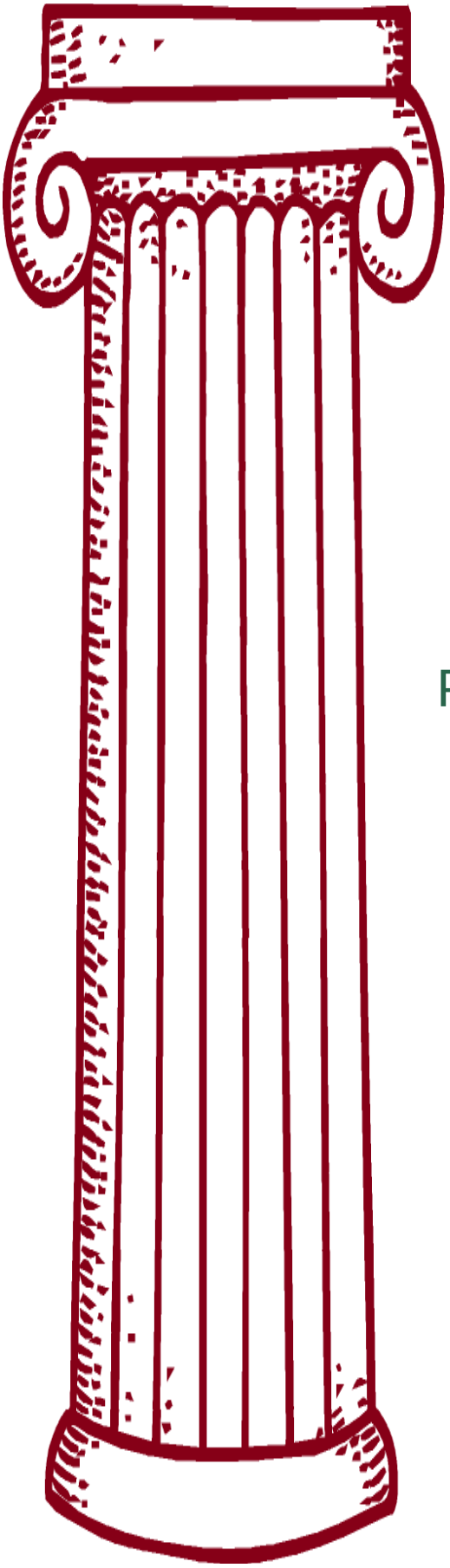

# Community Choices

## Public Policy Education Program

## Module Five

## The Community's Human Resource Attributes

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SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
SRDC

# Module Five Instructor's Guide

## The Community's Human Resource Attributes

## Objectives

After completing the workshop, participants will be able to do the following:

- Determine the key items that help one to assess the human resource qualities of an area.
- Understand the linkages that exists between level of education and unemployment rates, income earnings, and poverty status.
- Appreciate the unique economic and social problems facing adult illiterates, high school dropouts, and non-college bound students.
- Develop an understanding of the significant human resource problems that exist in the South, particularly in its nonmetropolitan areas.

## Procedures and Time Line

- Begin the session by asking participants to indicate what comes to mind when they think about the human resource qualities of their community. List these on a newsprint or a clean overhead transparency. After a few minutes, ask the group to state what importance these human resource features might have in shaping the social and economic health of their community. This group discussion should help attune the group to the human resource dimensions that will be given treatment in this module. Plan to spend about 10 minutes on this introductory portion of your workshop.
- Use the information generated in the group discussion to introduce the human resource attributes that will be highlighted in this module. Indicate that in thinking about the human resources found in a community (or county, region, or country), it is not uncommon to give primary attention to the educational status of the population living in that area. It is this subject of educational status, coupled with the related subjects of poverty, unemployment and earnings, that is given major treatment in this module. During the next 20 to 30 minutes, present some key facts about the human resource conditions of the United States and those outlined for the South. Be ready to get the group involved in some discussion of the information you are presenting if the opportunity presents itself.
- After presenting the data contained in the module, offer the group the list of challenges found in the conclusions section of the module. Ask participants to share what they think might be other challenges given the information that has been shared with them in this session.

For the final phase of the workshop, get the participants involved in one of the activities that has been prepared to complement this session. This portion of the session should take 50 to 60 minutes.

## Materials

- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Newsprint pad and markers
- Copies of *The Community's Human Resource Attributes* module
- Copies of the activity sheets

## Going Further— Things For Participants To Do

Have participants visit with members of the local school board and with high school administrators to discuss the nature and extent of the high school dropout problem in the community. Visit the local state employment agency. Ask about job prospects for people with different levels of education. What educational requirements are local employers requesting?

# The Community's Human Resource Attributes

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## Introduction

As people begin to survey the features of local communities, it's not uncommon to examine such things as the quality of the health delivery system, the availability of good housing, the level of access to a variety of retail services, and the breadth of cultural amenities. The one attribute that tends to rank highest for many individuals who now live in, or are considering moving to, a given community is the quality of its educational system.

People are increasingly concerned about how well schools educate students and prepare them for educational opportunities beyond high school or for productive jobs when they enter the labor force. And that concern often influences decisions made about the attractiveness of a local community as a place to live.

"People are increasingly concerned about how well schools educate students and prepare them for educational opportunities beyond high school."

This document discusses factors that tend to provide a good pulse of the human resource qualities found in a given locality. Specifically, educational status and its relationship to poverty and other socioeconomic outcomes are examined. These factors represent meaningful measures for assessing the strength of an areas's human resources. The primary intent of this module is to provide a descriptive overview of the human resource qualities of a locality, and to give careful thought to the consequences that these attributes may have on the social and economic health of this community.

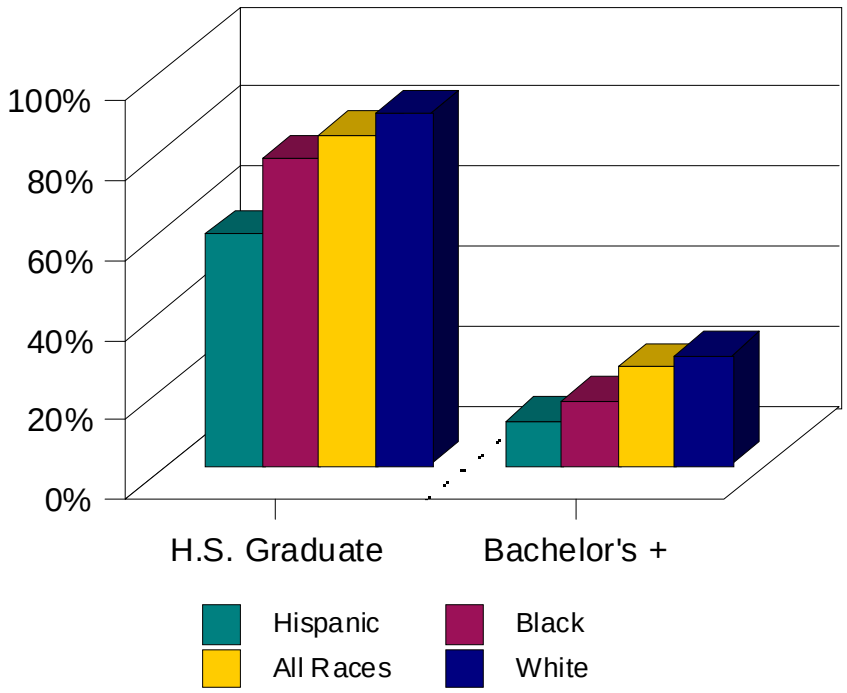
## Exploring Educational Status

The amount of education that people possess represents an important index of the human resource characteristics of an area. As will be demonstrated in this section, the economic and social complexion of a community is significantly shaped by the educational status of its population.

