fifth District School Systems

County	Assessed Property Value per Pupil 1984	Percent Children Economically Deprived 1983-84	Local Financial Effort 1983-84	Percent Local Funding 1983-84	Percent State Funding 1983-84	Percent Federal Funding 1983-84	Chapter 1 Funds 1985-86	Expenses per Pupil 1983-84	Materials per Pupil 1983-84	Administration Expenditures Per Pupil 1984-85	Transportation as Percent of All Expenditures 1984-85	Instruction per Pupil 1984
Adair	$76,538	43.5	167	6.5	77.2	16.3	$332,557	$1,536	$21	$41	8.0	$1,159
Bell	$42,941	60.5	298	6.3	72.0	21.7	$744,050	$1,516	$17	$29	7.0	$1,097
Middlesboro Ind	$60,121	45.5	434	12.5	71.5	16.0	$288,726	$1,710	$22	$72	4.0	$1,300
Pineville Ind	$75,332	48.6	617	20.0	64.4	15.6	$111,179	$1,823	$34	$123	2.0	$1,413
Casey	$70,461	54.3	156	5.6	74.4	20.0	$476,449	$1,476	$33	$47	7.0	$1,089
Clay	$35,192	64.5	242	4.1	73.6	22.3	1,059,193	$1,581	$26	$41	9.0	$1,144
Clinton	$52,494	72.1	149	3.3	75.2	21.5	$324,696	$1,785	$23	$117	7.0	$1,245
Cumberland	$74,294	59.8	144	4.9	76.7	18.4	$146,773	$1,726	$21	$81	8.0	$1,229
Estill	$54,062	42.8	226	6.1	77.2	16.7	$394,079	$1,613	$28	$41	5.0	$1,206
Garrard	$115,886	30.8	329	17.5	69.1	13.4	$169,184	$1,730	$25	$57	7.0	$1,269
Green	$80,822	32.4	351	13.3	75.3	11.4	$201,653	$1,650	$22	$60	10.0	$1,149
Harlan	$57,817	55.5	233	7.1	70.0	22.9	$969,887	$1,530	$20	$42	6.0	$1,104
Harlan Ind	$45,451	41.4	671	15.1	72.9	12.0	$142,624	$1,777	$51	$94	1.0	$1,352
Jackson	$38,258	66.9	170	2.9	72.0	25.1	$408,775	$1,657	$40	$50	8.0	$1,158
Jessamine	$107,224	22.9	419	22.1	70.4	7.5	$296,670	$1,553	$32	$47	6.0	$1,127
Knox	$41,328	68.8	189	3.7	73.7	22.6	1,093,546	$1,567	$29	$29	9.0	$1,088
Barbourville Ind	$107,867	48.2	388	20.3	64.8	14.9	$75,018	$1,619	$17	$125	1.0	$1,250
Laurel	$70,034	45.6	200	7.4	76.7	15.9	$772,910	$1,487	$27	$30	8.0	$1,053
E Bernstadt Ind	$31,926	51.6	326	5.6	83.5	10.9	$13,880	$1,524	$45	$124	4.0	$1,088
Lee	$49,213	62.0	370	8.2	72.3	19.5	$271,036	$1,643	$50	$61	7.0	$1,165
Leslie	$55,815	53.9	179	5.2	73.4	21.4	$538,312	$1,587	$22	$42	11.0	$1,024
Lincoln	$69,010	45.0	310	10.2	72.4	17.4	$465,853	$1,577	$17	$39	8.0	$1,135
McCreary	$28,745	74.0	254	3.5	74.8	21.7	$676,052	$1,553	$32	$57	6.0	$1,154
Metcalfe	$71,095	56.4	204	6.7	73.7	19.6	$205,413	$1,610	$21	$45	8.0	$1,149
Monroe	$63,573	53.7	384	10.7	68.9	20.4	$288,467	$1,648	$28	$61	6.0	$1,194
Owsley	$44,111	78.8	204	3.6	66.2	30.2	$274,112	$1,760	$28	$76	5.0	$1,176
Pulaski	$92,006	38.9	201	9.8	77.0	13.2	$681,179	$1,509	$28	$33	11.0	$1,134
Science Hill Ind	$59,983	34.1	607	20.7	72.6	6.7	$19,823	$1,384	$32	$266	2.0	$850
Somerset Ind	$94,875	31.5	648	23.3	66.0	10.7	$193,450	$2,274	$62	$65	1.0	$1,774
Rockcastle	$56,362	56.9	144	4.2	77.2	18.6	$407,408	$1,573	$24	$37	8.0	$1,135
Russell	$67,397	44.1	101	3.3	75.5	21.2	$385,876	$1,609	$38	$59	6.0	$1,183
Taylor	$83,953	21.8	217	9.3	81.0	9.7	$191,126	$1,595	$22	$53	8.0	$1,183
Campbellsville Ind	$98,258	35.5	436	20.1	68.3	11.6	$118,190	$1,658	$20	$76	3.0	$1,252
Wayne	$40,448	63.4	368	7.4	74.6	18.0	$380,776	$1,556	$28	$45	10.0	$1,127
Monticello Ind	$37,274	51.3	451	8.0	73.7	18.3	$135,320	$1,597	$30	$82	3.0	$1,207
Whitley	$47,634	68.6	63	1.6	78.0	20.4	$640,949	$1,475	$19	$51	10.0	$994
Corbin Ind	$68,006	25.1	629	21.0	72.3	6.7	$70,518	$1,493	$23	$57	2.0	$1,132
Williamsburg Ind	$69,315	42.5	431	15.2	76.4	8.4	$104,716	$1,608	$35	$82	2.0	$1,201
KENTUCKY	$89,264	37.0	435	17.4	70.2	12.6	$56,388,199	$1,789	$1,297	$57	6.0	$1,342

