



Bridgett Heinrich <bheinrich@panaschools.com>

Fwd: The Value of Rural Schools

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Bridgett Heinrich <bheinrich@panaschools.com>

Thu, Feb 10, 2022 at 8:15 AM

February Board Meeting

FYI: The renewal form is included as a link in this email.

Jason

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools** <execdir@airssedu.org>

Date: Thu, Feb 10, 2022 at 7:29 AM

Subject: The Value of Rural Schools

To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



**The Association
of Illinois Rural
and Small Schools**



The Value of Rural Schools: A Letter from Executive Director David M. Ardrey

Membership forms are due NOW for calendar year 2022. [Click here for the fillable, printable form](#), and read the letter below from Executive Director Dave Ardrey to learn more about the work AIRSS does on your behalf.

Founded in 1982, the Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools (AIRSS) primary focus was to combat the never-ending attempt to consolidate rural and small schools. In the early 1990's AIRSS merged LOCON under the AIRSS organization. This added an intentional focus on "Local Control" of Schools and Districts decision making.

Today, in the new year 2022, and 40 years later from our humble beginnings we are still fighting the same issues of consolidation and local control, however with added stressors of school funding, fairness, equity, inclusion, bigotry and a general divisive dismissal of rural people and the rural way of life.

Rural and Small Schools in Illinois have been left out of the conversation and

left behind regarding public policy for far too many years. The progress that was made in the past few years under the Obama and Trump administrations at the federal level has been all but lost under the current administration. To date an office of rural education has not been established and no liaisons for rural education have been named in the White House or the U.S. Department of Education.

At the state level some significant progress was made under the previous administration with regard to school funding, teacher shortages and establishing a working relationship with the Governor's office and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). That progress has been slow to transition and develop with the current administration and ISBE, as we (AIRSS) work tirelessly to build relationships and trust. It is a challenging road, one that cannot be left to chance at every transition of leadership.

While we might differ at times on individual policy issues, and may not always agree on all outcomes, what we must agree on, is the value of our rural schools, the amazing success stories of our teachers and students in rural and small schools and the importance of our rural communities and the rural way of life. If we intend to preserve this rural way of life, it is imperative we stick together for the common good and cause and support our rural education system.

Please join AIRSS in 2022 with a supporting financial membership, it is an investment in the future of all rural and small schools and communities and is vital to AIRSS ability to be the "Voice" for rural and small schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Ardrey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David M. Ardrey
Executive Director
Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools

Thank you!



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