At the national level, 1999 education statistics reveal the following (see Figure 1):

- Nearly 83 percent of all persons 25 years of age or older are high school graduates.
- About 1 in 4 persons in the 25 + age category have completed a baccalaureate degree or higher.

# Figure 1. Years of School Completed by Persons 25 + Years Old in the United States, March 1999.




| | H.S. Graduate | Bachelor's + |
|---|---|---|
| **Hispanic** | 57.7% | 11.1% |
| **Black** | 76.7% | 16.0% |
| **All Races** | 82.6% | 24.5% |
| **White** | 87.8% | 27.5% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

- Educational attainment among individuals 25 years of age or over varies by race and ethnic background. High school completion reaches the 87.8 percent level among whites, 76.7 percent among blacks, and 57.7 percent among hispanics. The percent of persons with a bachelor's degree or more is highest among whites (27.5 %), but slips to 16 percent among blacks and to 11.1 percent among hispanics.

## Education's Link With Unemployment and Earnings

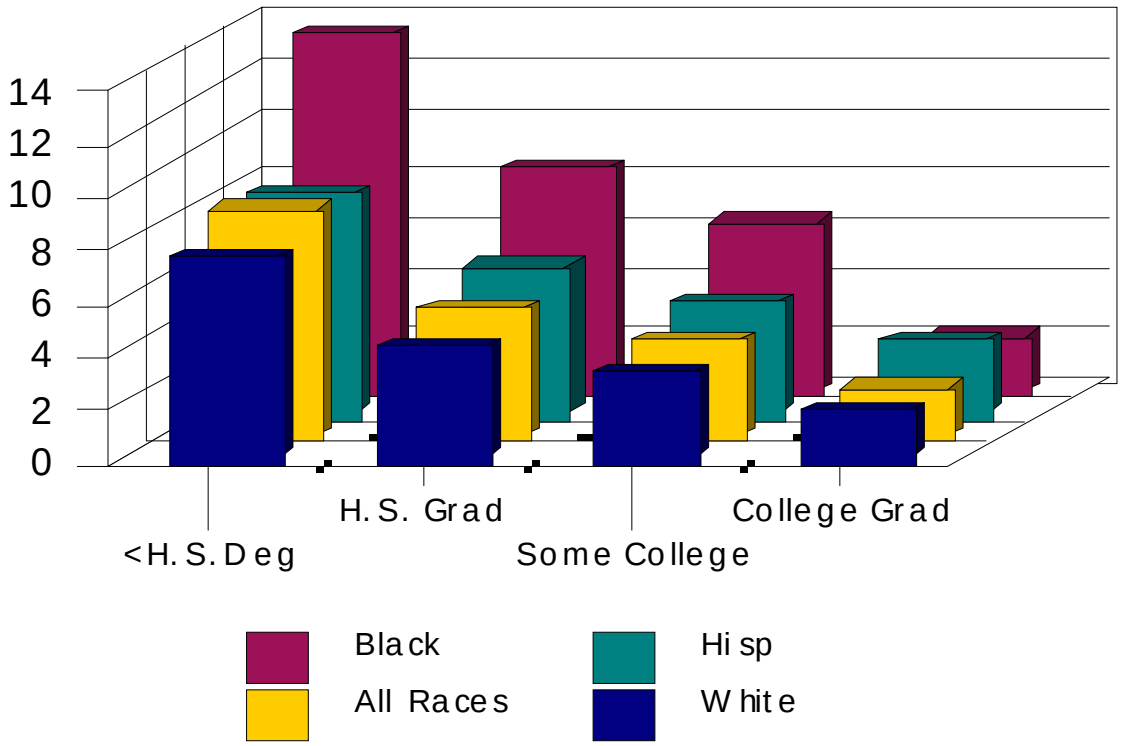
Educational attainment has a profound impact on the individual's capacity to secure a job and to earn a decent income. Two charts (see Figures 2 and 3) bring this message home. Figure 2 shows that unemployment decreases as one's level of education increases. In 1998, for example, the overall unemployment rate for persons 16 years of age and above with less than a high school education was over 5 times higher than for individuals holding a college degree or more (8.5 percent vs. 1.8 percent unemployed). Rates of unemployment did vary by race and ethnicity. Unemployment among blacks, for example, proved higher than those of whites and hispanics at nearly every educational level. The sole exception was for college graduates, where unemployment among hispanics was slightly higher than that found among blacks.

As a general statement, educational success is an important ticket for securing a job and maintaining a job. It is clear that for persons with less than a high school education, their chances of being unemployed are anywhere from 3-6 times higher than that of their college-educated counterparts (depending upon the specific race/ethnic category being examined). Given the increasing demand for educated and skilled workers, the long term prospects for workers with no high school education appears gloomy.

Figure 3 shows the income differences associated with various levels of education. In 1998, the average income earned by individuals (of all races) with a baccalaureate degree or higher exceeded $52,000. This income level decreased steadily as one moved down the education ladder. Persons with less than a high school education (9-11th grade) averaged less than $18,300, an income level that was 65 percent below that of individuals with a college degree.

As a rule, the average income of hispanics was lower than that of whites, while the income of blacks proved to be even lower than those of hispanics, regardless of the educational level under examination.

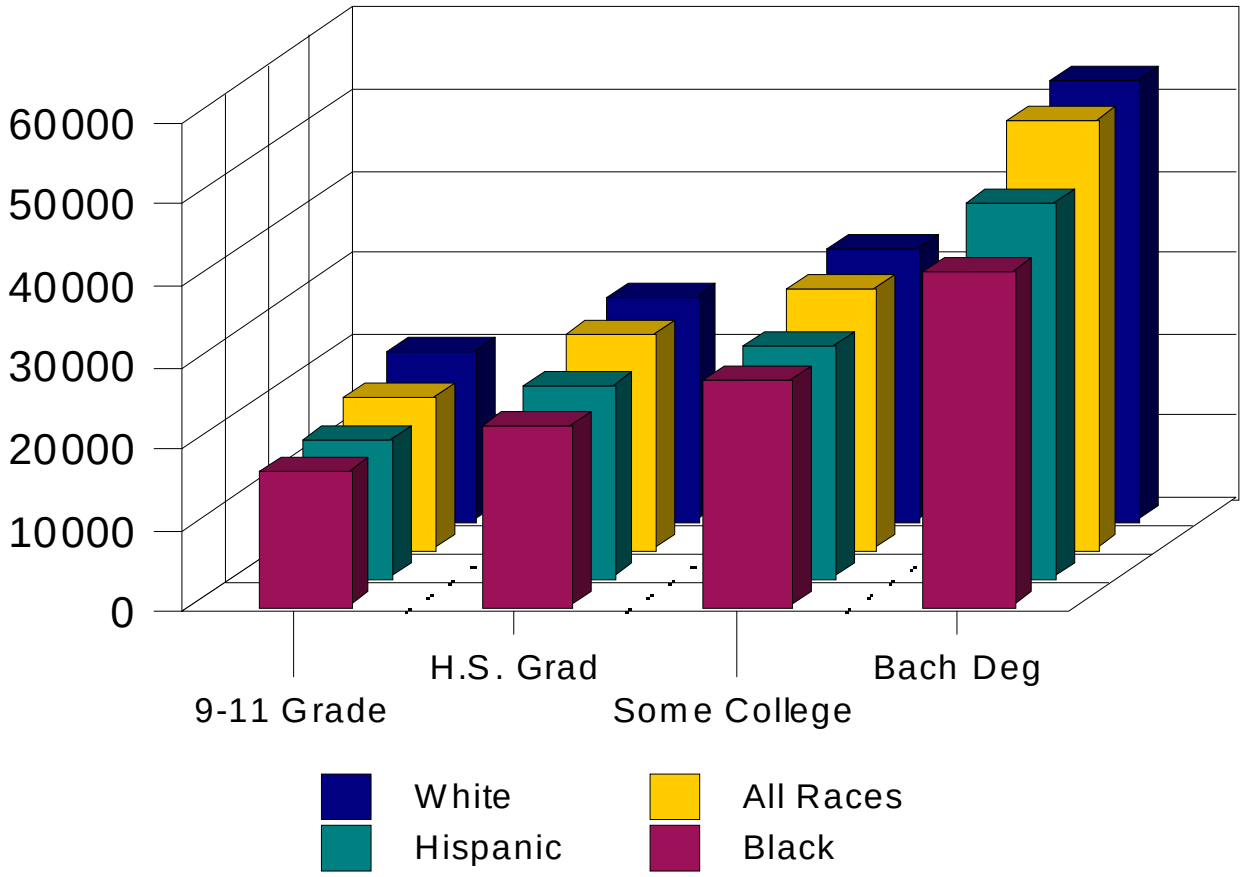
# Figure 2. Unemployment Rates of Persons 25-64 Years Old by Years of School Completed, 1998.