Table 5. Characteristics of Fifth District School Systems

County	Percent Dropouts Grades 7-12 1984	Percent 9th Graders Graduating 1983-84	Percent Graduates Going to College 1983-84	Test Scores 1985	Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Reading 1984-85	Percent 7th Graders Mastering Reading 1984-85	Percent 3rd Graders Mastering Math 1984-85	Percent 7th Graders Mastering Math 1984-85
Adair	3.8	63.9	52.2	51	72.5	65.0	87.1	89.5
Bell	5.9	54.6	33.7	50	72.8	58.5	81.6	86.4
Middlesboro Ind	3.0	57.0	51.3	50	69.5	45.8	81.2	73.6
Pineville Ind	6.4	50.0	56.5	57	82.1	63.2	84.6	76.3
Casey	6.0	74.5	24.2	53	65.3	69.5	83.0	89.2
Clay	8.2	44.8	25.0	52	75.1	62.3	84.8	86.4
Clinton	3.0	49.7	35.2	53	91.2	60.8	92.2	64.2
Cumberland	6.4	58.1	34.7	51	78.9	69.0	81.1	84.5
Estill	5.3	57.0	33.7	56	81.5	68.7	90.5	86.0
Garrard	5.7	50.3	31.4	56	74.3	80.7	91.0	94.1
Green	2.9	82.8	39.2	54	71.4	69.1	85.7	90.6
Harlan	5.7	54.8	41.0	50	63.8	52.8	73.3	78.7
Harlan Ind	5.8	62.0	57.9	52	74.2	60.0	75.8	72.4
Jackson	5.8	52.1	28.7	52	84.8	63.7	88.3	88.3
Jessamine	3.6	57.9	56.6	56	82.3	66.8	88.7	77.0
Knox	6.8	51.2	39.3	47	60.0	61.3	69.1	75.8
Barbourville Ind	4.8	52.4	54.5	54	76.9	57.1	84.6	74.3
Laurel	6.4	60.9	50.6	52	74.2	71.6	84.5	84.1
E Bernstadt Ind	1.3			62	91.4	92.3	97.1	100.0
Lee	7.5	59.6	28.6	57	82.5	62.1	90.0	80.2
Leslie	5.9	64.5	36.4	48	65.0	60.1	81.7	81.1
Lincoln	6.2	60.6	23.2	54	77.5	71.8	86.9	85.2
McCreary	5.0	45.0	41.1	52	74.7	65.4	84.3	90.9
Metcalfe	2.9	80.5	27.3	53	73.2	59.8	87.8	84.1
Monroe	4.5	79.4	32.9	51	78.2	63.4	85.9	79.8
Owsley	7.0	50.8	35.9	53	88.6	51.2	78.5	63.1
Pulaski	5.1	57.7	39.7	56	82.4	78.9	92.7	91.7
Science Hill Ind				57	78.8	59.4	90.0	90.6
Somerset Ind	2.9	62.2	65.8	59	95.6	79.8	96.5	88.4
Rockcastle	6.8	63.4	21.9	54	76.3	69.5	81.3	80.1
Russell	5.3	63.8	35.8	56	77.2	64.5	91.7	85.5
Taylor	1.7	81.6	32.1	60	77.0	71.1	87.6	93.6
Campbellsville Ind	3.8	81.7	32.9	59	76.6	66.7	79.4	100.0
Wayne	4.0	55.2	33.6	53	78.0	72.2	89.3	89.6
Monticello Ind	8.4	75.0	38.1	53	83.6	63.2	80.0	89.5
Whitley	11.9	56.0	31.1	47	71.2	60.4	83.4	74.2
Corbin Ind	3.1	77.1	69.5	56	69.6	79.7	79.5	97.0
Williamsburg Ind	3.8	76.7	69.6	53	86.5	71.2	86.5	83.1
KENTUCKY	4.4	68.5	42.5	56.2	80.5	72.5	88.4	87.9

Appendix 1 continued.

