A survey of 229 students in grades 10-12 at a rural consolidated high school in Tennessee sought to determine employment patterns among rural students and the impact of that employment on students' academic and personal lives. Findings indicate that employment of rural youth was an accepted part of the teen culture; student employment increased at higher grade levels, with the greatest frequency during the senior year. Over half of seniors were employed. Males and females were equally likely to be employed. Working students were more likely to be tardy or absent and to be making poorer grades. Failing grades in English were reported by six percent of working students and one percent of nonworking students. Working students were less likely to be planning to attend a 4-year college and more likely to be planning to join the military or to attend a technical school or community college. Over half of employed students worked more than 20 hours per week. They were more likely to use their money for personal expenses (car and entertainment) than for family needs or college savings. According to students, the greatest negative impact of work was lack of leisure time to spend with friends and family or to be involved with sports and clubs. The greatest positive impact was money to spend. Contains 12 references.
THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Paper Presented to the National Rural Education Association Research Forum 1996 Annual Meeting San Antonio Texas

by

John K. Price
and
Margaret S. Phelps

Contact Person:

Dr. Margaret Phelps
Box 5112, TTU
Cookeville, TN 38505
615-372-3791
FAX 615-372-6319
msp2751@TnTech.edu

BEST COPY AVAILABLE.
THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The nature of youth in American society has undergone dramatic changes over the past half century. In increasing numbers, school-age youth have entered the workplace, holding part-time jobs after school and on weekends. The reasons that American teenagers have flocked to the workplace are embedded in events that have taken place in the school, the family, the economy, and the larger society. (Steinberg & Greenberger, 1986). As the social ecology of youth has changed, the workplace has assumed a significant role in the life of many teens. Teen employment impacts their personal lives, the lives of their families, and their schools. (National Commission on Youth, 1980)

Baxter (1992) reported that two-thirds of seniors work fifteen or more hours per week and that eighty percent of all students will work sometime during their high school career. Lewin-Epstein (1981) found that teen employment increases as family income increases up to a range indicative of lower middle-class status.

Previous studies in more urban settings have found that working teens experience fatigue, falling grades, and diminished interest in schooling (Workman, 1990; MacArthur, 1989); take easier electives and fewer advanced courses (McNeil, 1984); watched less television (Barton, 1989); and were more likely to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, and ultimately drop out of school (Kablaoui and Pautler, 1991).

More positively, teachers have observed that employed students have increased practical business knowledge and social
skills through the work experience (Kablaoui and Pautler, 1991). Scholars have argued that work place involvement facilitates the transition from adolescence to adulthood through transmission of knowledge, practical skills, adult perspectives, and greater sense of responsibility which could lead to better school performance (Marsh, 1989).

The role of youth employment in breaking the poverty barriers in urban communities has been debated. (National Committee on Economic Development, 1987; Rosenberg, 1986). Little attention has been directed toward the impact of employment on rural youth.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine the employment patterns among rural students and the impact of that employment on the academic and personal lives of the students.

Methodology

Using the review of literature as a basis, a survey instrument was developed in cooperation with the guidance personnel at a rural consolidated high school in Tennessee. The survey was administered by teachers and guidance personnel in intact classroom settings during the winter of 1996. Usable surveys were returned for 229 students in grades 10 through 12. Slightly more than half of the students were employed. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and chi-square comparisons of working and non-working students.

Findings

Of the students surveyed, 51.97% were working. Among
working students, 51.64% were female, 48.36% were male. Employment increased from 14.75% of sophomores to 19.51% of juniors to 55.74% of seniors.

Working teens were significantly more likely to be absent from school. Of the teens surveyed, 12.15% of non-working teens and 20.49% of working teens had missed four or more days of school. While non-working teens were more likely to have been tardy one or two days, working teens were more likely to have been tardy three or more days (37.70% vs 18.70%).

English grades were used as the measure of academic performance. Non-working teens were more likely to have an A in English during the last reporting period (25.71% vs 8.26%). The modal English grade for non-working students was a B (45.71%) while non-working students earned a C (41.28%). Failing grades were reported by 0.95% of non-working teens and 6.42% of working teens.

On a future plans continuum 74.77% of non-working students indicated plans to attend a four year college compared to 38.34% of working students. Working students were more likely to be planning to join the military (4.10% vs 1.87%), or attend a technical center or community college (26.23% vs 8.51%). Approximately 10% of each group planned to enter the job market. Several students marked "Other" (12.30% working vs 4.67% non-working) and indicated that they planned to marry or "sponge off" of their parents.

Employment patterns included fast food/restaurant (31.15%), retail/grocery/department store (21.31%), mechanical/garage/gas
station (16.39%), agriculture (15.57%), child care (5.74%), and clerical (4.10%). Students reported that 63.11% earned above the minimum wage while only 5.74% earned below minimum wage. The number of hours per week worked were 0-10 hours (12.30%), 11-20 hours (31.15%), 21-30 hours (36.07%), and 30+ hours (20.49%).

Working students averaged 5-7 hours of sleep per night, but 11.48% reported less than 5 hours of sleep per night. Student identified disadvantages of working included loss of leisure time (67.21%), exclusion from sports and clubs (18.85%), inadequate sleep (13.93%), inadequate homework time (8.20%), dislike of the job (7.38%), lower grades (6.56%), and school attendance problems (4.10%).

Students most frequently used their wages for entertainment (66.39%), car expenses (62.30%), clothes (53.28%), family living expenses (17.21%), school expenses (17.21%), college savings (14.75%). However, the greatest amount of earnings went to car expenses while the smallest amount went to college savings.

**Conclusions**

Employment of rural youth was an accepted part of the teen culture at the high school surveyed. Student employment increased dramatically each year with the greatest frequency during the senior year. Males and females were equally likely to be employed.

Working students were more likely to be tardy, absent, and to be making poorer grades. They were less likely to be planning to attend a four-year college. They were more likely to use their money for personal (car and entertainment) expenses than
for family needs or college savings. According to the students, the greatest negative impact of work was lack of leisure time to spend with friends and family or to be involved with sports and clubs. The greatest positive impact was money to spend.

References


I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT ON RURAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Author(s): John K. Price & Margaret Phelps

Corporate Source: Tennessee Technological University

Publication Date:

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

[ ] Check here
For Level 1 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEminate THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

[ ] Check here
For Level 2 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but not in paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEminate THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Signature: Margaret S. Phelps

Printed Name/Position/Title: Director, Rural Education Research & Service Consortium

Organization/Address: Tennessee Technological University

Box 5112, FB 206

Cookeville, TN 38505

Telephone: (615) 372-3791

E-Mail Address: MSP2751@tntech.edu

FAX: (615) 372-6319

Date: 12/13/96
III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher/Distributor:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/CRESS AT AEL
1031 QUARRIER STREET - 8TH FLOOR
P O BOX 1348
CHARLESTON WV 25325

phone: 800/624-9120

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2d Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com