| | < H.S. Degree | H.S. Graduate | < Bachelor's Degree | College Graduate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black | 13.4% | 8.4% | 6.4% | 2.1% |
| Hispanic | 8.3% | 5.5% | 4.2% | 2.8% |
| All Races | 8.5% | 4.8% | 3.6% | 1.8% |
| White | 7.5% | 4.2% | 3.2% | 1.7% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999.

## Figure 3. Average Earnings for Full-Time Persons 25 + Years of Age by Years of School Completed, 1998.




| | 9-11th Grade | H.S. Graduate | Some College | Bachelor's + |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | $20,506 | $27,235 | $32,989 | $53,547 |
| All Races | 18,277 | 26,141 | 31,850 | 52,159 |
| Hispanic | 16,667 | 23,360 | 28,071 | 45,540 |
| Black | 16,434 | 21,843 | 27,607 | 40,774 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

## Education and Poverty

The link between educational attainment and impoverishment is startling. In 1999, over 22 percent of adults 25 years of age or older having less than a high school education lived in poverty (see Figure 4). Poverty touched 9.2 percent of adult Americans having a high school education, while the figure dipped to 6.1 percent among those with some college education. For the college graduate, only 2.8 percent lived below the poverty line in 1999 [2].

When examined on the basis of race and ethnic background, the percent of the adult population living in poverty was most extensive among blacks and hispanics who lacked a high school degree (34.4 percent and 26 percent, respectively). Better education significantly reduced the poverty status of all racial and ethnic groups. For example, the percent of blacks with less than a high school education living in poverty in 1999 proved to be ten times higher than that found for college-educated African Americans (34.4 percent vs. 3.2 percent). Clearly, education proved to be the key vehicle for escaping poverty.

## A Word About Functional Illiteracy

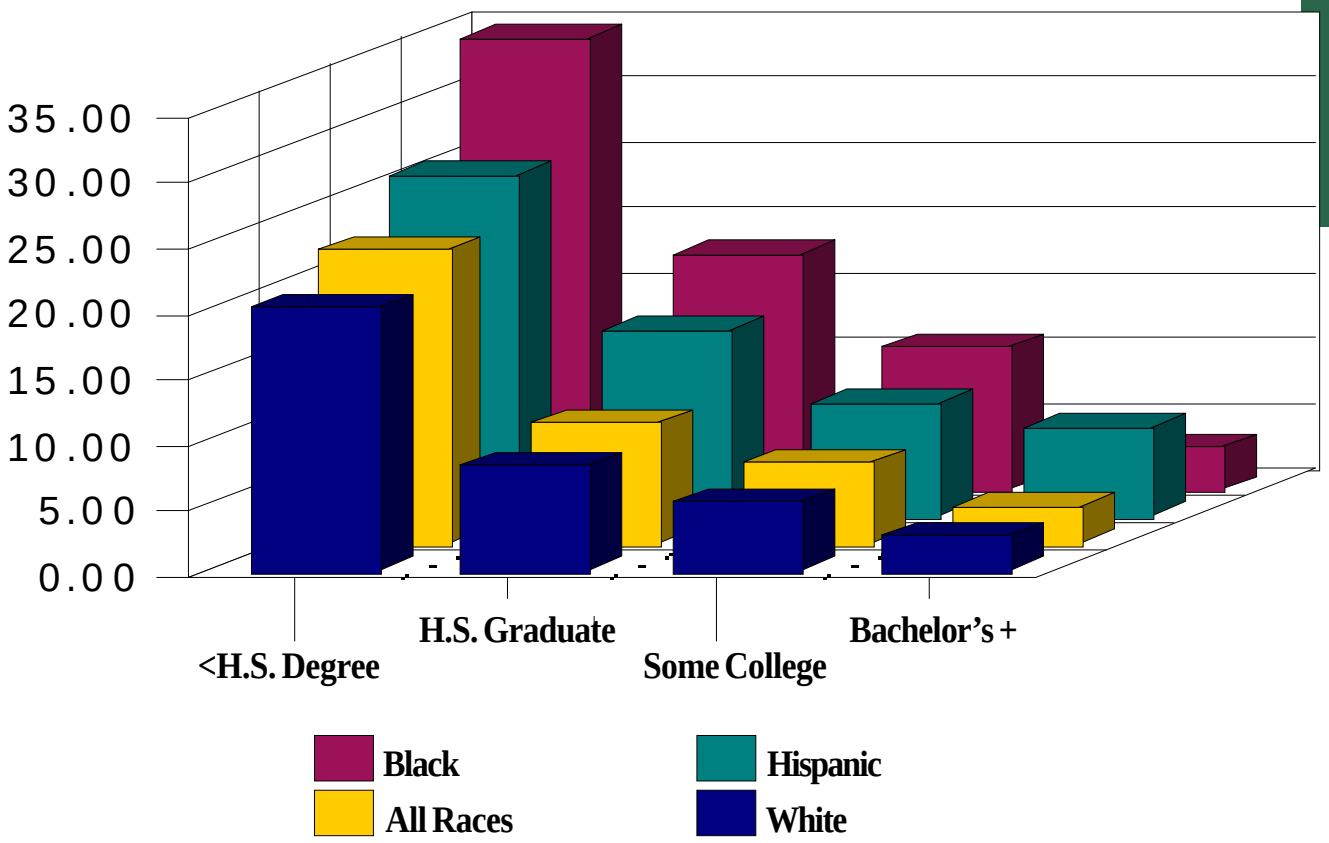
An important education issue that has generated much concern is that of illiteracy. Several years ago, Jonathan Kozol [4] claimed that 25 million American adults could not read and an additional 35 million people had only minimal reading capacity that left them unable to effectively function in today's society. The National Adult Literacy Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in the early part of the 1990s, found that 40-44 million adults in the country demonstrated skills in the lowest level of prose, document and quantitative abilities [7]. Approximately 62 percent of those in this lower literacy category failed to ever complete a high school education. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that functional illiteracy is costing U.S. businesses $300 billion annually in lost productivity [5].

