



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Robert K. Hammond
Commissioner of Education

Keith Owen, Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner

January 28, 2013

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors:

The Colorado Department of Education, in partnership with the Rural Education Council, has been working to revise the current CDE definition of rural school districts to more closely portray the number of districts considered rural by Colorado educators. This work was recently completed, and the Rural Education Council has provided me with a definition they would like to see the department use going forward. I have approved its recommended definition. The Council has asked to review this definition each year to ensure it is working for districts, and for the opportunity to make any recommended changes as necessary.

The following is the newly revised definition of rural school districts as recommended by the Rural Education Council:

A Colorado school district is determined to be rural based on the size of the district, the distance from the nearest large urban/urbanized area, and having a student enrollment of approximately 6,500 students or fewer. Small rural districts are those districts meeting these same criteria and having a student population of fewer than 1,000 students.

The rural definition above is based on the following components and how these components impact each other:

- Distances from urban clusters, urbanized areas and census-defined rural territories as used by the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics);
- Student enrollment of approximately 6,500 students or fewer.
- And, for the small rural subset, a student population of fewer than 1,000 students.

Urbanized areas and urban clusters, as used by the NCES, are densely settled "cores" of Census-defined blocks with adjacent densely settled surrounding areas. Core areas with populations of 50,000 or more are designated as urbanized areas; those with populations between 25,000 and 50,000 are designated as urban clusters. Specifically, the Rural Education Council believed the following NCES considerations best described the concept of rural in Colorado in addition to the student enrollment of a school district.

- Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area;



- Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area;
- Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area;
- Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster;
- Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster;
- Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

Attached is a spreadsheet showing the distribution of districts considered rural and small rural using this new CDE definition.

I want to thank the Rural Education Council for its support in developing this new definition. We are very proud of the work our rural school districts are doing and feel this new definition will help CDE align support and resources to better assist our rural districts. It will also help the department to better communicate to all stakeholders the different challenges and supports our rural districts' need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert K. Hammond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "H".

Robert Hammond
Commissioner
Colorado Department of Education