

CEN Rural School & Community Development Briefing Paper

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1. Transforming Rural American and Rural Texas through Education and Economic Development.

2. Rural Americans are experiencing difficult times. “Rural” defines 97 percent of the nation's land area but contains 20 percent of the population. Still, 13.4 million children under 18 live in rural America and experience disproportionately higher poverty rates, lower educational achievement, low-wage jobs, and a struggling economy. Texas reports 5.4 million children enrolled in 1,200 PK12 schools, with 1 million students enrolled in 700 small rural districts. In 2020, both Texas and the U.S. look to the educational systems to prepare students who can compete globally for jobs and satisfying careers.

Since 2002, Roscoe Texas has doggedly challenged K12 tradition and created a network called Collegiate Edu-Nation (CEN). Today, this transformation produces 100 percent high school completion. At the same time, 90 percent of the high school graduates earn associate degrees and industry-recognized certifications with expectations for 80 percent to earn bachelor's degrees within three years and 70 percent to earn post-graduate degrees—all with little or no debt. Five rural Texas schools and one West Virginia district have joined the CEN network. Twenty students have earned bachelor's and five post-graduate degrees. Wow!

The mission—Collegiate Edu-Nation P20 System Model aims to transform public education for **all** students, especially those in small rural schools, to provide affordable access to college-ready, career-ready preparation leading to degrees and industry-recognized certifications and to serve as a state and national resource for such efforts. CEN is a network of rural school districts using our defining strengths to tackle our most significant challenges and make life better for our students and communities.

3. Analysis—Six rural schools have joined the transformation network since 2018. CEN can assist rural districts in meeting these college, career, and community attainment goals. The transformation begins with authentic self-diagnostics around leadership, values, and culture. Aspirations and high expectations encourage districts to form partnerships to build from innovations to practice. Communities and faculties join in collaboration and professional development. Resources are reallocated to high-value outcomes. The P20 concept has moved from a model to a test-bed and now a network of schools. CEN and its stakeholders can transform the early majority of 300 small schools by 2030 as Texas meets its 60x30TX goals to prepare students for real-world careers and challenges. Start-up funding remains a problem.

4. Recommended Actions—CEN is focused on implementing this model to link PK12 to Higher Education through the Land Grant System infrastructure in position in every state in the U.S., beginning in Texas and in collaboration with West Virginia, through the Extension, Research, and Higher Education infrastructure. **Federal legislation and policies** are needed to implement rural P20 STEM education to reduce generational poverty. Propose **\$1.35 Billion** over five years to transform rural American schools for 13.4 million children. Strategic, large-scale investments will bolster the economy, improve families' bottom lines, and provide the foundations for the lives of today's children and tomorrow's workforce. **State legislation** is needed to implement "innovation hubs" to drive school transformation, integrate P20 educational networks, and ensure accountability and quality. Propose **\$360 Million** over five years to transform rural Texas schools for 1.2 million children. **Local initiatives** reward bold actions for providing rural America with a 21st Century STEM workforce and America with global vitality and economic prosperity. Propose that local districts invest an additional/redirected **\$300** per student over five years to transform as P20 schools for their children/students. Whatever is educationally sound should be administratively possible. Together, we can.

Fiscal Considerations (Notes)