"Many believe that all public and private literacy programs combined provide services to only a handful of those in need of literacy programs."

While illiteracy continues to be a major problem in this country, many believe that all public and private literacy programs combined provide services to only a handful of those in need of literacy programs. This is unfortunate given that those who function at the lowest literacy level tend to suffer from higher rates of unemployment and poverty, and have greater dependence on state and federal public assistance programs.

The general definition of functional illiteracy is one in which the individual cannot function sufficiently on the job or in everyday life because of a lack of basic skills ranging from reading, writing and mathematics [9]. This definition makes the accurate measurement of functional illiteracy a difficult task at best.

## Figure 4. Poverty Status of Persons 25 + Years Old by Education, 1999.




| | <H.S. Degree | H.S. Graduate | Some College | Bachelor's + |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Black** | 34.4% | 17.9% | 10.8% | 3.2% |
| **Hispanic** | 26.0% | 14.2% | 8.6% | 6.8% |
| **All Races** | 22.4% | 9.2% | 6.1% | 2.8% |
| **White** | 20.0% | 7.9% | 5.2% | 2.6% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1999.

While not ideal, one approach that has gained some acceptance as a proxy measure for functional illiteracy is the number of school years completed. It is suggested that persons who have completed 8 years or fewer of education are at risk of being functionally illiterate. The use of this measure seems reasonable in light of the fact that the National Adult Literacy Survey found that 75-80 percent of adults with Level 1 literacy skills (the lowest category on the literacy scale) had 0-8 years of education [7].

Figure 5 reveals that nearly 8 percent of the U.S. population 25 years of age and older have an 8th grade education or less — our proxy measure of functional illiteracy. This percentage is lowest among whites (4.5 percent) and highest among hispanics (26.2 percent). Sizable variations do exist, however, on the basis of the metropolitan status of the area in which individuals reside. As a general point, adults living in metropolitan areas of the U.S. are less likely to be functionally illiterate when contrasted with persons located in the nonmetro areas of the country (7.8 percent vs. 8.5 percent). The disparities are particularly significant among blacks. About 7.1 percent of metro blacks are considered to be functionally illiterate, with this figure swelling to 14 percent for African Americans living in the nonmetro U.S. For hispanics, the level of functional illiteracy tends to be slightly higher in the nonmetropolitan U.S., although both the metro and nonmetro percentages are quite sizable.

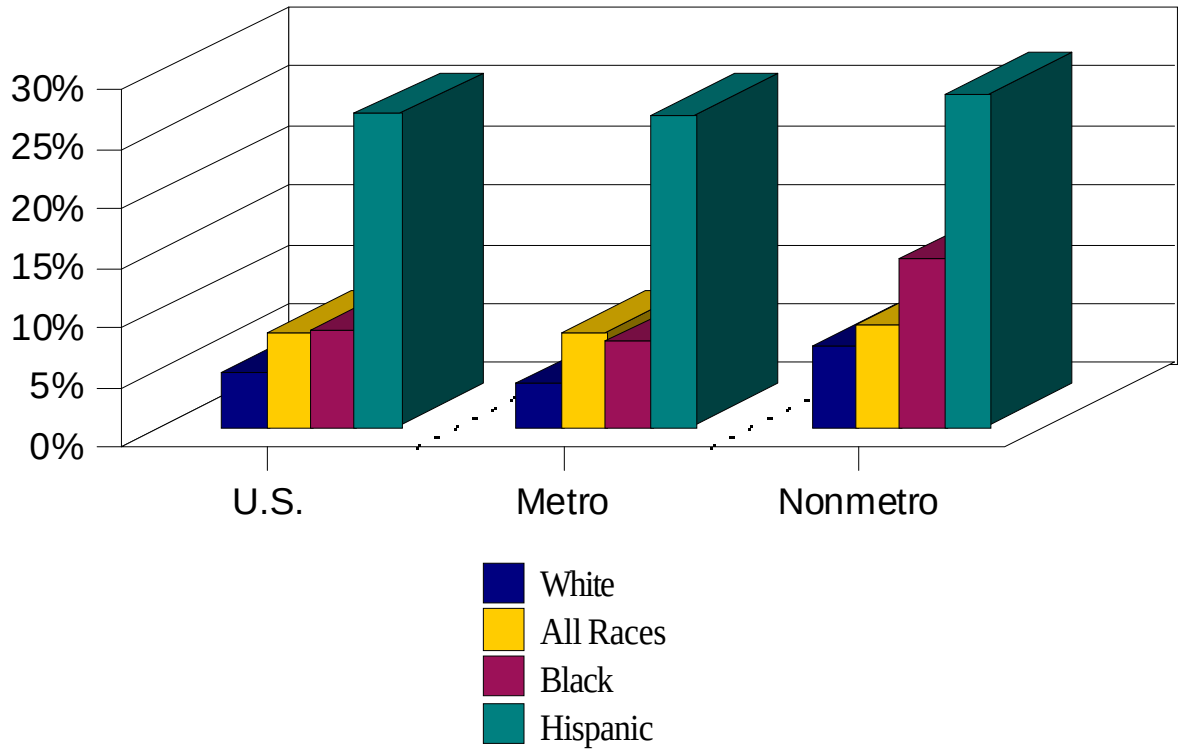
"Dropout rates proved to be much higher among black and hispanics when compared to those of whites."

## Dropouts and Non-College Bound Students

While we have presented information on the educational status of adults 25 years of age and above, what about the high school dropout rate among persons 18-24 years of age in the United States? Recent data on the status dropout rates of individuals (i.e., the percentage of persons 16-24 years old who have not completed high school and are not enrolled in any high school program) show:

- The proportion of individuals (16-24 years old) who were high school dropouts in 1999 stood at 11.2 percent, a figure that was somewhat lower than that found for much of the period of the 1990s [3].
- Dropout rates proved to be much higher among black and hispanics when compared to those of whites. For example, some 7.3 percent of white, non-hispanics 16-24 years of age were dropouts in 1999. This figure increased to 12.6 percent among black, non-hispanic individuals, and to 28.6 percent among hispanics [3].
- Even in light of the good economic times that the nation enjoyed over the decade of the 1990s, the unemployment rate for dropouts in 1998 was 6.5 percentage points higher than the rate for high school graduates (15.7 percent vs. 9.2 percent). Furthermore, nearly 35 percent of high school dropouts were not even in the labor force in 1998, much higher than the 14.9 percent non-labor force participation found among high school graduates [6].

## Figure 5. Persons 25 + Years Old With an 8th Grade Education or Less by Metro/Nonmetro Residence, March 1999.




| | U.S. | Metro | Nonmetro |
|---|---|---|---|
| White | 4.5% | 3.7% | 6.7% |
| All Races | 7.9% | 7.8% | 8.5% |
| Black | 8.0% | 7.1% | 14.0% |
| Hispanic | 26.2% | 26.1% | 27.9% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (various years).

Closely related to the dropout issue is that of non-college bound students. Several years ago, the William T. Grant Foundation noted in one of its highly regarded reports on America's youth and families that nearly one-half of young adults 16-24 years of age were not going on to college after high school. The report labeled them the "Forgotten Half," principally because the Foundation felt that educators were focused on attending to the needs of students who were going on to college and as such, were failing to meet the needs of those who were not college bound [8]. The by-products of this inattention, the report argued, has been a shrinking pool of decent jobs with a good future available for these non-college bound persons, increasing uncertainty with regard to job security, and erosion in the real income earned by these individuals in their jobs.