Map 1. Counties of Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District

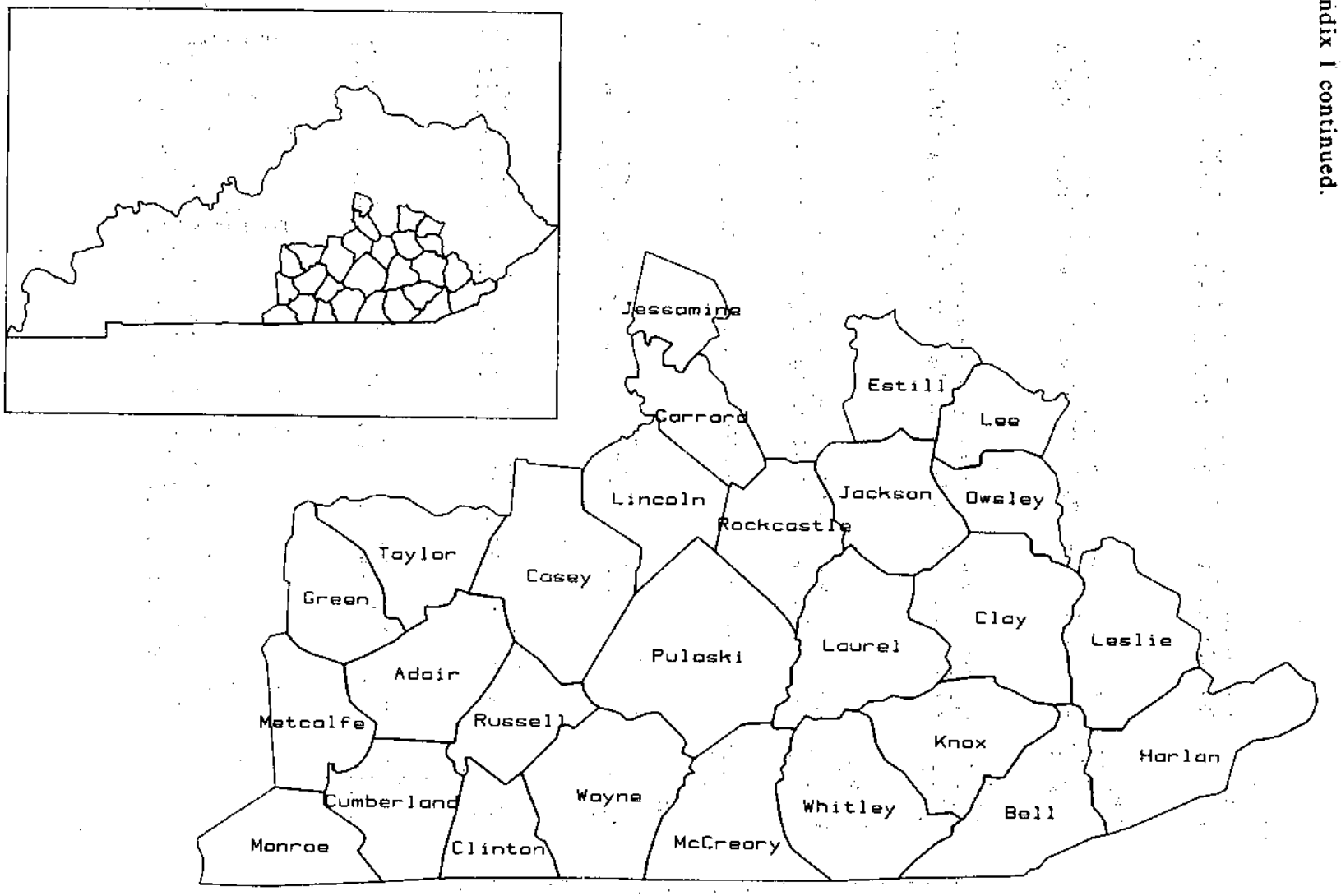
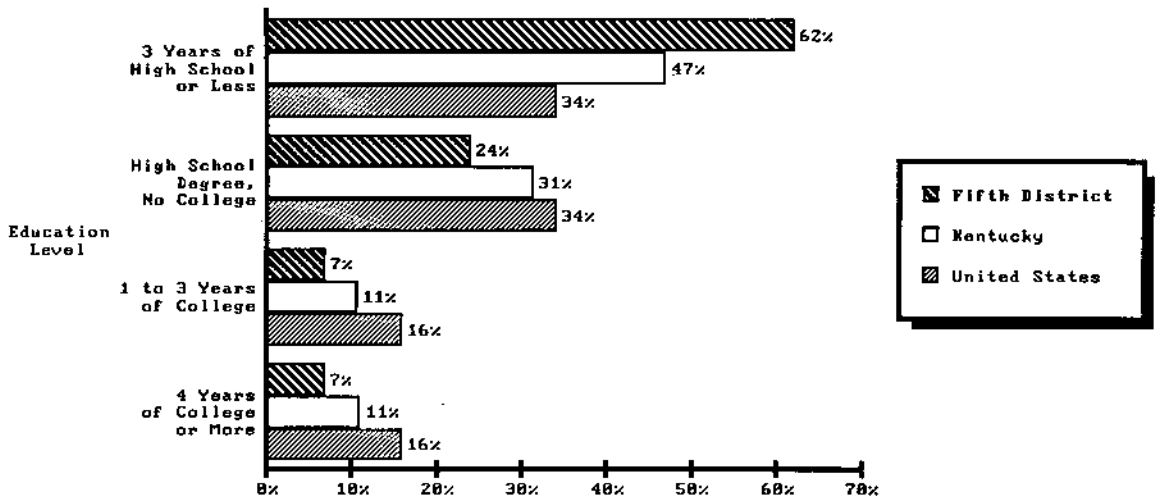


Chart 1. Educational Attainment: Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District, Kentucky and United States, 1980



APPENDIX 2

Sources of Variables

Definitions of Indicators

From: **Kentucky Essential Skills Test Statewide Testing Results, Spring 1985, Kentucky Department of Education, Educational Improvement Act Assessment Program.**

Biennial Report, 1983-1985, Part II, Performance, Kentucky Department of Education.

INDICATORS

Current Expenses - Annual current expenses per pupil in average daily attendance. The total current expenses were divided by the average daily attendance to arrive at the figure. Current expenses include costs for administration, instruction, attendance services, health services, pupil transportation, operation of plant, maintenance of plant and fixed charges.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio - This factor was determined by dividing the enrollment at the school building level by the number of classroom teachers reported on the federal and state salary schedules.

Cost for Instruction - Cost per pupil for instruction was calculated by dividing the total amount spent for instruction by the average daily attendance. The total amount spent on instruction excludes federal programs.

