

School After Recess: Exploring Rural School Closures (2012-2020)

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April 9th 2021

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#Load Packages  
#install.packages("readxl")  
library(readxl)
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Abstract

Introduction

The topic of preventing school closures is one of those rare bi-partisan issues that can bring people together from both sides of the political spectrum in working towards a common goal. Despite having a common goal, school closures have morphed into battle grounds between parents, school boards, and the government that represents them. This is especially true in rural communities where previous changes in the per-pupil funding formula and trends in provincial demographics have been lowering school enrollment numbers. Declining enrollment is problematic as the government prefers approximately 500-800 students per school and traditionally rural schools have much less, around the range of 100-150 students per school. It would come to no surprise that the government is looking at 600 closures with 500 of those being from rural communities. A wave of closures of that magnitude threatens to tear the heart out of many rural communities. Schools are much larger than the sum of their parts in rural areas, they act as community hubs and are intrinsic to their economic prosperity. Once a rural area loses their local due to low enrollment, it causes a snowball effect where families are less likely to move there, meaning even lower enrollment in the next school where the students are now being bused towards which threatens their funding.

Attempting to determine the appropriate threat level to rural communities has been made difficult by the lack of public data that is made available. Both the Ministry of Education and local school boards do not publish the schools that are under review or provide legacy lists of all schools that have been closed and what has replaced them. Even more challenging is determining the reason for closure. Schools can be closed for different reasons, they may have been dilapidated and a new one was constructed to replace it. Or perhaps two schools were suffering from low enrollment and a new one was built to replace both of them. To better understand what is transpiring with rural school closures, research has been conducted into what factors can be attributed to a school closure. It is the hope of this research that it can support parents dealing with on-going school closures and help academics working in this domain.

Data

Discussion

Appendix

References