While the William T. Grant report was released in the late 1980s, many of the concerns expressed at that time remain true today. In fact, Beaulieu, Israel and Cluck [1] recently released a report that examined the labor force experiences of non-college bound youth in the U.S. who entered the workforce after graduating from high school in 1982. They found that over the course of several years, most non-college bound persons remained employed in lower paying, lower status jobs. Few were able to good decent jobs that paid decent wages and that could provide them with economic security over the long-term.

"Several years ago, the William T. Grant Foundation noted in one of its highly regarded reports on America's youth and families that nearly one-half of young adults 16-24 years of age where not going to college after high school."

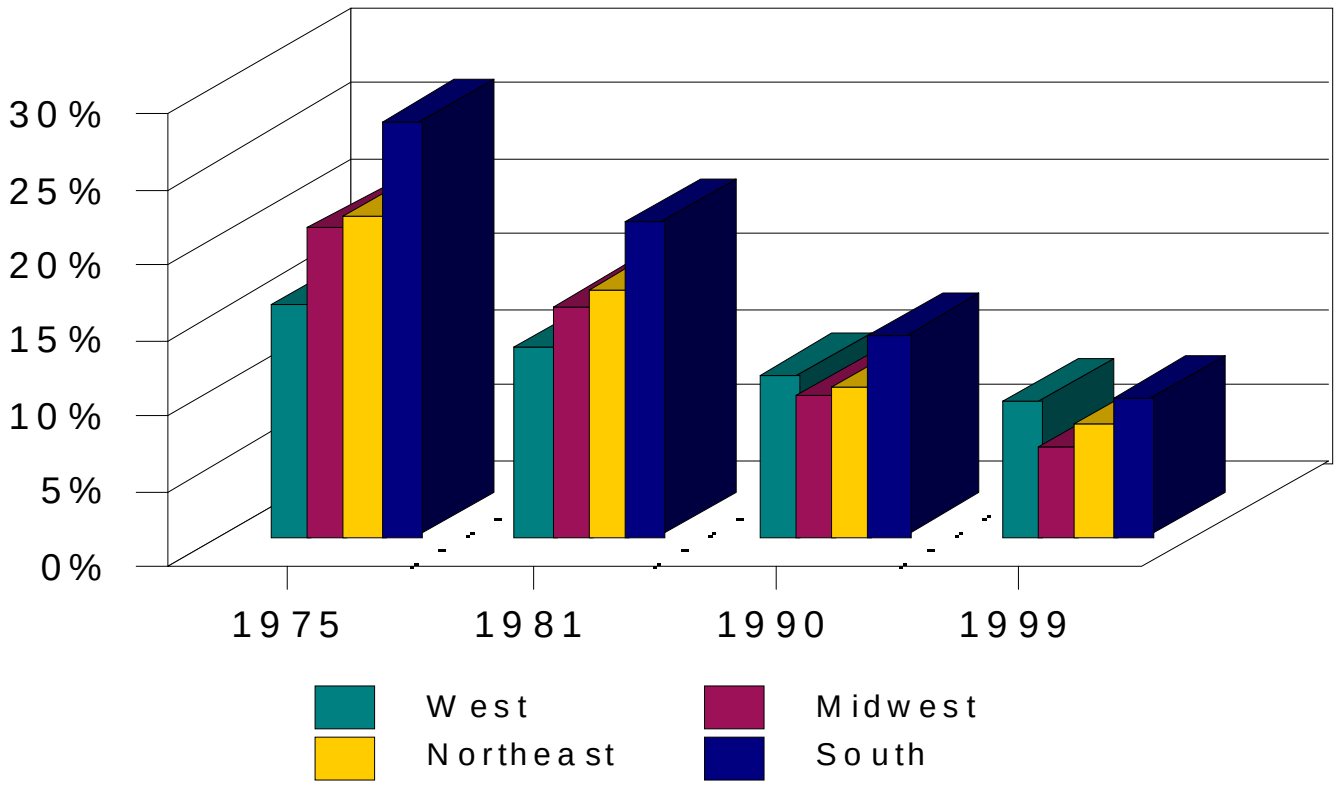
## Human Resource Conditions in the South

As we take stock of the human resource qualities of the U.S. as a whole, it is important to be attuned to the unique set of human resource problems that face our region of the country, namely, the South. In general, the South suffers from a number of human resource limitations, many of which are the worst of any region in the country.

Consider the following facts:

- In comparison to other regions of the country, the South has the highest proportion of functional illiterates (see Figure 6), that is, persons with an 8th grade education or less. But, recognition must be given to the fact that the South has made major educational strides over the past 25 years. In 1975, for example, over 27 percent of the South's adult population (25 years old and over) were considered to be functionally illiterate (that is, had an 8th grade education or less). By 1999, the figure had dwindled to 9 percent.

## Figure 6. Persons 25 + Years Old with an 8th Grade Education or Less, by U.S. Region, 1975-1999.




| | 1975 | 1981 | 1990 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| West | 15.3% | 12.4% | 10.5% | 8.9% |
| Midwest | 20.3% | 15.1% | 9.2% | 5.8% |
| Northeast | 21.2% | 16.2% | 9.8% | 7.3% |
| South | 27.4% | 20.7% | 13.2% | 9.0% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Statistics, March 1998.

- The South has the second highest status dropout rate (in 1999) in the nation for persons 16-24 years of age at 12.7 percent. Only the Western region surpasses the South on this measure (13.8 percent). Unfortunately, of the 3.8 million persons 16-24 years of age who are high school dropouts in the U.S., nearly 40 percent are residents of the South. [3].

- The region's metro and nonmetro areas have both witnessed measurable declines since 1990 in the percent of their adult population (25-64 years old) having less than a high school education. But even with these improvements, six of every 10 nonmetro adults either had terminal high school degrees (40.4 percent) or less than a high school education (22.2 percent) in 1999. In contrast, less than 46 percent of metro residents fell into the high school education or less categories (see Figure 7).

"The region's metro and nonmetro areas have both witnessed measurable declines since 1990 in the percent of their adult population having less than a high school education."

- As shown in Figure 7, the expansion of college-educated residents has been negligible in the nonmetro South, increasing by only one percent over a nine year period. Metro areas, on the other hand, have seen adult populations with baccalaureate degrees or more increasing from 23.9 percent to 28.1 percent between 1990 and 1999. So today, more than one in four persons in the metro South are college educated, while the rate is approximately one in seven in the region's nonmetro areas.