Dropout Rate - The dropout rate represents the percent of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of school during the school year. It includes withdrawals in attendance accounting codes W6--a pupil who became 16 and dropped out; W7--a pupil excused from school because of mental or physical disability; W10--a pupil discharged; and W11--a pupil excused from school because of marriage.

Percent Economically Deprived - This factor represents the percentage of children eligible for free school lunch benefits in proportion to total children of school age in the district.

Local Financial Index - The index was derived by dividing the local revenue per child in average daily attendance by the assessed property value per child in average daily attendance. This index measures the amount of effort a community puts into the support of its schools based upon its ability to pay.

Appendix 2 continued.

Assessed Property Value Per Child - The assessed property value per child is calculated by dividing the total assessed property value in the district by the average daily attendance for the district.

Mean NCE Scores - Normal curve equivalent scores (NCE) divide the scale beneath the normal distribution into 99 equal segments. Scores range from 1-99, with a mean/median of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.

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From: **Profiles of Kentucky Public Schools, Fiscal Year 1983-84, Kentucky Department of Education.**

INDICATORS

Percent of Ninth Graders Graduating - The Superintendents' Annual Statistical Report submitted by the local districts to the Division of Pupil Personnel is the basis for this calculation. It lists the total graduates by age and enrollment by grades. The number of graduates was divided by the number of ninth graders enrolled in 1980-81. In districts which have merged or experienced a significant enrollment increase or decrease, the figure can be misleading.

Cost Per Pupil for Educational Materials - The cost for educational materials was found by adding the account items dealing with library books, periodicals and newspapers, library supplies, audio-visual materials, tests, supplementary books, and teaching supplies which include Codes 251-258; 261-266.03; and 268 (on the Annual Financial Reports for the 1983-84 school year). This total was divided by the number of students in average daily attendance.

Percent of High School Graduates Entering College - The School Data Form is the source of graduates entering college. The number of high school graduates reported on the Superintendents' Annual Statistical Report was divided into the number entering college.

Cost Per Pupil for Administration - This factor was calculated by dividing the total spent for administration (Line H of the Annual Financial Report) by the number of students in average daily attendance.

Local Aid as a Percent of Revenue Receipts - This item illustrates the percent of total revenue from local sources as indicated on the Annual Financial Reports (account codes 11-35 and below the line account codes 94.11, 94.21 and 94.31). This total excludes nonrevenue receipts in the calculation of the percent of revenue.

State Aid as a Percent of Revenue Receipts - This figure is the total posted in account codes 41-45 and below the line receipts 94.12 and 94.22 of the Annual Financial Report.

Federal Aid as a Percent of Revenue Receipts - This percent consists of receipts posted in account codes 51-53, 61-62, and below the line codes 94.13 through 94.34.

*****

From: **Kentucky Department of Education (per phone conversation, May, 1986).**

INDICATORS

Measurement of School Quality - An indicator used internally by the Department of Education created by ranking each school district on each of eight measurements. The ranks are added and divided by number of ranks applicable to system. The eight measures include:

- Percent of positive placements from vocational education.
- Percent graduates going to college.
- Dropout rate.
- Retention rate for all grades.
- KEST test scores in the 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 10th levels.

*****

From: **Congressional Districts of the 98th Congress, Kentucky, 1980 Census of Population and Housing, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.**

INDICATORS

Population 1980
Per capita income
Labor force as percent of persons age 16 and over
Employed persons as percent of persons age 16 and over
Percent population age 18-54
Percent population 55 and over
Percent population disabled
Percent 18-24 year olds who have completed high school
Percent adults (25 and over) who have completed high school
Percent adults who have attended college

APPENDIX 3

Dropout Prevention Programs

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Dropout Prevention Programs in Kentucky and Elsewhere

Kentucky is taking aggressive steps to deal with the dropout problem in the state. The Dropout Prevention Advisory Commission, appointed in 1984 by Alice McDonald, Superintendent of Public Instruction, presented its report in April, 1985. In Keeping Kentucky's Students in School: An Initial Report on Dropout Prevention, the Commission noted that any successful dropout prevention effort will require a strong commitment from all Kentuckians, changes at all levels of the educational system, and adequate funding for local districts.

Citing the increasing disappearance of unskilled jobs and ready-made places in the state's economy for those without a high school education, the Commission made numerous recommendations aimed at reducing the number of young Kentuckians who do not complete high school.

Recommendations include:

1. Dropout prevention plans for all schools in all districts.
2. Public awareness campaign.
3. Cooperative programs and better communication with institutions of higher education.
4. State funding for support staff (social workers, counselors)--at a ratio of 1:250--to address the needs of potential dropouts, particularly in the elementary schools.
5. State funding to support the current remediation program to grades three and four.
6. State funding to implement dropout prevention programs and/or alternative programs at middle, junior, and high Schools.

Examples of Dropout Prevention Programs in Kentucky

A few of the various types of programs being tried in Kentucky are listed below. A description of other programs may be found in Kentucky's Successful Dropout Prevention Programs, published by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Alternative Schools--Two alternative schools, one serving Laurel County and one serving Adair and Russell Counties, provide special attention and smaller classes for young people who have trouble functioning in a traditional school setting. McCracken County's Project RESCUE provides a night school where credit can be earned for a required course that has been failed. Students work at individual rates and receive individualized attention.

Parent Volunteer Programs--In Pulaski and Jefferson Counties parents tutor elementary and secondary students.

