Remote Towns and Rural Fringes: An Overview of the NCES School Locale Framework

Doug Geverdt
U.S. Census Bureau

March 3, 2007
New Orleans, LA
Annual Conference of the American Association of School Administrators
Overview

1. What are locale codes and why do they matter?
2. Why did the NCES locale framework need to be changed?
3. What were the primary changes?
4. How did the changes affect schools and districts?
5. How are locales assigned to schools?
6. How are locales assigned to districts?
7. Where to find school district data resources?
What is a locale assignment?

• General indicator of a school’s physical location

• Assigned to all schools and districts in the NCES Common Core of Data

• Previous NCES locale framework included:
  – Large City
  – Midsize City
  – Urban Fringe of Large City
  – Urban Fringe of Midsize City
  – Large Town
  – Small Town
  – Rural Outside Metropolitan Area
  – Rural Inside Metropolitan Area
Why do locale definitions matter?

1. Geography is a fundamental organizing feature of public education
2. Locale definitions affect educational research and analysis
3. Research and analysis shapes public conversation and policy
4. Locales are used as a criterion for program eligibility
Why did the old locale framework need to be changed?

1. Overbounded urban fringe
   - Urban fringe included all non-city urban territory in metro area.
   - Definitions did not allow Towns in metro area.

2. Aspatial town distinctions:
   - Town delineated by size, not proximity.

3. Rural relativity:
   - Metro distinction (outside/inside) not necessarily more/less rural.
   - Inability to identify rural areas vis-à-vis urban areas.
Figure 1. Old NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.

Legend
- Gray: Metropolitan Statistical Areas
- County
- Red: Principal City
- Orange: Urban Areas

Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line
Figure 2. Old NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.
Figure 3. Old NCES Locales: Fringe vs. Town Classification

Legend:
- Gray: Metropolitan Statistical Areas
- County
- Red: Principal City
- Urban Areas

Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line
Figure 5. Old NCES Locales: Inside vs. Outside Metro

Rural location outside metro can be closer to large urban core than rural location inside metro.

Legend:
- Metropolitan Statistical Areas
- County
- Principal City
- Urban Areas

Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line
What were the primary changes?

- Urban-centric rather than metro-centric
- Based on Urbanized Areas (>50,000) and Urban Clusters (< 50,000)
- Twelve categories: Four primary types with three subtypes.

1. City: Large, Midsize, Small
2. Suburb: Large, Midsize, Small
3. Town: Fringe, Distant, Remote
4. Rural: Fringe, Distant, Remote
Figure 7. New NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas
Figure 8. New NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.

Legend:
- Metro Areas
- City-Large
- City-Midsize
- City-Small
- Suburban-Large
- Suburban-Midsize
- Suburban-Small
- Town-Fringe
- Town-Distant
- Town-Remote
- Rural-Fringe
- Rural-Distant
- Rural-Remote

Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGERLine
Figure 9. New NCES Locales: Key Changes

Legend
- Metro Areas
- City-Large
- City-Midsize
- City-Small
- Suburban-Large
- Suburban-Midsize
- Suburban-Small
- Town-Fringe
- Town-Distant
- Town-Remote
- Rural-Fringe
- Rural-Distant
- Rural-Remote

Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGERLine
The spatial context of new locale framework: demo
How did locale changes affect schools and districts?

- **Town**
  - 53% increase in Town schools
  - 26% Towns schools located near urban core of 50,000 (≤10 miles)
  - 34% Town schools located in remote areas (> 35 miles)

- **Rural**
  - More schools than any other locale type (due to decline in Urban Fringe)
  - 52% live within 5 miles of a UA or within 2.5 miles of a UC
  - 15% of rural public school students are in remote rural areas
How are locales assigned to schools?

1. Census Bureau classifies all U.S. territory according to locale criteria
2. NCES collects school addresses each year for the Common Core of Data
3. Addresses are reviewed and geocoded – assigned longitude/latitude (XY)
4. School points (XY) are connected to U.S. territory.
5. School receives the locale value that was assigned to that area
How are locales assigned to districts?

• Based on school locale assignments
• Weighted by school enrollment
• Assignment process:
  – Is there a majority sub-type? If not…
  – Is there a majority basic type? If not…
  – Consider all sub-types and assign based on plurality
• Many districts encompass multiple locales
• Small change in school locale may change district assignment
Where to find school district geodemographic data?

- **NCES**
- **Census Bureau**
  - Title 1  ([http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/saipe.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/saipe.html))
  - American Factfinder  ([http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html))
    - Census 2000
    - American Community Survey
Contact Information

Doug Geverdt
U.S. Census Bureau

douglas.e.geverdt@census.gov

Data Integration Division, Small Area Estimates
6H126A
Washington, DC 20233-8100