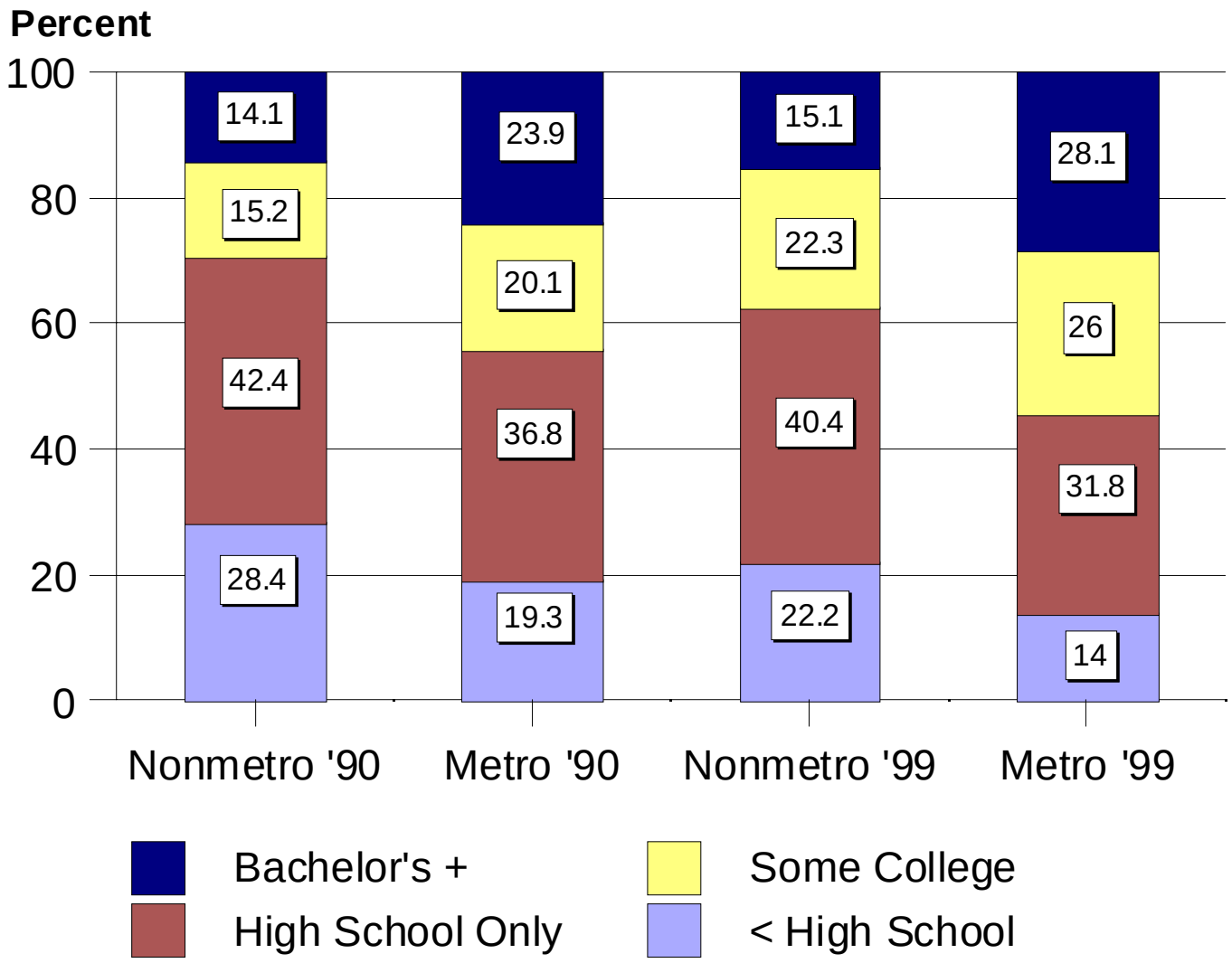
While these data are informative in their own right, greater insight on the educational progress realized by metro and nonmetro Southerners over the past decade can be gleaned from Table 1. It shows that:

- Nonmetro whites have witnessed a 27 percent decline in the percent of its adult population with less than a high school education since 1990 (from 24.9 percent to 18.2 percent). Still, the 1999 figure is twice the rate found among metro whites (8.4 percent).

- High school completion rates among the region's rural African Americans continue to show progress. As of 1999, the proportion of nonmetro blacks with terminal high school degrees stood at 43.1 percent, an improvement of about five percentage points since 1990.

- Hispanics remain entrenched in the lowest rungs of the educational attainment ladder, particularly in the South's nonmetropolitan areas. As of 1999, over one-half of rural Hispanic adults had less than a high school education, a figure that was virtually identical to that found in 1990.

## Figure 7. Educational Status of Metro/Nonmetro Residents (25-64 years old) in the South, 1990 and 1999.




Source: Current Population Survey, March 1990 and 1999.

# Table 1. Educational attainment of metro and nonmetro adults (25-64 years old) in 1990 and 1999, by race and ethnicity.

| Race/Ethnicity | 1990 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Metro | Nonmetro | Metro | Nonmetro |
| *White* | | | | |
| < High School | 13.6 | 24.9 | 8.4 | 18.2 |
| H.S. Only | 37.3 | 43.6 | 31.7 | 41.0 |
| Some College | 21.1 | 15.9 | 27.1 | 23.7 |
| Bachelors + | 28.0 | 15.6 | 32.9 | 17.1 |
| No. of cases | 11,788 | 5,553 | 9,930 | 3,860 |
| *African American* | | | | |
| < High School | 26.6 | 41.1 | 16.7 | 28.3 |
| H.S. Only | 40.0 | 38.3 | 36.8 | 43.1 |
| Some College | 15.7 | 13.1 | 27.9 | 20.7 |
| Bachelors + | 14.0 | 7.6 | 18.6 | 7.9 |
| No. of cases | 2,756 | 1,108 | 2,584 | 696 |
| *Hispanic* | | | | |
| < High School | 39.1 | 50.7 | 33.2 | 51.8 |
| H.S. Only | 31.9 | 35.2 | 28.4 | 30.3 |
| Some College | 16.4 | 8.7 | 21.3 | 12.7 |
| Bachelors + | 12.7 | 5.5 | 17.2 | 5.2 |
| No. of cases | 2,414 | 219 | 2,571 | 363 |

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1990 and 1999.

- The largest pool of educated Southerners, across all race and ethnic categories, remain embedded in the region's metropolitan localities. The percentage of white, African American, and Hispanic residents with baccalaureate degrees or better is approximately two to three times greater in the metro South than in the nonmetro South as of 1999. Only 7.9 percent of rural Southern blacks had a college education in 1999, while the figure for Hispanics was even lower (5.2 percent).

- Since 1990, the metro/nonmetro gap has increased in terms of presence of college-educated adults in the population. For example, the percent of African Americans with college degrees in the metro South grew by 33 percent during the 1990-99 period (from 14 percent to 18.6 percent). In the nonmetro South, expansion of college-educated blacks inched up by less than 4 percent (from 7.6 percent to 7.9 percent). Simply put, metro areas are expanding their pool of educated adults of prime working age at a faster pace than are the region's nonmetro areas.

## Conclusions

The human resources that are available in an area have a great effect on the prospects of realizing economic and social progress in a community. From the information presented in this document, it is apparent that access to employment and to a decent wage is closely tied to the quality of the human resources that people possess.

There are a number of important challenges that face rural leaders and residents as they struggle to advance the human resource endowments of their communities. These challenges include:

- How to get high-school-aged students to stay in school and to complete their high school education?

- How to address the high school dropout problems that touch so many blacks and hispanics today?

- How to secure a decent future for the large pool of non college-bound persons?

- How to help adults who suffer from functional illiteracy and who are unable to qualify for many of the jobs now focused in local labor markets?

- How to expand the pool of adults in our communities who have some type of post-secondary education, be it a technical/vocational or a baccalaureate degree?

These are but a small sampling of some of the tough questions that confront many communities today. And for rural areas of the South, the challenges are even more pervasive. How do we develop the human resources needed to make the rural South competitive in the 21st century? It is an issue that deserves the attention of citizens and leaders in every rural community in the South. How committed local leaders and citizens are to effectively addressing these questions may very well dictate the long-term economic and social health of their communities.

## References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[4] Kozol, Jonathan. "Facing the consequences of our illiteracy." *Gainesville Sun* (September 4) 1988.

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[6] U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999.* Washington, DC.

[7] U.S. Department of Education. *Adult Literacy in America*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics, (December) 1993.

[8] William T. Grant Foundation. *The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families.* Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship (November), 1988.

[9] Youth Policy Institute. *Youth Policy* 12 (November/December), 1990.