In-school Tutoring and Counseling Programs--Numerous school districts have established tutoring and counseling programs. Clinton County pays Beta Club students $5.00 per hour to tutor and counsel potential dropouts. Taylor County pairs troubled elementary school students with teachers for tutoring and counseling. Montgomery County has developed Project STAR, an in-school counseling and tutorial program.

Work-related Programs--Hart County provides pre-employment skills and employment experiences for potential dropouts through its Work Experience Program. Students receive classroom instruction in career education as well as experience at the work site. In Adair County potential dropouts are provided the opportunity to learn work skills through hands-on experiences in the school under the supervision of good role models.

Examples of Dropout Prevention Programs in Other States

Operation Far Cry--Workers at Outreach centers in New York City contact students by telephone to persuade them to return to a regular or alternative school or to join a career program.

Hold Youth Program--In Denver, Colorado, potential dropouts are identified and counseled. They may enroll in a special teaching program which provides individualized attention and intense communication with the parents.

Work-Study Specialty School--Milwaukee is planning a school in which classes will be conducted at odd hours to accommodate work schedules.

Education is E$$ential--Growing out of the concern of the Dalton-Whitfield Chamber of Commerce, this program in Georgia provides volunteers in the business community who interact with each potential dropout and the child's parents. Efforts are made to involve all students in extracurricular activities. Employment may be offered on a part-time basis only and under strict conditions that grades and attendance in school are maintained.

Learn-to Earn/Stay in School--Operating in Clay County, Mississippi, under the Job Training Partnership Act,

this program provides intensive training in reading, English, mathematics, and personal and occupational counseling. Students attend during the summer and on Saturdays.

National Dropout Prevention Programs and Resources

70001 Ltd.--A nonprofit public service corporation founded in 1969 and operating in 16 states, 70001 provides work-readiness training, job placement, educational instruction and motivational activities for economically disadvantaged dropouts. 70001 helps get local programs started, trains staff, provides the curriculum, helps obtain private funding and offers technical assistance. They may be reached at 600 Maryland Avenue, S.W., West Wing, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20024.

REAL Enterprises--REAL (Rural Education with Action Learning) provides training in entrepreneurial skills for economically disadvantaged students, slow learners, and special education students. Projects provide learning through the development of money-making enterprises such as a child development center, a swine production operation, and a tourist information center. Their address is 300 Old College Building, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602.

Jobs for America's Graduates, Inc.--This program operates in eight states to ease the transition from school to work for high school seniors who have been identified as most likely to experience problems in securing employment upon graduation. The program recently turned its attention to high school dropouts in one state. Jobs for Tennessee Graduates provides GED training and job development. Their address is 3041 Getwell, Suite 209, Memphis, Tennessee 38118.

Potpourri of Low-Cost Dropout Prevention Activities

Developed by Barbara Dougherty and Jan Novak
Vocational Studies Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison

- Build dropout prevention efforts of previously/currently successful programs and activities.
- Use dropout prone students as tutors to younger students in inter-age peer tutoring programs.
- Encourage individual staff members to take a personal interest in one or two students both in school and outside of school through an advisement or "adopt-a-student" program.
- Have individual staff members "adopt-a-student" for the entire time the student attends school in that particular building; then, the staff member helps to ease the transition to the next school the student attends by taking them to visit the school, meet with some teachers, and help the student identify the next person to "adopt" them.
- Implement an enrichment tutoring approach which focuses on talented and gifted (dropout prone) students to help school staff understand or see the students in a more positive/acceptable light.
- Utilize students as tutors to dropout prone students in peer tutoring programs/activities.
- Promote dropout prone students to volunteer to help community social service providing agencies.
- Have teachers/counselors help dropout prone students with study skills (e.g., student who never completes homework assignments because he/she forgets to take books home could be helped by putting homework assignments in top of locker throughout the day so that when in a hurry to catch the bus, the homework is in the top and books without assignments are in the bottom of locker).
- Invite students in dropout prevention program and students who have left school to talk about their jobs, what they do, the type of people they work with, working conditions, potential promotions, salary/wages, employer attitudes toward employees, etc.
- Utilize JPTA programs to provide work and training opportunities.

- Have dropout pron students in program/activity assume responsibility for plants, etc., in "drop-in center," counseling area, teachers' lounge, conference room, etc.

- Have dropout prone student in program assume responsibility for reading newspapers and posting job openings on bulletin board in program room.

- Have dropout prone student in program (with typing skills) type newsletter, news releases, thank you letters for speakers, etc.

- Have program students paint pictures, draw cartoons, make posters, refinish used furniture, etc., for "drop-in center," counseling center, program, room, teachers' meeting room, etc.

- Utilize volunteers from community to help in classrooms and throughout the school.

- Develop a system where volunteers call parents of students who are absent.

- Encourage retired persons to help/volunteer to work with or spend time with potential dropouts.

- Organize volunteers to help with clerical tasks (e.g., typing, bookkeeping, filing, organizing materials).

- Solicit college students to volunteer to work with, tutor and develop resources/materials for remedial and/or gifted dropout prone students.

- Disseminate dropout prevention program/activity newsletter for school staff, parents, and community.

- Prepare news releases for school and local radio and/or TV stations, newspapers, etc.

- Ask local businesses and industries to pay for radio or television spots.

- Hold conferences/visits/meetings with parents of dropout prone youth.

- Ask school staff to assist in curriculum development and selection of resources/materials for use with dropout prone students.

- Use junior high texts for remedial materials in senior high.

