



## Education In Our Community

### Small Schools Work And They're Cost-Effective

(NAPSA)—Research on the relationships of school size, poverty, and student achievement has shown that small schools are better for kids—particularly kids from poorer communities. Now, a new report goes head-to-head with conventional wisdom about economies of scale, illustrating that smaller schools also can be cost-effective. “Dollars & Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools” challenges the common belief that big schools are cheaper to build and maintain. Its conclusion: investing tax dollars in small schools makes good economic sense.

“There is a growing national consensus that small schools are better for children,” said Rachel B. Tompkins, president of the Rural School and Community Trust, “but there are still many misconceptions about the costs of small schools. This report sets the record straight that small schools are not just effective, they are cost-effective.”

The report cites research on the host of educational and social benefits of small schools—benefits that include higher academic achievement, lower dropout rates, less violence and vandalism, greater teacher satisfaction, and more community involvement. Similarly, it outlines the negative effects of large schools on students, teachers, and members of the community, as well as the “diseconomies of scale” inherent in large schools.

These diseconomies are rarely discussed when a new school is proposed, but are extremely important in figuring the true cost of building and maintaining a school. For example, large schools may appear to have a lower per-student cost.



When the much-higher dropout rates of larger schools are factored into a cost-per-graduate, however, small schools become more cost-effective. The long-term costs to society of school dropouts—their lower earning power, higher arrest and jail rates, higher incidence of child abuse and neglect, and poorer overall health—also argue powerfully in favor of using the cost-per-graduate in determining the true cost of a school.

Larger schools also require costly added tiers of administration, more security personnel, and additional maintenance and operations personnel—expenditures that significantly increase the per-student cost of a school, and that grow as a school becomes larger. Another major diseconomy in large consolidated schools is transportation—fuel, buses, bus drivers, and maintenance. Yet, say the report’s authors, the billions of dollars it costs to transport students every year are rarely factored into cost comparisons between smaller and larger schools. Finally, the economic costs when a community loses a school can be significant.

To download a free copy of the report, go to [www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org).