# Module Five Instructor's Guide

The Community's Human Resource Attributes

# Small Group Activities

# Activity 1

## Taking a Look at the Human Resource Characteristics of Your State

1. We have had an opportunity in this session to examine some of the key human resource features of the U.S. and the South. Now, we would like to offer you the time to study important facts about your state for the purpose of exploring its human resource attributes. While the information being provided for this activity tends to be primarily state-level information, we encourage your group to seek county and community level data so that local human resource conditions can be examined and discussed by all of you who are participating in the *Community Choices* program.

Using the information presented in the attached tables (Tables 1-3), we would like you to study the facts on your Southern state with regard to the following items:

- The percent of the state's population (25 years of age and above) having a 4-year college education or better (that is, a bachelor's or advanced degree) in 1990 and 1998 (see Table 1);
- The percent of the population having a high school degree only in 1990;
- The percent of the population with less than a high school education in 1990 and 1998 (to calculate this for 1998, subtract the percent "high school graduate or more" from 100);
- The percent of people with some college (but no degree) and those with an associate's degree;
- The proportion of students in the state who had not completed a high school degree in 1990.
- The extent to which the percent with a high school education or more, and the percent who are college graduates or more, vary by race and ethnicity (whites, blacks, and hispanics) in 1990 (see Table 2);
- The amount of revenues that states have to support public elementary and secondary education in 1998, and the source of these funds (compare how much comes from the various sources in different states in the region). Also, the per capita amount of dollars that is spent in your state for elementary and secondary education (see Table 3).

2. Once you have complete this task, break up into small groups of five to seven people and share with each other some of your observations. As a group, explore how your state differs from other states in the South. Is your state worse off or better off in terms of the characteristics of its human resources?

3. As a small group, identify what you think is the most critical human resource problem facing your state at present (try to use the data you have studied to strengthen your case). What does your group feel are some of the factors that have contributed to this human resource problem? Please list these items on a newsprint pad or overhead transparency.

4. Discuss and identify two or three alternatives that might be considered for addressing this human resource issue. What might be some of the consequences associated with each of these alternatives? List these alternatives and consequences on the newsprint pad or overhead transparency.

5. A representative from your group should be selected to share a brief overview of your group's discussion with others taking part in the ***Community Choices*** program**.**

# Activity 2

## Education and Workforce Quality Issues and Strategies: What Do You Think?

Over the past several years, a number of authors have offered their views of the difficulties that loom ahead if the human resource shortcomings of our country are not soon addressed. Selected parts of these articles that relate directly to the quality of our present workforce and the adequacy of our country's educational system have been excerpted. Also, strategies that some of the authors proposed for dealing with these issues have been outlined. Study the problem excerpts and recommendations.

I. ADULT WORK FORCE

a. Problems/Issues

*Jobs for the unskilled and poorly educated are disappearing and future employment will require, if not higher education, at least good communications skills and basic ability in math and reading, a new study says. . . The nation is in transition from an industrial to a service economy, which means most jobs will require education and skills.*

"Study: No Education, No Job Future." Randolph E. Schimid.

*We have a work place crisis in this country. . . The crisis is that more than four out of 10 of the workers who are on the job today are not being trained to do the work that today's economy demands... Forty-two percent of the workforce will need additional training over the next decade to keep up with the new demands of their jobs, but will not get the training if present practices continue.*

"50 Million Workers Need Training and Development, Says National Group." Youth Policy Journal.

*Shortcomings are not limited to what today's students are learning in school. . . Perhaps 25 million adults are functionally illiterate. As many as 25 million more adult workers need to update their skills or knowledge.*

"America 2000: An Education Strategy." Youth Policy Journal

*In the new economy, brainpower trumps the cards economists have traditionally counted on in their growth hand. Cheap land and unskilled labor are plentiful around the world. Capital goes where it will earn the best return . . . And advanced machinery-technology can be moved anywhere in the world, where people can be easily trained to use it. Brainpower trumps them all.*

1998 Commission on the Future of the South

*The 21st Century battle for economic opportunity is going to hinge on digital preparedness and digital literacy. It is important to note that the South as a whole is not well prepared for the digital economy . . . The South has the lowest proportion of residents using the Internet and the fewest households with e-mail of any region of the United States.*

"The State of the South 2000." MDC, Inc.

*Requirements for good, well-paying jobs are changing rapidly as new technology calls for ever-higher skills. To qualify for the high-growth, higher-paying occupations generated in the global economy, the South's workers must constantly augment their skills and increase their knowledge. Increasingly the question will be asked of Southerners wanting to move up the career ladder: What did you learn lately?*

"The State of the South 2000." MDC, Inc.

b. Some Recommendations Proposed by these Authors

- Establish "skill clinics" in every large community and worksite. These clinics will allow people to find out how their present skills compare with those they would like to have -- or that they need for a particular job and where they can acquire the skills and knowledge they still need.

- Develop work-based learning alternatives for non-college-bound youth to help them effec tively make the transition from school to a meaningful career path.

- Provide additional incentives to encourage employers to increase the training of workers and to adopt structured work-based training programs.

- Recognize that community colleges can help prepare our people for the global economy, but only if we give them the status and resources it takes to do the job.

- "Cultivate Brainpower." Cultivate the brainpower of every child in the South; cultivate the brainpower of men and women already in the workforce! Cultivate it early, cultivate in often! It's not just more jobs we need, it's better jobs. Brainpower is the avenue to get them.

- The South must change how it thinks about education, recognizing the necessity for continu-ous learning in a highly competitive global economy. . . We must provide education and training that enables people of all ages and walks of life to navigate the changing world of work.

- We must enable rural communities to make the transition from a natural resource and low-end manufacturing economy to the digital age. Connecting rural areas to economic activity, be it to a nearby economic center or to a burgeoning sector of the new economy, is critical to rural economic survival and requires rural communities to collaborate regionally for success.

II. THE EDUCATION OF OUR YOUTH

a. Problems/Issues

*While we spend as much per student as almost any country in the world, American students are at or near the back of the pack in international comparisons. If we don't make radical changes, that is where they are going to stay.*

"America 2000: An Education Strategy." Youth Policy Journal.

*The second Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll of teachers' attitudes toward the public schools pointed out that "parents lack of interest/support" led the teachers' list of the biggest problems facing the public schools. Parents, not educators, bear the primary responsibility for the faults and failures in educating our youth within our present public-school system. We have witnessed a preoccupation with dropout prevention programs during this decade of school reform without seriously considering the alternative of letting the student quit and allowing teachers to devote their efforts to working with students who have assumed responsibility for their education.*

"Our Public Schools are a Mess." Donald M. Clark

*Rural America's human capital has been falling, mainly through the export of its young people to urban and suburban areas. While this trend is not new, new steps are needed to stem that tide if rural America is to tap more economic opportunities, especially since knowledge-based industries figure so prominently in the new economy.*

"New Directions for U.S. Rural Policy." Center for the Study of Rural America, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

*As we consider the people facing difficulties, we must pay special attention to children. If you take one lesson in economic development away from this report, it should be this: In the years ahead, effective education for everyone will drive our economy, and effective education begins with a family and their children before birth.*

1998 Commission on the Future of the South

b. Some Recommendations Proposed by These Authors

- Develop a more responsive academic and vocational education programs that better meet the needs of all students, particularly in preparing them for productive work.

- It's time for parents to get their act together and help educators by reinforcing the mission of the school at home and by monitoring their youngster's progress.

- To plan and implement substantive school reform. . ., other stakeholders (such as business, industry, government, and labor) -- the employment community -- must collaborate with education in a formal broad-based alliance over the long term.