- Make "used" post-secondary texts (vocational education, college) available for gifted and talented dropout prone students.

- Use newspaper, magazines, paperbacks, etc., for current, less expensive classroom materials (staff might bring in day-old papers; local newspaper might donate extra papers).

- Have dropout prevention staff work with other school staff members to develop materials, audio-visual resources, etc., that present program/activities to the school, students or community (e.g., art teacher might design posters, English or journalism teacher could write news releases/newsletter, staff member with photography interest could take/develop pictures of students in dropout prevention program activities).

- Have school board members participate in program planning.

- Have dropout prevention staff meet with school board members to keep them informed, gain their support, etc.

- Have staff make presentations to local groups about the dropout problem, what people in the community can do to help the schools, and what the school is doing to meet the needs of its student.

- Identify a "shaker and mover" to get the idea and plan for dropout prevention going.

- Have dropout prevention staff spend time in teachers' lounge (or appropriate location) to increase visibility and communication with other staff.

- Invite school staff (teaching, clerical, maintenance, etc.) to talk with dropout prone students about their experiences, job, careers, etc.

- Ask school staff members to report/comment on the attendance, attitude, performance, etc., or students participating in the dropout prevention activities.

- Identify "leaders" of various staff groups and work with them to "win" their support and encourage their support for dropout prevention efforts.

- Ask business/industry public relations people to help develop a dropout prevention campaign, improve school image campaign, etc.

- Request and use donations of discarded equipment, supplies, etc., for program activity.

- Ask business, trade, and industry to make small donations (e.g., "$25 will buy us a couch for the drop-in center").

- Invite workers to talk to students about their jobs, need for high school diploma, usefulness of an education, etc.

- Encourage employers to talk to their employees, many of whom are parents, about the importance of a high school diploma, how to help their children in school, etc.

- Promote community development of work sites for dropout prone youth.

- Ask business and industry groups/companies to let you talk to their employees, many of whom are parents, about helping their children stay in school, how to talk with or ask questions to teachers, etc.

- Have local business and industries write letters that can be shown to potential dropouts that tell why they want to hire people with diplomas.

- Ask local printer to donate printing services for posters, fliers, newsletters, etc.

- Encourage school staff, school board members, advisory committee members, business and industry, etc., to express their support for dropout prevention efforts in writing so that it can be shared with others.

- Establish a home visit program to improve home-school relations.

- Involve **both** mothers and fathers in conferences it discuss student progress, problems, etc.

- Have parents participate on advisory committees, task forces, or assessment/evaluation teams.

- Invite and encourage parents to help at school.

- Request school staff to call parents when potential dropout has done something "good"--not only when there is a problem.

- Make on-going or current parenting skills classes accessible/inviting to parents of dropout prone students.

- Offer in-service, educational, or awareness activities to school staff to explain dropout prevention program/activity objectives, functions, etc.

- Involve school staff in the planning and implementation of dropout prevention efforts.

- General an attitude of "caring for students" and a general atmosphere of "I am/we are interested in you as a student and individual" in the school district (this frequently begins with the school administrators).

- Promote dropout prevention staff to meet with members of school staff on an **individual** as is (in addition to group presentation or discussions).

- Involve school staff in evaluation/feedback activities.

- Use local public library community information and referral service for information concerning government and private services available to help your local dropout prevention effort.

- Request information, suggestions, etc., from individuals working with dropout prone students in other school in area/state/nation.

- Conduct meetings and/or cooperate efforts with church groups.

- Utilize/develop parent/family support groups within the church network.

- Encourage dropout prone youth to utilize services available through local Job Service office.

- Initiate cooperative efforts with post-secondary schools, colleges, and universities (e.g., advanced placement, enrollment in courses) to provide services to dropout prone youth.

- Make services available to dropout pone youth through vocational, technical and adult education.

- Encourage constructive feedback from the community and school.

- Borrow student and teacher materials with specific information (e.g., life skills, career education) and aimed at different skill levels.

* Reprinted from West Virginia Dropout Study, 1984-1985, West Virginia Department of Education, Feburary, 1986.

The Mountain Association for Community Economic Development is a regional organization which combines research and policy analysis with technical assistance and financial investments to stimulate development that benefits low income households in Appalachia. Since 1977, MACED has worked with community groups and local leadership on economic development projects. In recent years, the program has concentrated on "sectoral interventions," attempts to stimulate incremental change in important industries to benefit poor people and poor places. Currently MACED has projects or investments in housing financing and banking, the hardwood lumber industry, water system management, and the coal industry. The staff of 13 works on research, technical assistance, investment, or policy analysis, as the issue requires.

May 23, 1986

Shakertown Meeting on Fifth District

Talk by Cynthia Duncan

IMPROVING EDUCATION IN THE FIFTH DISTRICT

MACED wants to stress three points:

1) Educational quality lags, but the kids are as smart as kids anywhere. They face greater obstacles because of the economic problems of the area.

2) People throughout the District care, and their concerns and ideas for solutions show a lot of <u>common ground</u>.

3) People agree that improving education is a task for the whole community, and we found energy and commitment to build a new educational climate.

How Education in the Fifth District Compares

The premise of this meeting is that education and economic development are intertwined--many have described the Fifth District's combined problems of low educational attainment and an undeveloped economy as a "vicious cycle," and part of what we are all doing here today is looking for handles to break that cycle.

While the effects of a poor economy are visible in educational attainment--how many highschool graduates there are, how many college educated and professionally skilled people--the educational handles we look to for change are school related.