- If we want to compete for the sophisticated jobs in the future, we need to invest more heavily in our technical schools, colleges and universities.

- If we want to make sure our workforce is prepared for what's coming, there's not better place to start then responsible parenthood, quality childcare and early childhood education.

- There are four steps that can be considered for boosting rural human capital. These are: utilizing distance education to build the human capital of the existing workforce, strengthen the rural education system to raise educational outcomes for rural youth, import new human capital through the 21st equivalent of the Homestead Act, and create a rural environment that will better attract and retain people with high human capital.

## III. GROUP ACTIVITY

Now, either as an entire group or as smaller groups of 5 to 7 people, discuss your thoughts and reactions to the problems that these authors have identified both for our workforce and the education of our youth. Consider the following questions:

a. Do you agree with the issues identified? Are there other related issues/problems that need to be considered? If yes, what are they?

b. What are your reactions/opinions of the strategies being proposed? What specific strategies would you see as worthy of consideration?

To give your group enough time to debate these problems and strategies, you may want to have part of the group deal with the workforce issues and the remainder of the group address the education of our youth problem. Allow some time at the end of this activity to share each group's thoughts and recommendations on the topic with which they dealt.

## Table 1. The Educational Status of Persons 25 Years of Age and Older in 13 Southern States, 1990 and 1998.

| Highest level of education completed in 1990 (in percent). | | | | | | | 1998 Educational Attainment. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Southern State | Not a HS grad | HS grad only | Some college | Associate's degree | Bachelor's degree | Advanced degree | Percent who are dropouts | HS grad or more | College or more |
| Alabama | 33.1 | 29.4 | 16.8 | 5.0 | 10.1 | 5.5 | 12.6 | 78.8 | 20.6 |
| Arkansas | 33.7 | 32.7 | 16.6 | 3.7 | 8.9 | 4.5 | 11.4 | 76.8 | 16.2 |
| Florida | 25.6 | 30.1 | 19.4 | 6.6 | 12.0 | 6.3 | 14.3 | 81.9 | 22.5 |
| Georgia | 29.1 | 29.6 | 17.0 | 5.0 | 12.9 | 6.4 | 14.1 | 80.0 | 20.7 |
| Kentucky | 35.4 | 31.8 | 15.2 | 4.1 | 8.1 | 5.5 | 13.3 | 77.9 | 20.1 |
| Louisiana | 31.7 | 31.7 | 17.2 | 3.3 | 10.5 | 5.6 | 12.5 | 78.6 | 19.5 |
| Mississippi | 35.7 | 27.5 | 16.9 | 5.2 | 9.7 | 5.1 | 11.8 | 77.3 | 19.5 |
| North Carolina | 30.0 | 29.0 | 16.8 | 6.8 | 12.0 | 5.4 | 12.5 | 81.4 | 23.3 |
| Oklahoma | 25.4 | 30.5 | 21.3 | 5.0 | 11.8 | 6.0 | 10.4 | 84.6 | 20.5 |

**Table 1. The Educational Status of Persons 25 Years of Age and Older in 13 Southern States, 1990 and 1998.**

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South Carolina | 31.7 | 29.5 | 15.8 | 6.3 | 11.2 | 5.4 | 11.7 | 78.6 | 21.3 |
| Tennessee | 32.9 | 30.0 | 16.9 | 4.2 | 10.5 | 5.4 | 13.4 | 76.9 | 16.9 |
| Texas | 27.9 | 25.6 | 21.1 | 5.2 | 13.9 | 6.5 | 12.9 | 78.3 | 23.3 |
| Virginia | 24.8 | 26.6 | 18.5 | 5.5 | 15.4 | 9.1 | 10.0 | 82.6 | 30.3 |
| United States | 24.8 | 30.0 | 18.7 | 6.2 | 13.1 | 7.2 | 11.2 | 82.8 | 24.4 |

## Table 2. The Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years Old and Over by Race/Ethnicity in the Southern States in 1990.

| Southern State | Percent with a HS Diploma or More | | | | Percent with Bachelors' Degree or More | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Overall | White | Black | Hispanics | Overall | White | Black | Hispanics |
| Alabama | 66.9 | 70.3 | 54.6 | 73.8 | 15.7 | 17.3 | 9.3 | 20.1 |
| Arkansas | 66.3 | 68.6 | 51.5 | 59.1 | 13.3 | 14.1 | 8.4 | 11.1 |
| Florida | 74.4 | 77.0 | 56.4 | 57.2 | 18.3 | 19.3 | 9.8 | 14.2 |
| Georgia | 70.9 | 74.9 | 58.6 | 66.2 | 19.3 | 21.8 | 11.0 | 20.5 |
| Kentucky | 64.6 | 64.7 | 61.7 | 74.0 | 13.6 | 13.9 | 7.7 | 18.9 |
| Louisiana | 68.3 | 74.2 | 53.1 | 67.6 | 16.1 | 18.7 | 9.1 | 16.6 |
| Mississippi | 64.3 | 71.7 | 47.3 | 67.7 | 14.7 | 17.2 | 8.8 | 17.1 |
| North Carolina | 70.0 | 73.1 | 58.1 | 71.0 | 17.4 | 19.3 | 9.5 | 17.9 |
| Oklahoma | 74.6 | 75.7 | 70.1 | 55.9 | 17.8 | 18.7 | 12.0 | 10.5 |
| South Carolina | 68.3 | 73.6 | 53.3 | 71.8 | 16.6 | 19.8 | 7.6 | 19.8 |
| Tennessee | 67.1 | 68.2 | 59.4 | 71.5 | 16.0 | 16.7 | 10.2 | 21.9 |
| Texas | 72.1 | 76.2 | 66.1 | 44.6 | 20.3 | 22.6 | 12.0 | 7.3 |
| Virginia | 75.2 | 78.3 | 60.3 | 70.5 | 24.5 | 27.0 | 11.1 | 22.4 |
| United States | 75.2 | 77.9 | 63.1 | 49.8 | 20.3 | 21.5 | 11.4 | 9.2 |

# Table 3. Public Elementary and Secondary School Finances in Southern States in 1998.

| Southern State | Revenue Receipts by Source (in Millions of Dollars) | | | | Per Capita Expenditures in Dollars [1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Federal | State | Local | |
| Alabama | 4,030 | 380 | 2,601 | 1,049 | 1,011 |
| Arkansas | 2,322 | 193 | 1,536 | 594 | 1,008 |
| Florida | 14,583 | 1,058 | 7,068 | 6,457 | 1,074 |
| Georgia | 8,580 | 563 | 4,485 | 3,531 | 1,291 |
| Kentucky | 3,882 | 290 | 2,563 | 1,029 | 979 |
| Louisiana | 4,251 | 511 | 2,117 | 1,623 | 951 |
| Mississippi | 2,503 | 326 | 1,423 | 755 | 939 |
| North Carolina | 7,128 | 506 | 4,690 | 1,932 | 1,013 |
| Oklahoma | 3,119 | 302 | 1,951 | 866 | 943 |
| South Carolina | 4,157 | 312 | 2,176 | 1,668 | 1,077 |
| Tennessee | 4,491 | 356 | 2,314 | 1,822 | 902 |
| Texas | 23,920 | 1,833 | 10,282 | 11,805 | 1,346 |
| Virginia | 6,662 | 362 | 2,469 | 3,831 | 1,132 |
| United States | 314,187 | 21,338 | 155,321 | 137,528 | 1,210 |

[1]The figure represents the amount spent on a per resident basis, not on a per student basis