Therefore, the education questions that leaders in the District ask themselves are questions about their schools and how to improve them. How can we reverse high dropout rates and upgrade the quality of education children receive?

The Fifth District is disadvantaged economically because its population has less education. Fully 62 percent of the adults living in the District have not completed high school, compared to 47 percent in the state and only 34 percent in the nation.

Twenty-four percent of the District's adults have high school

degrees, compare to 34 percent nationally, half as many have attended some college, half as many have college degrees.

As we emphasize in our paper, people with education leave. A guidance counsellor and many school superintendents and businesspeople said

> It is not necessarily that we don't educate them, but that they don't stay here. It's a matter of economic survival. And it's left the others behind.

Someone else said--

> Unfortunately, we find that the better ones leave the county. The ones that graduate have to leave, unless they have some family connection within the county with an oil company, a coal company. --

Many of those who stay are older, many are disabled, and most have less education.

People do not see much economic opportunity in the District for those who stay, and they are worried about their children's economic future. One parent said:

> The way times are changing, it's hard to predict whether our kids will live here when they grow up. The main thing around here is jobs. Jobs are so hard to find any more. Any more, it's even hard to find those odd jobs. --

The lack of economic future translates directly into motivation to finish school. As one young woman who had dropped out of school put it:

> A lot of people's got the attitude that if I go through high school, I'm still not going to get no job, so what's the use.

Nonetheless, parents and students from all kinds of different backgrounds clearly <u>value</u> education. We talked with people on welfare who were back in school to "to try to make it a little bit better", and whose children were in college because they knew they needed an education to get anywhere. A student told us:

> All I know--if you ain't got an education, you ain't got a future.

One businessman described how he took applications from people who could not read or write because he did not want to offend them, but he put an X on those applications:

> I figure if they can't read a warning sign, then they would just not be safe in our jobs, probably couldn't watch out for the safety of those working around them either.

People emphasized over and over that the children in the Fifth District are just as smart as children anywhere, but they face greater obstacles because many of them come from poor families and many of their parents are not educated:

> Our kids--I would put our kids up against anybody in San Francisco or California, or anywhere in the world. Only thing our kids lack is the chance to do something with it. They've got the minds; they're not dumb.

Many teachers make a point of telling their students "You are OK, you are as smart as anybody else; it's OK to be an Appalachian. You're not any less smart than anybody else."

Everyone knows successful people from the District who have overcome the disadvantaged circumstances and succeeded--lawyers, doctors, ministers, engineers, teachers.

Nonetheless, educational quality lags behind in the District, and people recognize that overall their schools have more dropouts and their students do not do as well on the standard tests. In an area that desperately needs more industry, there are fewer resources to fund education and more of the "harder-to-educate" students--those from low-income families.

Related to both of these factors, there is less community support for schools. While the property value assessment per student averages $89,000 across the state, the Fifth District averages only $64,000. This compares to over $106,000 per student in the Fourth District. While slightly over a third of the students throughout the state are what we call "economically deprived", nearly one half the students in the District fall in that low-income category. This economic handicap is visible in the relative local contribution to school funding:

Statewide 17 percent of schools' funding is raised locally, but only 10 percent comes from local sources in the Fifth District (in the Fourth, the proportion is 26 percent). The state's power equalization program attempts to even out some of these differences, and in fact the amount spent on instruction per student does not vary drastically. But the important corollary between local resources for schools and the quality of schools is visible when we examine local effort to fund schools.

The state has devised a well-respected index of how much effort communities devote to local support for schools, and this index, which measures support given resources for support, varies across the state and within the district. The state average on this financial index is 435, but in the Fifth District it is only 313. In the Fourth District the index is 639. Schools in which the community tries harder and puts more local money into education are the schools that have fewer dropouts and higher student achievement.

Community support for education, as conveyed by this index, goes hand in hand with standard measures of school quality.

We divided school districts within the Fifth District into three groups according to some standard measures of school system "success" (including the dropout rate, retention of students, placement of students from vocational education, percent going

to college, test scores in various grades) and, as you can see from this table, good schools have certain things in common:

They have more wealth--$75,000 compared to $70,000 in average systems and $47,000 in poor systems. They have fewer poor children to teach--38 percent in good schools, compared to 47 percent in average schools and 63 percent in poor schools. And, importantly, they work harder to support their schools: the financial index is 423 in good schools, just under the state average, compared to 220 in poor schools.

When we asked superintendents what they considered the biggest obstacles to improving education, most said "money". Even when a poor school district raises its taxes, it gets less because the tax base is so low.

Poor places have a more difficult row to hoe, fewer hoes, and less support for the whole enterprise.

What People Told Us About Problems

We heard over and over that expectations of both students and schools are too low. Many attribute low expectations to the lack of economic opportunity in the area and the level of poverty among families. But even though these low expectations are

understandable, many people told us that they were not necessary. Students and schools can overcome economic handicaps.

Parents blame schools for expecting too little of their kids, and schools blame parents for not conveying the importance of school to their kids. For example, parents and students alike felt that students are categorized by schools on the basis of their appearance and their family name from the first day they enter school:

> These kids walk in the door and are categorized by 90 percent of the teachers. "This is so-and-so over there; his mommy and daddy never did amount to a hill of beans.

And parents were frankly outraged:

> Whatever a child has got on his back and no matter how ticky his hair is, no matter how nasty it is, no matter what hole it comes out of, it deserves the same chance as Sally sitting over here in a ruffled dress.

Bright college students told us how they were grouped by appearance, and only after surprising the teachers and administrators with high grades were they given more encouragement. From several we heard that even when they perform well in school, they are encouraged to become beauticians and factory workers, not doctors, lawyers or teachers.

And we did hear from many school people that the problem kids are from welfare families, often one-parent families, often families with no one working. Everyone recognizes exceptions- "-poor families who see the need for their children to go on through and they push them and encourage them in every way." But from the school's perspective, by and large the students from poor families are thsoe who fail.

But we found people on both sides could understand the complexity of the problem and its causes. There were parents who realized that kids do not get the encouragement they need at home, and there were school personnel, teachers and administrators, who saw that schools categorize kids and work with those for whom they have high expectations. One superintendent said that "teachers' attitudes have to change":

> In a rural area, when a youngster comes to school, and he's had older brothers or sisters, if they did well, then they expect him to do well. If they didn't

> do well, teachers have a tendency to say, "Well, the others weren't any account. They didn't do any good and he won't either." ...I'm saying that's a normal reaction, and I'm sure that it happens.

Politics was mentioned by many as the primary obstacle to improving education. There are school systems in which many feel that decisions are made on the basis of power and giving away coveted jobs--not on the basis of what is good for schools and students. We found that the places that have heavily politicized school boards are the places that have the highest dropout rates and the lowest student achievement levels.

The problems that children and schools in the Fifth District face are complex, and residents of the Fifth District know they are complex. School administrators would like more money, teachers and parents would like dramatically smaller classes, teachers need more support from both parents and administrators, parents want more communication and involvement, and higher expectations for their children. and everyone sees the need for getting bad politics out of school systems and developing greater support from the wider community. But these different emphases do come together into some common ground.

What People Said Could Be Done

Everyone agrees that children in the Fifth District need to be exposed to a bigger world so they can reach higher and farther for themselves. Kids need to experience art, music, and go on trips to museums and theater productions.

They need to hear people from their county talk about the value of education--see people for whom education has worked. Numerous people mentioned how much a recent visit from Alex Haley and John Stephenson had meant to the students. They not only talk about what these kids can become, they are success stories in the flesh. Teachers and parents had stories to tell of other visitors--professionals whose visit and experiences made a big difference to their children. One school's guidance counsellor summed it up:

> Any time anybody that's important to the community walks through that door and goes to a classroom and shares his time and/or interest, whether it's from the vocational community or a parent with a slide show of another country, any person who shares his time and talents with our students has made a difference.

Many people suggested ways to expand parents' horizons as well--taking them to visit colleges, including them on field

trips, building their expectations of what their children can become and building their value for education. People had ideas for reqarding kids who graduate--giving them money, summer jobs, senior trips for graduates--a host of ideas. Ideas, both inside and outside the District--are plentiful. The task is to build the momentum at all levels for implementing those ideas.

In fact, everyone believes that the way to improve education in the District is to have the whole community emphasize that education is valuable, that all children can get a good education, and that all children need an education.

> Business leaders have to start demanding that the people they hire are better educated. It's got to work hand-in-hand. --

> Toyota's announcement about requiring a diploma made a big difference. They need to hear about the importance of a diploma from "real" people, not just teachers. --

People suggested "a massive campaign" to change attitudes throughout the region. Television ads, businessmen and women stressing their need for educated employees...recognizing those who do graduate:

> The Chamber of Commerce needs to do a county-wide recognition of graduates, just to show recognition of those who succeed. Because that's elementary, that's basic . . . Now one person [company] will put it on the billboard, two or three days later somebody else'll put it up. You know, "Congratulations, Graduates!" But it needs to be a multilateral effort and the newspaper, all the media, need to pick up on it.

People we talked with know that building a movement to value education--building a new educational climate--is a long-term process.

In a new educational climate, destructive school politics would no longer reign. In an atmosphere that supports education, school politics based on wielding power over jobs would be undermined.

> You would have to put a board in there that is... unable to get a personal gain out of it...[make] the administrator in the school...responsible for that school. . . . The only thing the school board should do is appoint an administrator for that school. Some means of keeping the integrity.

It's going to happen when the people want it to happen...it will not end until the people want it to end and until they hold their public officials accountable...

All of these measures depend upon wide community support, and people throughout the District told us they thought that people were ready to begin making the change--that there is new leadership and energy.

Our school board is improving, mainly because the attitude of the people is changing. They demand better education. I see the potential for changing the old-time politics. The baby boomers are becoming your new leadership--the old leadership is breaking. I see a new vigor for the survival of the mountains in this new leadership--they will make a difference.

We now have three newly elected officials who are of a more progressive nature. I'm not saying they're not political, just that their brand of politics is more responsible--and they have the support of their peers. But we're still churning. We're not fully emerged.

> If we want change, the change has to come from within. If the people here in the mountains, in the Fifth District, don't want change, they're not going to have change. It's that simple. We've got to want to change ourselves.

MACED interviews with the people of the Fifth District convinced us that the seeds are there to change the educational climate in the District. The children can be taught and kept in school, all those concerned-- from students to parents to teachers to administrators to local business leaders- express concern and have ideas for working out of the problem. There is indeed common ground. It is time now to start planting those seeds together.

This presentation was followed by talks by Eliot Wigginton, Foxfire, Rabun Gap, Georgia (what teachers can do); David Bergholz, Public Education Fund, Pittsburgh, PA.(what communities can do); and John Dashler, Unituft and Education Is E$$ential, Dalton, Georgia (what business leaders can do).